



## Gendered Perspectives: Ibuism in Indonesian English Education Textbooks

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how Ibuism ideology influences gender representation in Indonesian primary school English textbooks. Ibuism, an ideology that emerged during Indonesia's New Order era, promotes traditional, domestic roles for women under male authority, limiting their societal roles to caregivers and mothers. Despite ongoing social developments, Ibuism remains influential, reinforced by state programs such as the PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment). Content analysis was employed to explore how textbooks for Grades 1 through 4 depict women and men in gendered roles, with findings indicating that female characters are frequently portrayed in domestic, nurturing roles, while male characters are depicted as providers and authority figures. The analysis strongly supports the notion that Ibuism ideology permeates educational content, reinforcing traditional gender roles and limiting women's representation by emphasizing their value through domestic contributions and positioning them in supportive roles subordinate to men. These findings highlight the critical role of educational materials in transmitting cultural and political ideologies, perpetuating systemic gender inequalities with significant global implications. The study underscores the universal challenge of addressing ideological bias in curricula and calls for international efforts to promote gender-sensitive curriculum development to foster equity. By revealing how deeply embedded ideologies shape societal norms through education, this research contributes to discussions on gender representation in educational resources and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers working toward inclusive and equitable education systems

*Keywords: gender perspective, Ibuism, education textbook*

### INTRODUCTION

The ideology of “ibuism” has been a pervasive influence in Indonesian society, emphasizing the role of women as mothers and their contributions to national development under male authority. This concept, deeply rooted in the country's governance and social structures, has been actively promoted by the current administration through organizations like the PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment) (Syukri, 2023). Originating from the New Order era, Ibuism is characterized by fixed stereotypes aimed at controlling and establishing hierarchical structures, particularly in politics (Akbar, 2021; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1992;

Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). It confines women to traditional roles as appendages to their husbands, procreators, educators, and housekeepers, ultimately leading to their depoliticization and segregation (Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). State Ibuism, a term coined during the New Order era, continues to shape societal perceptions and behaviors, idealizing motherhood and domesticity (Chin, 2018; Elanda, 2021). This ideology, intertwined with politics and societal norms, has persisted over time, influencing gender portrayals and societal expectations (Amalia & Tjahjandari, 2023). The intersection of ibuism with patriarchal culture, capital-

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ism, and political agendas has been observed during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where traditional gender norms and power dynamics have been reinforced (Elanda, 2021; Udasmoro & Prügl, 2021).

Given the significance of ibuism in shaping gender roles and expectations in Indonesia, it is crucial to examine how this ideology is reflected in educational materials, particularly in English textbooks used in primary schools. Textbooks, as carriers of ideologies, can play a pivotal role in shaping learners' perceptions, values, and understanding of gender dynamics (Dar & Masroor, 2019; Goyal & Rose, 2020). The critical analysis of English textbooks in Indonesia can provide insights into the ways in which the state's endorsement of ibuism is manifested in educational content, potentially reinforcing traditional gender norms and power structures.

Research has extensively examined the impact of ibuism on Indonesian society, ranging from media representations to societal norms. Scholars have highlighted its influence on various aspects, including media portrayals, commercial advertisements, literary works and children song (Amalia & Tjahjandari, 2023; Campbell, 2007; Inas Pratiwi, 2020; Malilang, 2024; Odellia & Simorangkir, 2018; Patria Yulida Augustine & Juniarti, 2022) and broader political, economics social and cultural issues (Chin, 2018; Hyunanda et al., 2021; Jakimow, 2018). The enforcement of State Ibuism during the New Order era reinforced gender dichotomies, relegating women to domestic roles while men held positions of authority (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2019). Despite societal changes, ibuism continues to shape gender constructions and societal norms, reflecting broader issues of power dynamics and gender inequality within Indonesian society including education (Hook, 2004; Manzo et al., 2019). The role of education in maintaining and perpetuating ibuism ideology is multifaceted and influential, as educational institutions and materials often serve as vehicles for transforming societal norms, values, and beliefs (Manzo et al., 2019).

