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Gender Themes in Selected Philippine Fictions in English

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ABSTRACT
Literature is being utilized in the language classroom. Through being exposed to various literary pieces, students learn not only about grammatical structures but also about different aspects of life, including gender. Hence, the literature being presented and imparted to the learners must be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated. Presently, most of the studies conducted related to gender and literature have only focused on the inequality between men and women. Meanwhile, research that considers the gender spectrum supported the idea that gender inequality exists in the academe. With this and highlighting the advantages of adding a gender perspective to ELT, this study aims to conduct content analysis among selected Philippine fictions in English regarding gender themes. The results of the study will help people to have a better understanding of gender. It is one significant way to promote gender equality among all genders, with the acceptance and consideration that gender is non-binary. Moreover, the study showcases literary pieces written by Filipino authors as one way to show patriotism. Specifically, the goal of this study is to pinpoint the characters' gender identities and sexual orientations from selected Philippine Fiction and unveil how the prevailing themes explain Filipino experiences regarding gender. The selected short stories are Chambers of the Sea by Edith L. Tiempo, The Doll by Egmidio Alvarez-Enriquez, The Husband by Jaime An Lim, How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife by Manuel E. Arguilla, and Summer Solstice by Nick Joaquin. The study employed qualitative design, specifically content analysis. Following the processes of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke, the salient findings are the following: (1) There are four sexual orientations (heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, and gay) and four gender identities (cisgender, transgender, boyflux, and ambigender) that were portrayed by the characters and (2) There are seven themes that prevailed in the stories: Self-Denial, Romantic Attraction to Other People, Experiences of Discrimination, Hegemonic Masculinity, Feminist Lens, Gender Performativity, Dominance, Gender Stereotypes, and Women Empowerment. The characters in the selected Filipino Short Stories represent different sexual orientations and gender identities, giving the audience have better understanding of the complexity of gender. In terms of predominant themes, the short stories provide a more vivid picture of the experiences of Filipinos when it comes to gender: the occurring gender inequality that happens inside and outside the academic setting. Nevertheless, there is also women's empowerment. From these findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the short stories may be utilized in the language classroom not only for grammatical structures but also to provide a wider perspective on the complexity of gender. Moreover, further studies may be conducted on literary pieces that are being utilized in the classrooms to ensure that each classroom is aligned to eradicate gender inequality, primarily in the academic setting.

Keyword:
literature, gender identities, filipino short stories, sexual orientations, philippine fictions

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INTRODUCTION

To promote gender equality, there is an effort to integrate gender-responsiveness in the educational sector. Teachers are deeply encouraged to make the learning process gender responsive. In general, being gender-responsive means all kinds of genders are given equal access, treatment, and opportunity. On the contrary, gender inequality is still apparent in the academe as proven by research (Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Aguilar, 2021; Bachore, 2022). One of which is reflected in literature. Studies have revealed that the inequality of genders is being directed and/or implied in various literary pieces (Walczack, 2014; Reynolds & Henderson, 2022).

In the most current Global Gender Gap Index (GGGR) study from the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Philippines continues to be the most gender-equal nation in Asia (Abad, 2023). It shows that the country has been developing when it comes to gender. However, behind this seeming global success are narratives concerning the persisting gender disparities in education, employment, and income among the impoverished and agricultural laborers (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2019). Additionally, figures like this generalize these kinds of wins without doing a thorough analysis of other minority situations and lower socioeconomic groups, like the populations of LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, and other genders) (Tarrayo et al., 2021). This is concerning, particularly as individuals frequently encounter harassment, prejudice, a dearth of knowledge about LGBT issues, and, in certain instances, physical or sexual assault (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

In terms of the educational sector in the country, studies have disclosed issues about gender in different areas. Like the results of the international studies, it was found that gender issues exist in learning materials such as in the Philippine Preschool English Language Textbooks (Tarrayo, 2014) and Filipino storybooks for children (Mante-Estacio et al., 2018). These reveal the reality that, despite the seeming success based on statistical reports and growing efforts to discard gender inequality, gender

issues are still apparent in the country today.

