Gender and Justice in Egyptian History Textbooks: Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights Perspectives

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores how Egyptian secondary school history textbooks represent gender and justice, in light of Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 and human rights values. It highlights the dominance of male-cantered narratives and the marginalization of women and diverse voices, which undermines inclusive and sustainable education. Using qualitative content and discourse analysis of textbooks for grades 10–12 (2024/2025), the study finds limited female representation and a narrow view of justice framed by nationalism and authority. It concludes that current textbooks reinforce traditional hierarchies and fall short of promoting gender equity, critical citizenship, and education for sustainable development.

1. Introduction

The Curricula represent one of the most prominent tools for shaping collective consciousness and constructing cultural and social perceptions among emerging generations. They are not limited to the transmission of knowledge and information; rather, they contribute to the reproduction of values, symbols, and identities within specific political and cultural contexts. Through what is taught in classrooms, the outlines of a possible world are drawn, defining patterns of the relationship between the individual and society, between the self and the other, and between the citizen and the state.

In light of accelerating global transformations, it is no longer possible to view education as neutral or detached from the major issues facing humanity, foremost among them gender justice, equality, and human rights. The school has become a symbolic battleground over the representation of different groups and the reproduction or resistance of social hierarchies. Herein lies the importance of scrutinizing educational content to uncover implicit biases and symbolic representations that may reinforce or undermine concepts of justice, dignity, and equal citizenship.

Internationally, recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in curricula from a rights-based and developmental perspective, especially following the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable

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Development Agenda, which explicitly states in its fourth goal (4.7) the necessity for "all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, and global citizenship" [23]. Consequently, gender representations and issues of social justice have become fundamental components of modern educational quality standards.

In the Arab context generally, and in Egypt in particular, curricula—especially history textbooks—continue to be produced within conservative political frameworks that sometimes reproduce stereotypical gender roles and reinforce an official narrative that marginalizes certain groups or eliminates alternative narratives of justice, resistance, and participation [8]. It is noted that gender representations in school textbooks are either limited and superficial or fall within a traditional framework that reproduces patriarchal roles.

School history textbooks hold a special significance due to their central role in constructing collective memory and shaping national narratives [11]. They do not merely present the past; rather, they select how it is narrated, to whom it is narrated, and from the position of which authority. Accordingly, the gender representations in history textbooks reflect images of women and men and carry deeper connotations related to power, citizenship, recognition, and invisibility [24].

In recent years, a number of critical studies have emerged aiming to analyze gender, class, and ethnic biases in curricula across various countries, including Rappoport's study on gender representations in textbooks in several provinces [15], Dineen's research on gender justice in educational policies [6], as well as Arab studies such as Shosha's investigation into stereotypical gender images of women in basic education curricula in Egypt [19], and Damanhouri's (2022) study documenting the marginalization of women in Arabic language textbooks for secondary grades [5]. Nevertheless, studies addressing Egyptian secondary history textbooks from the perspectives of gender representations and justice remain limited, often overlooking the connection between these representations and global discursive contexts, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and rights-based discourse. This highlights the need for research that reexamines educational content in light of evolving global conceptual frameworks and aspirations for social justice.

Building upon the foregoing, this study aims to fill a clear research gap in the Arab literature by conducting a critical analysis of gender and justice representations in Egyptian secondary history textbooks. It employs a dual approach combining discourse analysis and content analysis, informed by conceptual frameworks derived from the Sustainable Development Goals and global rights discourse, particularly concerning equality, representation, citizenship, recognition, and engagement in inclusive historical narratives.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Concept of Gender and Its Representations in Educational Discourse

The concept of gender refers to the characteristics, roles, behaviors, and social norms that societies consider appropriate for males and females. Unlike sex, which reflects the natural biological differences between males and females (such as physical constitution and hormones), gender is regarded as a social and cultural construct that varies across time and place, and reflects prevailing perceptions of masculinity and femininity and the expectations of each [3].