While previous studies have examined gender bias and ideological influences in Indonesian textbooks, there has been little focus on the specific ways in which *ibuism* ideology is represented in educational content. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of how ibuism, with its emphasis on women's roles as mothers and their subordinate position to male authority, is embedded in the narratives and representations within Indonesian primary school English textbooks. This research not only highlights the influence of state-endorsed ideologies on educational resources but also offers a novel perspective by systematically uncovering the nuanced ways in which *ibuism* continues to shape cultural and political dynamics through the education system. By addressing this underexplored intersection, the study aims to contribute to broader discourses on gender equity and ideological influence in education, providing valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to challenge and transform restrictive gender norms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of Ibuism ideology in Indonesia is a subject of extensive study, particularly concerning its impact on gender roles and societal expectations. Ibuism, rooted in Indonesia's political and cultural landscape since the New Order era, promotes an idealized notion of womanhood focused on domestic roles, motherhood, and subservience to male authority (Akbar, 2021; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1992; Syukri, 2023). The ideology is maintained through various social and governmental structures, such as the PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment), which serves to reinforce women's responsibilities within the household and, by extension, their contributions to national development under a male-led hierarchy (Syukri, 2023). This hierarchical framework, often referred to as "State Ibuism," is designed to control and direct women's roles as mothers, educators, and supporters, placing them as secondary to men's authority and influence.



within the family and society (Chin, 2018; Elanda, 2021).

Previous studies have explored the manifestation of Ibumism within multiple societal spheres, including media representations, advertisements, and broader societal norms (Inas Pratiwi, 2020; Odellia & Simorangkir, 2018). Research indicates that these portrayals tend to relegate women to traditional, supportive roles that reflect a larger patriarchal agenda (Hook, 2004). Despite significant social progress, Ibumism remains a powerful ideological force, subtly shaping gender expectations and limiting women's roles within Indonesian society (Amalia & Tjahjandari, 2023). The reinforcement of these norms was particularly evident during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where societal shifts heightened the reassertion of traditional gender roles and power dynamics (Elanda, 2021; Udasmoro & Prügl, 2021).

The role of education in maintaining and perpetuating Ibumism is critically important, as educational materials and institutions serve as vehicles for transmitting values and beliefs to younger generations (Dar & Masroor, 2019; Goyal & Rose, 2020). Textbooks, as instruments of socialization, often reflect and reinforce dominant ideologies, shaping students' perceptions of appropriate gender roles from an early age (Manzo et al., 2019). Studies specifically examining Indonesian English school textbooks have identified biased portrayals of male and female characters, suggesting that textbooks reinforce gender dichotomies in line with traditional norms (Mihira et al., 2021; Yanto & Fitriyana, 2021). For example, women are often depicted as passive, nurturing figures limited to household roles, while men are portrayed as active participants in public and professional spheres (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2019).

Despite a wealth of research on gender bias and ideological influences in Indonesian textbooks, relatively few studies have focused explicitly on how Ibumism ideology shapes gender portrayals within these educational materials. This gap is

significant because educational content not only reflects but also influences societal attitudes and values. Meiratnasari & Wijayanto (2020) emphasize the importance of analyzing English textbooks to understand how cultural values and political ideologies, such as Ibumism, are internalized by students. Tyarakanita et al. (2021), Utami (2021) further highlight that a critical examination of textbooks can reveal the subtle ways in which state-endorsed ideologies permeate educational content, thereby reinforcing traditional gender norms.