Furthermore, it has also been proven by studies that gender issues are also present in some Philippine literary pieces (Casil-Batang, 2021; Crisostomo & Layug, 2021). Goodman (1996) asserted, in the book Literature and Gender, that literature regularly depicts gender relations, one of the many forms of cultural representation. Pieces of writing can potentially promote gender representations and/or reinforce discrimination. Therefore, the literature, as well as related learning materials, being presented and imparted to the learners must be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated, considering that these have broad and long-lasting impacts on them.

Three distinct perspectives regarding the benefits of adding the gender component to ELT were revealed in an interview study among ELT (English Language Teaching) Professionals at Philippine Universities and Colleges: (1) enhancement of students' critical thinking abilities, (2) encouragement of a welcoming and encouraging learning environment, and (3) heightened consciousness of the vital function that language plays (i.e., English) in recognizing diversity (Tarrayo et al., 2021). Based on the study, teacher-student contact, teaching-learning activities, and resources can all be used to incorporate the gender viewpoint into ELT (Tarrayo et al., 2021).

Given the existence of these gender issues and highlighting the advantages of adding a gender perspective to ELT, this study aims to conduct content analysis among selected Philippine fictions in English regarding gender themes. Selecting Philippine fiction is one way to show patriotism, as the study showcases literary pieces written by Filipino authors. Primarily, the result of the study will help people to have a better understanding of gender, and it can be utilized as a basis for further research about gender. It is one significant way to promote gender equality among all genders, with the acceptance and consideration that gender is non-binary.

Specifically, this study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do the selected Philippine Fictions in English portray Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities?
2. How do the narratives' predominant themes explain the Filipino Experiences regarding gender?

METHOD RESEARCH

The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically content analysis. The chosen short stories have been examined, and the researchers also employed relevant theories, led by the research questions. These stories are Chambers of the Sea by Edith L. Tiempo, The Doll by Egmidio Enriquez, The Husband by Jaime An Lim, How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife by Manuel E. Arguilla, and Summer

Solstice by Nick Joaquin. These have been subjected to content analysis. Words, concepts, or topics that are specific to the material have been coded. Based on the patterns, inferences have been made to determine how gender identities and sexual orientations are portrayed. It was done following the content analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis methodology, which is similar to the method utilized by MAXDQA software to organize qualitative data. The procedures are the following: Familiarization, Coding, Generating Themes, Reviewing Themes, Defining and Naming Themes, and Writing Up. Generally, to seek answers for the research questions, it relies on the process of content analysis, based merely on the corpus of the selected Philippine Fiction in English, with the help of the related theories and studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study shows the findings of the researchers on the portrayal of gender identities in selected Philippine Fiction in English. By analyzing the character development, narrative, and thematic elements, the study aims to reveal the ways Filipino authors drive the complexities of gender. Through this exploration, the researchers seek to shed light on the cultural and societal influences shaping gender representation in Philippine literature, offering insights into the broader discourse on identity and equality.

Tabel 1. Summary of Findings (Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities)

Short Stories	Sexual Orientation		Gender Identities	
	Frequency	List	Frequency	List
The Doll	2	heterosexual asexual	2	cisgender boyflux
Chambers of The Sea	2	gay heterosexual	2	transgender cisgender
The Husband	3	bisexual gay	3	ambigender transgender cisgender
How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife	1	heterosexual	1	cisgender
Summer Solstice	1	heterosexual	1	cisgender

With the analysis of the behaviors and portrayal of the characters in the selected Philippine Fictions in English, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities are found to be present.

In the selected short stories, there are four sexual orientations that are portrayed by the characters. These are heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, and gay. On the other hand, there are four gender identities, including cisgender, transgender, boyflux, and ambigender.