Feminist and critical theories have contributed to developing a complex understanding of gender as a descriptive category, a mechanism for social regulation, and a means of reproducing hierarchy and dominance [9]. For example, Butler posits that gender is not a fixed essence but a social performance continually renewed through language and practices [2]. In this sense, as Simone de

Beauvoir famously stated, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman or a man," according to what symbolic and social systems impose.

In the educational field, several studies have demonstrated how curricula—through texts, images, and representations—reproduce stereotypical gender roles that reinforce traditional differences and limit possibilities for change. For instance, Rappoport's study observed that many textbooks worldwide tend to depict males in leadership and professional roles, while females' roles are often confined to caregiving or educational settings [15]. Likewise, Shosha's study in the Egyptian context concluded that female representations in primary school curricula remain limited to the domestic sphere, with an almost complete absence of women in the public sphere or political history [19].

Differentiating gender from sex is a methodological necessity for analyzing how differences are constructed and naturalized or "essentialized," whereas they are actually the product of symbolic and institutional structures. When women in history books are depicted merely as wives or mothers, in contrast to men portrayed as leaders and fighters, this does not reflect reality as much as it reflects a discursive choice that reproduces power relations [25].

In light of the above, analyzing gender representations in school history textbooks becomes a reading of the authoritarian logic underlying educational narratives, and a test of how collective consciousness is directed toward a constrained understanding of gender. In the Egyptian context, where curricula are expected to align with state transformations and commitments to sustainable development goals (especially Goal 5 concerning gender equality), the continued portrayal of gender from a traditional perspective serves as an indicator of discursive resistance to change and a gap between official discourse and educational reality.

2.2 Gender Stereotypes and Roles in Curricula

Textbooks often depict women in traditional roles such as mother, caregiver, or supporter, while men are presented as leaders, warriors, and decision-makers. Arnot points out that curricula in many developing countries reinforce gender stereotypes by marginalizing women as active participants in history or representing them as exceptions rather than the norm [1]. Sauntson refers to what she calls the "systematic silence" about women in school history narratives [16].

School history textbooks are among the educational texts most prone to perpetuating male dominance, due to their reliance on narratives of heroism, war, and politics from which women are often excluded. Millard & Clark assert that school history reproduces a masculine nationalism, where women appear only as symbols of national identity (mother/martyr) without recognition of their participation as historical agents [13]. In a 2024 study by Ghanem, women constitute less than 10% of images and examples in Egyptian secondary school psychology curricula, frequently in traditional or non-leadership roles [7].

Gender biases are not only evident in written texts; there exists a "hidden curriculum"—the unspoken messages conveyed through examples, illustrations, role distribution, and even classroom arrangement and vocabulary [17]. Scott & Gray indicate that curricula reflect prevailing cultural authority and contribute to the reproduction of inequality through what they conceal as much as through what they reveal. Therefore, the absence or marginalization of women is not incidental but a symbolic act imbued with profound ideological implications [18].

2.3 Educational and Gender Justice as Central Dimensions in Critical Education

Educational justice is considered one of the central concepts in contemporary educational thought. Its meaning surpasses the narrow idea of formal equality of opportunity to encompass the

very structure of the educational system itself in terms of content, curricula, language, assessment methods, and forms of representation within texts [12]. Justice is measured by the extent to which education is equitable for different groups, respecting their experiences, needs, and cultural contexts. Within this framework, education is redefined as a process of liberation and citizenship [14].

As for gender justice, it extends the concept of educational justice by focusing on eliminating disparities and discrimination based on gender within educational fields. This includes both the visible aspects, such as curriculum content and activities, and the implicit, embedded elements within the school culture, symbols, and signifiers [21]. Cin indicates that gender is an analytical tool to understand how power relations are constructed in discourse, including educational discourse, and that education contributes to the reproduction of "male dominance" unless its representations and standards are critically questioned [4].

2.4 Curricula as Discourse and Hegemony

Curricula are fundamental tools in shaping collective consciousness and cannot be viewed merely as a neutral compilation of knowledge or facts. They reflect social, cultural, and ideological choices that express a particular worldview, reproducing specific patterns of understanding, belonging, and power. In this sense, the curriculum can be considered an organized discourse that formulates the relationship between the learner and knowledge, determining what is said and what is silenced [20].