This study aims to fill this research gap by examining how Ibumism, with its emphasis on women's roles as mothers and their subordinate position to male authority, is represented in Indonesian primary school English textbooks. This analysis provides a critical look at how these textbooks may contribute to the transmission of Ibumism, potentially reinforcing restrictive gender roles among young learners. The insights from this study contribute to the broader discourse on the role of educational materials in shaping societal values, underscoring the need for inclusive and equitable representations that go beyond traditional Ibumism ideologies. In doing so, this research also supports calls for re-evaluating educational content to foster a more balanced perspective on gender roles, ultimately promoting greater gender equality in Indonesian society.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach, drawing on critical textbook analysis developed by Weninger (2020), Abubakar (2021), Razak (2017), to examine how Ibumism ideology is represented in Indonesian primary school English textbooks. The data consist of 6 (six) English textbooks used for Grades 1-6, namely My Next Words. The units of analysis comprise both written texts (dialogues, narratives, exercise instructions) and visual elements (illustrations depicting male and female characters), yielding a total of 11 (eleven) coded units across the textbooks.

Coding was conducted using five categories derived from the literature on Ibuism (Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1992; Suryakusuma et al., 2011): domestication of women, restriction of women's public roles, emphasis on morality in relation to women, depiction of women as dependent on men, and women as subservient to husbands. Each unit was classified according to these categories and tabulated by grade level to identify distributional patterns. Representative examples from each category were then selected for deeper qualitative interpretation to reveal the ideological meanings embedded within the textbook content.

## RESULT

The findings from analyzing six Indonesian elementary school English textbooks (Grades 1-6) reveal a notable presence of ibuism, an ideology that emphasizes women's roles within the home and limits their representation in public or professional contexts. A total of 12 representations of ibuism were found across the six elementary school English textbooks.

This ideology is most prominent in the textbooks for lower grades, especially Grades 1 and 2, where the majority of ibuism-related representations are concentrated. In these books, women are often depicted primarily in domestic roles, such as housewives and caregivers. For example, in the Grade 1 textbook, Unit 6 ("My garden is colorful") and Unit 11 ("Aisyah's Family") illustrate women solely engaged in household chores and childcare activities. This portrayal aligns with the ibuism ideology's focus on idealized motherhood and domesticity.



Figure 1  
Domestication of Woman

Additionally, these textbooks restrict women's roles by largely omitting female characters in professional or leadership positions. This limited portrayal reinforces the notion that women's primary sphere is the domestic domain. While these portrayals decrease in higher-grade textbooks, underrepresentation persists.

Another subtle yet pervasive theme is the emphasis on women's morality, often depicted as paragons of virtue and obedience. For instance, in the Grade 4 textbook, Unit 4 ("Cici Cooks in the Kitchen") portrays women as nurturing and morally upright.



Figure 2  
Woman Morality

The analysis also reveals portrayals of women as dependent on men within the family structure. Fathers are commonly depicted as the family's primary providers, while mothers are financially and emotionally reliant on them.

Furthermore, the depiction of women as subservient to their husbands, fulfilling domestic duties to maintain family well-being, underscores the hierarchical gender roles entrenched in ibuism.



Figure 3  
Woman as Subservient to Husband





## DISCUSSION

The findings from the analysis of Indonesian elementary school English textbooks strongly support the notion that Ibuism ideology permeates educational content, reinforcing traditional gender roles and limiting women's representation. This is consistent with the broader understanding of Ibuism as an ideology that confines women to domestic roles under the authority of male figures, promoting a hierarchical structure that reflects patriarchal values (Akbar, 2021; Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 1992; Syukri, 2023).

The analysis reveals that textbooks frequently depict women primarily as housewives and caregivers, reflecting the domestication of women central to Ibuism. For instance, in the Grade 1 textbook, Unit 9 ("At Cici's Farm") and Unit 11 ("Aisyah's Family") depict women as engaging solely in household chores and childcare. This pattern continues across various textbooks, with illustrations such as a mother cooking on the Grade 2 textbook's cover image. This portrayal aligns with the ideology's focus on idealized motherhood and domesticity, which is central to the concept of State Ibuism that emerged during the New Order era (Chin, 2018; Elanda, 2021).

Further, the limited representation of women in public and professional roles emphasizes the ideological restriction of women's roles to the private, domestic sphere, echoing historical *Ibuism* stereotypes. For example, in the Grade 1 textbook, female characters are generally depicted as mothers or daughters performing domestic tasks, reinforcing the notion that a woman's primary role is within the household. Despite a slight decrease in such depictions in higher-grade textbooks, the continued underrepresentation of women in diverse roles perpetuates the narrative of women as appendages to their husbands (Ichsan Kabullah & Fajri, 2021).

The textbooks also convey implicit moral expectations for women, portraying them as symbols of virtue and obedience. This aligns with the Ibuism ideology, which idealizes women who conform to traditional roles and behave in a manner

deemed morally upright. In the Grade 4 textbook, Unit 4 ("Cici Cooks in the Kitchen") reflects this expectation, portraying women as kind and well-mannered. This portrayal of women as paragons of virtue reinforces the social norms that support traditional gender roles (Amalia & Tjahjandari, 2023).

The depictions of women as dependent on men, portrayal of women as subservient to their husbands, especially within the family structure, are another manifestation of the Ibuism ideology in these textbooks. Fathers are often portrayed as breadwinners and heads of the household, while mothers are shown as financially and emotionally dependent on them. This is evident in the Grade 1 textbook, where the father is the provider and the mother the caregiver, reinforcing the gendered power dynamics central to Ibuism (Udasromo & Prügl, 2021). Additionally, the portrayal of women as subservient to their husbands, fulfilling domestic duties to ensure the family's well-being, reflects the hierarchical and gendered divisions inherent in Ibuism ideology (Adiprasetyo & Larasati, 2019). This narrative, deeply rooted in Indonesian societal norms, reflects the broader *ibuism* framework that defines women's value through their domestic contributions and subservience to male authority (Amalia & Tjahjandari, 2023; Hook, 2004).

Lastly, the portrayal of women as subservient to their husbands, dedicated to fulfilling domestic duties, resonates with the ideology of *ibuism* that relegates women to supportive roles. This depiction is particularly evident in the Grade 1 textbook, where women are consistently shown serving their families, further emphasizing the expectation for women to ensure familial comfort and well-being.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study addresses a significant research gap by examining how Ibuism ideology, which prioritizes traditional, domestic roles for women under male authority, is embedded in Indonesian primary school English textbooks. While previous research has explored gender biases and ideological influences within

Indonesian educational materials, there has been limited focus on how Ibuism specifically shapes the portrayal of gender roles in textbooks. This study reveals that Ibuism ideology is deeply embedded in these educational resources, reinforcing fixed stereotypes of women as primarily mothers, caregivers, and subservient figures within hierarchical family structures.

This analysis contributes novel insights by demonstrating how English textbooks reflect the broader societal and political promotion of Ibuism, actively endorsed through structures like the PKK (Family Welfare Empowerment) under the Indonesian government. Rooted in the New Order era, Ibuism promotes an idealized form of motherhood, domesticity, and moral obedience that confines women to limited roles, reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics. The persistent depiction of women as subordinate to men and restricted to household tasks perpetuates a traditional narrative that aligns with the state's historical agenda, aiming to establish and maintain gendered hierarchies and control through education.

The findings have important implications for the broader field of educational studies and gender representation. By highlighting the role of textbooks in transmitting cultural and political ideologies, this study underscores the need to re-evaluate and potentially revise educational materials to foster more equitable and inclusive representations of gender roles. Such revisions could promote diverse perspectives and contribute to reshaping societal perceptions of women's roles in Indonesia, offering young learners a more balanced understanding of gender dynamics beyond the confines of Ibuism. This research not only advances the understanding of ideological influence in educational content but also serves as a call for critical engagement with curriculum development to support gender equity in educational and societal contexts.

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