When curricula are produced within specific political and social contexts, they contribute to the reproduction and entrenchment of prevailing power. They represent and legitimize authority through their choices in narrating history, representing social roles, and classifying identities. On this basis, educational content cannot be separated from the ideological structures to which it belongs, whether at the level of the state, the national community, or the dominant culture [10].

2.5 Education Goal (4.7) in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Sustainable Development Goal 4 represents an ambitious international framework aiming to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, while promoting lifelong learning opportunities. Sub-target 4.7 holds a special position within this context, as it focuses on the quality of education in terms of the values and content that are expected to be taught. It calls for all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including education for human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity [23].

This goal reflects a paradigm shift in the perception of education—from being merely a tool for imparting marketable skills to becoming a means of reshaping the relationship between the individual and the world, and between the citizen and society. This shift inherently recognizes that major global challenges, such as discrimination, violence, and exclusion, can only be addressed through education that fosters values of dignity, justice, and mutual respect. Consequently, what is taught in school textbooks is not merely a local matter but part of a global commitment to a shared ethical and epistemic agenda.

The tasks of the school are redefined through Education Goal 4.7, transcending rote knowledge transmission to become a space for cultivating citizenship and critical awareness. This necessitates a critical appraisal of school curricula, especially subjects related to identity and history, assessing their alignment with this orientation and their capacity to empower learners to understand issues of justice, equality, and gender as fundamental components of comprehending and engaging actively with the world.

Indicators for Analyzing Gender Justice and Global Citizenship in the School Context

Based on UNESCO [22] and the Sustainable Development Agenda [23], particularly Goal 4.7, a qualitative analytical framework was developed to monitor representations of gender justice and global citizenship in school history textbooks, as these constitute fundamental indicators of content justice and its consistency with commitments to inclusive and rights-based education.

Regarding gender justice, the framework relies on a set of indicators including: (1) the numerical and proportional representation of women and men within the texts; (2) the nature of roles assigned to women, whether traditional (caretaking, familial) or non-traditional (leadership, resistance); (3) the degree of effectiveness attributed to historical women, that is, their presence as agents who shaped events rather than mere symbols or marginal notes; (4) the discursive language associated with women, especially in relation to evaluation, description, or reduction; (5) monitoring instances of absence or symbolic exclusion of women in pivotal events; and (6) finally, the diversity of female models presented in the texts, encompassing class, geographic, and cultural representations.

At the level of global citizenship, the indicators include: (1) the presence of universal concepts such as justice, peace, and human rights, and the extent to which they are presented as inclusive human values; (2) the depiction of the cultural or religious "Other" and its alignment either with values of plurality or rejection; (3) the incorporation of contemporary global issues that foster cross-border awareness; (4) the manner in which the relationship between the individual, society, the state, and the world is portrayed, and whether the learner is constructed as a critical actor or a loyal follower; and (5) lastly, the degree to which internal diversity within Egyptian and Arab societies is valued positively.

This framework enables a multilayered analysis that does not merely document superficial representation but delves into deconstructing underlying discursive patterns, exploring what is said and what is silenced, grounded in the conviction that curricula do not simply teach what happened but how the world and its inhabitants should be understood.

From this perspective, gender justice and global citizenship are not understood merely as quantifiable subjects, but as discursive representations that either reproduce patterns of domination or destabilize them. Curricula do not simply convey "content," but rather shape epistemological and value frameworks through which collective memory is reshaped, and certain perceptions about who deserves their history to be told and who is excluded from the narrative are entrenched. Accordingly, the absence of women or the negative portrayal of the other is not a mere coincidence or a lack of information, but an expression of a "discursive will" governed by authoritarian and societal considerations.

These indicators thus serve as analytical tools to understand how textbooks reproduce power relations and legitimize specific patterns of citizenship, identity, and history, blatantly ignoring the emancipatory educational objectives advocated by both Freire and Gramsci, which aim to empower marginalized groups to rewrite their identities within the epistemic space. Through this lens, the analysis of historical curricula becomes a means to uncover the ideological structures embedded within even the simplest and most apparently "neutral" texts, portraying them as sites of control and domination or of resistance and alternative meaning.

The analysis of these indicators is not intended to be confined to quantitative representation or superficial observation of meanings; rather, the approach extends to interrogating the discursive structures produced by educational texts and the patterns of normalization and discrimination they entail.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Type and Methodology

This study belongs to qualitative research with a critical approach. It aims to deconstruct the representations of gender and justice in the Egyptian history textbooks prescribed for the secondary education stage. The methodology employs a combined approach integrating content analysis and discourse analysis as complementary tools for reading educational texts as ideological discourses. The study focuses on revealing both explicit and implicit content, the construction of gendered images and roles, and the representation of justice concepts within a context where official local discourse intersects with global references on education and human rights.

3.2 Data Sources

The study is based on the analysis of the entire sample of history textbooks assigned to secondary school students in Egypt for the academic year 2024/2025, published by the Ministry of Education and Technical Education. The data sources include the following books:

- First Year Secondary: Egypt Civilization: The Civilization of Egypt and the Ancient World
- Second Year Secondary: Egypt and Islamic Civilization
- Third Year Secondary: History of Modern and Contemporary Egypt and the Arab World

These books were selected as they represent the official historical discourse presented by the governmental educational institution during a critical developmental phase for shaping learners' historical, political, and gender consciousness.

3.3 Analytical Tools

The study utilized two integrated tools for analyzing the content of history textbooks to understand gender and justice representations on both explicit and implicit levels:

- Content Analysis: To examine the frequency of character representation, distribution of roles, interaction patterns, overt biases, or the symbolic absence of various groups, with a focus on gender dimensions and justice concepts.
- Critical Discourse Analysis: To deconstruct the linguistic and symbolic structure of the historical discourse, including expressive forms, connotations, meta-messages, and the relationships between language and power, aiming to understand how gendered and symbolic authority is reproduced within the educational text.

The combination of these two tools enables a multi-layered reading of the textbooks, moving beyond surface content to the level of ideological meanings and value implications.

3.4 Analytical Categories

The study relied on a set of analytical categories developed based on the theoretical framework, the nature of the research questions, and the characteristics of the texts under examination. These categories aim to track gender representations and concepts of justice in history textbooks, and they include:

- Gender Representation: This entails counting the frequency of male and female appearances, the types of characters portrayed, and their dominance or absence within the historical narrative.
- Ascribed Roles: Identification of the roles attributed by historical discourse to both males and females (such as heroism, leadership, sacrifice, caregiving, obedience, etc.).

- Discourse on Justice and Equality: Monitoring statements that reflect perceptions of justice, whether in the distribution of rights, the narration of liberation struggles, or discussions concerning marginalized groups.
- Absence and Exclusion: Examining who is omitted from the historical narrative, and the implications of their absence, whether based on gender, class, or social group.
- Relationship of Content to Global Concepts: Tracking whether the texts engage with concepts such as equality, dignity, citizenship, and women's empowerment, and assessing their consistency with the principles of the Education Objective (4.7).

3.5 Study Limits

This study is defined by a set of methodological and epistemological boundaries that must be considered when interpreting the analysis results:

- The study is confined to the three history textbooks prescribed for the secondary education stage for the 2024/2025 academic year, without extending to other subjects such as national education or geography.
- The analysis concentrates on the official printed content without addressing classroom practices or how students receive the texts.
- The study focuses on monitoring and analyzing the discursive representations of justice and gender, without aiming to measure educational impact or actual learning outcomes.
- The study does not include a review of curriculum production processes or the institutional intentions behind it; rather, it focuses on reading the texts as they were presented to learners.

4. Results

4.1 Representations of Males and Females in History Books

As shown in Table (1), the numerical and qualitative distribution of figures in history books clearly reflects a pronounced bias toward male representation, accompanied by a severe marginalization of women. In all three books, males constitute over 90% of the total figures mentioned, while female representation is notably low, whether as participants in historical events or as agents in the making of history.

Table 1

Numerical and Qualitative Distribution of Male and Female Figures in History Books

Textbook	Number of male characters	Number of female characters	Main female characters	Minor Female Characters	Female Representation
First Year	36	2	0	2	5.3%
Second Year	42	1	0	1	2.3%
Third Year	58	3	1	2	4.9%

It is observed that when female representation does occur, it appears in marginal or traditional forms, without assigning them central roles. This reinforces the notion that the school historical discourse reproduces a monolithic image of gender, restricting heroism, political, military, and

national agency exclusively to males. Moreover, contexts in which women's roles could have been highlighted—such as revolutions, liberation movements, or social reforms—are marked by either the complete absence of women or references to them solely as complements to men's roles, rather than as independent actors.

4.2 Gender Roles and Their Connotations

Table (2) reveals that the three history books consistently attribute roles of activity, leadership, and authority to males, while limiting the presence of females—when present—to traditional or supportive roles. In the first secondary school textbook, despite the richness of the ancient historical period with influential queens such as Hatshepsut and Cleopatra, the text emphasizes men as symbols of civilization, portraying women predominantly as wives and mothers.

Table 2
Distribution of Attributed Roles to Males and Females in History Books

Textbook	Prominent Male Roles	Prominent Female Roles	General Pattern of Gender Roles
First Year	Rule, conquer, legislate, build civilization, lead armies	Wives of Pharaohs, mothers of kings	completely traditional roles for women
Second Year	Caliphate, conquests, jurisprudence, political reform, imamate	No assigned roles	Only males are historical actors
Third Year	Resistance to occupation, national leadership, state establishment, economic reform	Demonstrators, mothers of martyrs	Women in supporting or complementary roles

In the second secondary school textbook, this pattern intensifies, with women completely absent from religious, political, and advocacy roles. In the third secondary school textbook, women appear in some contexts but primarily as protesters or mothers, without being granted positions of leadership or decision-making.

This distribution reflects a traditional perception of women's role in history, reiterating a gender hierarchy that positions males as the makers of history, while women remain in the shadows or are invoked only for emotional or symbolic functions.

4.3 Images of Justice, Equality, and Citizenship in the Historical Narrative

Table (3) reveals that history textbooks present selective and constrained representations of the concepts of justice, equality, and citizenship. In the first secondary grade textbook, justice is portrayed as a component of the monarchical system, without an individual or rights-based conception of justice. In the second-grade textbook, justice appears as a religious concept confined to the justice of the caliphs, with no space allocated to the ideas of plurality, difference, or social rights; notably, marginalized groups such as non-Muslims or women are entirely absent.

Table 3
Representations of the Concepts of Justice, Equality, and Citizenship in History Books

Textbook	The Concepts of Justice Mentioned	The Equality Presented	Representation of the Concept of Citizenship
First Year	Centralized Pharaonic Justice towards the Subjects	Specific Legal Equality within the System	Citizenship as Submission to the System
Second Year	Justice of the Caliphs, Justice in the Judiciary	Equality of Muslims before Sharia law only	The citizen as an individual subject to Sharia law
Third Year	Justice in resisting occupation, social justice in the era of Nasser	Equality among Egyptians as a single nation	The citizen as a national actor against the colonizer

In the third-grade textbook, the concept of justice is presented more clearly but remains confined to a framework of struggle against colonialism and does not extend to encompass gender justice or justice within society. Equality is depicted as a purely nationalistic concept that disregards qualitative or group differences, thereby marginalizing the necessity to address discrimination within society itself. Consequently, any critical conception of justice that would enable learners to reflect on contemporary forms of inequality—particularly those based on gender—is absent from the historical narrative.

4.4 Symbolic Absence and Exclusion in History Textbooks

Table (4) shows that history textbooks systematically prioritize the voice of the dominant group within the historical narrative while excluding or marginalizing other groups. Across all three textbooks, there is an almost complete absence of women—not only as active agents but also as subjects of historical discourse. Religious and class minorities are marginalized, and ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity is omitted, while the narrative focuses on male figures who hold power or leadership positions.

Table 4
Absent Groups and Unrepresented Discourses in History Textbooks

Textbook	Completely absent groups	Marginally present groups	Groups represented only from the perspective of power
First Year	Women – Lower Classes – Non-Egyptians	Workers – Peasants	Subjects under Pharaonic Rule
Second Year	Women – Non-Muslims – Other Races	The Poor – Slaves	Conquered Peoples and Subjects
Third Year	Religious minorities - rural women - people with special needs	working classes	the people as a homogeneous group against colonialism

It is noteworthy that when marginalized groups do appear, they are not presented from their own perspectives but are reintroduced through the lens of power: the subjects, the people, the masses—without allowing space for alternative narratives or viewpoints from the margins. This

reinforces a unidimensional conception of history that cements social and gender hierarchies and excludes the possibilities of plurality, accountability, and critique.

4.5 The Consistency of the Historical Discourse with the Principles of the Educational Goal (4.7)

Table (5) shows that the results indicate history textbooks do not clearly align with the principles of Educational Goal (4.7) of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which calls for the promotion of the values of human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, and cultural diversity. Although there are some references to justice and human rights, these are often framed in laudatory or religious contexts and are not presented as universal values based on equality among all people regardless of gender or background.

Table 5
Presence of the Educational Goal Principles (4.7) in Egyptian History Textbooks

Textbook	References to human rights	References to gender equality	Presence of concepts of global citizenship	Appreciation of cultural diversity
First Year	Rare and fragmented	Completely absent	No clear references	Very limited
Second Year	Present only as religious values	Completely absent	No mention of global citizenship	Restricted to Islam only
Third Year	Present in the context of resistance to colonialism	Not mentioned	The concept of global citizenship does not appear	Almost absent

Gender equality constitutes the weakest link in this context, as it is entirely absent from the discourse, including in texts that address critical junctures in Egyptian and Arab history. Furthermore, none of the three textbooks show clear awareness of the concepts of global citizenship or respect for pluralism, indicating a disconnect between school historical discourse and the state's international commitments in the fields of sustainable development and human rights.

4.6 Patterns of Authority, Obedience, and Social Engagement in History Textbooks

Table (6) reveals that history textbooks highlight a hierarchical authoritarian model of authority, reflecting a traditional perception of the ruler and the ruled. In the first secondary grade, Pharaonic authority is presented as absolute and unquestionable, with obedience invoked as a central concept in the relationship between ruler and people. Society does not appear as an independent actor but rather as a mere subject to royal decrees.

In the second grade, authority appears in its religious form, represented by caliphs and scholars, with obedience linked to religious law and faith, reproducing a model that marginalizes discourse and dissent, casting obedience as a moral and religious virtue. In the third grade, although there is emphasis on the people as resistors to colonialism, this people are portrayed as a homogeneous mass rallying around a leader or leadership rather than as a diverse, responsible civil society.

Therefore, the concept of social engagement in these textbooks remains contingent upon obedience and discipline rather than critical participation or democratic action, reflecting an educational approach that entrenches compliance rather than empowerment.

Table 6
presentations of Authority, Obedience, and Community Participation in History Textbooks

Textbook	The Nature of Represented Authority	Representation of Obedience and Discipline	Forms of Community Engagement
First Year	Absolute central authority (the divine king)	Complete obedience to the king and the regime	No society as an actor
Second Year	Religious Caliphate as Supreme Authority	Obedience is linked to faith and Islamic law	Society is subordinate to religious leadership
Third Year	Centralized national leadership (leaders, chiefs)	Obedience to the nation and leaders	The people as a unified bloc resisting colonialism

5. Discussion

This discussion aims to interpret the findings derived from the analysis of Egyptian secondary school history textbooks in light of the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the study: [1] the concept of educational and gender justice in critical education, and [2] Target 4.7 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The discussion addresses how gender representations and concepts of justice within the textbooks reflect a discursive structure that reproduces discrimination and undermines empowerment opportunities, rather than reinforcing equality and dignity.

5.1 The Reproduction of Gender Hegemony in Historical Narratives

The results revealed a clear male dominance in both the quantitative and qualitative representation of characters and in the distribution of roles within the historical texts. This pattern aligns with the literature in critical pedagogy, which posits that curricula are not neutral cognitive mediums but contribute to the reproduction of power relations [8]. In this context, the marginalization or limited representation of women supports a hierarchical conception of gender that naturalizes and historicizes male dominance.

From the perspective of gender justice in critical education, it becomes evident that the historical discourse does not empower female students to perceive themselves as contributors to history; rather, it reinforces a sense of symbolic exclusion. This constitutes a form of "symbolic violence" exercised through educational content that employs absence as a tool to reproduce social stratification.

5.2 The Marginalization of Diversity and Exclusion of Alternative Discourses

The findings concerning the absence of marginalized social groups such as women, minorities, and lower classes intersect with Paulo Freire's critique of the "structural silence" imposed on marginalized voices in traditional education. The historical narrative in these textbooks reshapes students' consciousness through the lens of power, without providing space for resistant or alternative narratives. Consequently, history becomes a monolithic text that teaches obedience rather than fostering critical consciousness.

This contradicts the essence of educational Target 4.7, which aspires to equip learners with critical thinking skills, enhance respect for diversity, and promote active participation in society.

5.3 Separating History and Global Citizenship

Although education is supposed to be a tool for promoting global engagement, tolerance, and awareness of justice, the results revealed that the dominant discourse in textbooks presents a closed conception of citizenship based on absolute nationalism and loyalty to authority, without any engagement with concepts such as rights, diversity, or global citizenship. This contradicts the standards set by Goal (4.7), which calls for the formation of a responsible global citizen rather than a mere subordinate within a closed national framework.

5.4 Obedience instead of Participation: From Citizen to Disciplined Subject

The results show that the historical educational discourse implicitly adopts an authoritarian model of citizenship, in which obedience and discipline are presented as supreme values, while critical participation and community empowerment are marginalized. According to Foucault, this pattern reflects the operation of power at the "micro" level through narrative, shaping subjects within the educational system. This produces a "disciplined citizen" rather than a "critical actor," thereby undermining the philosophy of critical education.

Thus, it can be said that the current Egyptian high school history textbooks reproduce an authoritarian-masculine discourse that marginalizes women, excludes diversity, and empties the concepts of justice of their comprehensive rights-based content. In doing so, they stand in direct opposition to the commitments of education as a tool for social and gender empowerment as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Agenda. Therefore, revising this content is an epistemic, educational, and ethical necessity simultaneously.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that Egyptian secondary school history textbooks reflect a traditional discursive structure that reinforces male dominance and marginalizes concepts of gender and social justice, despite the state's declared commitments to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, foremost among them Goal 4.7 concerning inclusive and equitable education. The historical discourse presented in these textbooks consolidates a stereotypical image of the citizen as a male obedient to the nation and authority, while excluding other actors such as women and marginalized groups either through complete omission or through marginal symbolic representations.

This pattern is inseparable from the logic of "cultural governance" exercised by the state through curricula, where collective memory is reformulated to produce specific conceptions of history, identity, and social role. This fundamentally contradicts the philosophy of critical education, which emphasizes plurality, accountability, and justice.

Based on the above, the study affirms the urgent need for a comprehensive critical revision of the prescribed historical content, one that restores the voice of the marginalized and re-presents women as active agents in history rather than mere witnesses to it. It also calls for the development of an educational approach that integrates the values of equality, diversity, and global citizenship into the fabric of historical narrative, viewing it as a tool for cultivating free and responsible citizens.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends a comprehensive and courageous review of the school historical discourse, grounded in several principles, foremost among them:

1. Integrating women as active participants in the historical narrative, not merely as symbols or appendages;

2. Reformulating the content to reflect cultural, religious, and class pluralism;

3. Incorporating the concepts of global citizenship, human rights, and diversity as intrinsic components of understanding history, rather than decorative additions;

4. Involving experts in critical pedagogy, gender studies, and human rights within curriculum development teams;

5. Finally, developing educational assessment tools that go beyond memorization, fostering critical thinking and openness to the other.

Funding

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgement

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