In "The Doll", there are two sexual orientations and two gender identities that were determined. Narciso has been an asexual and boyflux, while Doña Enchay and Don Enchong are heterosexual and cisgender. Meanwhile, in the "Chambers of the Sea", heterosexual and cisgender have been demonstrated by the characters of Amalia, Miguel, Teban's Father, and Quirino. The story comes with a different sexual orientation and gender identity characterized by Teban, gay and transgender. Furthermore, most of these orientations and identities are found in the story of "The Husband". These are bisexual, gay, and heterosexual in terms of gender orientations, and ambigender, transgender, and cisgender for gender identities. Finally, the last two short stories only portrayed the characteristics of heterosexual and cisgender.

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Tabel 2. Summary of Findings (Gender Themes

Short Stories	Gender Themes
The Doll	• Self-Denial • Experiences of Discrimination
Chambers of The Sea	• Self-Denial • Romantic Attraction to Other People • Experiences of Discrimination
The Husband	• Self-Denial • Romantic Attraction to Other People
How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife	• Hegemonic Masculinity • Feminist Lens • Gender Performativity
Summer Solstice	• Dominance • Gender Stereotypes • Women Empowerment

Based on the narratives, most of the themes that prevail reflect the negative situations that Filipinos are experiencing in terms of gender. Specifically, these issues are Self-denial, Discrimination, Hegemonic Masculinity, Gender Performativity, Dominance, and Stereotypes. On the positive side, these stories also showcase Feminist Lens, Women's Empowerment, and Romantic attraction to Other People. Self-denial, Discrimination, and Romantic Attraction to Other People appear to be the

most prevailing themes among the stories. Self-denial exists in the stories of "The Doll", "Chambers of the Sea", and "The Husband". While discrimination is only portrayed in "The Doll" and "Chambers of the Sea". Meanwhile, in the last two stories, "How my Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife" and "Summer Solstice", the prevailing themes are focused on the binary gender depicting the existing issues between man and woman, such as Hegemonic Masculinity, Gender Performativity, Dominance, and Stereotypes, which are relevant to one another.

Discussion

The Doll

The narrative revealed two distinct sexual orientations: heterosexual and asexual. As heterosexuals, Don Enchong and Doña Enchay represent it. They are drawn to other people's gender romantically or sexually. On the other hand, Narciso/Boy is an asexual, a term used to describe a person who is not sexually attracted to people of any gender. Additionally, there are two gender identities: boy-fluffy and cisgender. Given that their gender identity corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth, Don Enchong and Doña Enchay identify as cisgender. However, Narciso/Boy falls under Boy-Flux, which describes a person with a lot of male gender changes.

In terms of Gender themes, Self-Denial and Experiences of Discrimination were found to be the prevailing themes.

Chambers of The Sea

The story shows only two Sexual Orientations, which are Gay and Heterosexual. Tio Teban is Gay. Meanwhile, Amalia, Miguel, Teban's father, Mina, and Quirina are all heteresexual. There are also two Gender Identities, which are Transgender and Cisgender. Tio Teban is Transgender because his Gender in the story is not aligned with his gender from his birth. Meanwhile, the rest were all Cisgender.

The story focuses on three predominant gender themes —Self-Denial, Romantic Attraction to other People, and Experiences Discrimination. These three are visible in Tio Teban's point of views.

The Husband

The characters in "The Husband" have 3 sexual orientations: bisexual, heterosexual, and gay. Elpidio Flores' sexual orientation is bisexual, Ellen Reyes is heterosexual, and Tommy Kabayao is gay. In terms of gender identity, there are also three: ambigender, cisgender, and transgender. Ambigender is portrayed by Elpidio Flores, cisgender by Ellen Reyes, and transgender by Tommy Kabayao.

In terms of gender themes, there are two predominant themes found in the

story: Self-Denial and Romantic Attraction to Other People.

How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife

The characters in the story reflect only one gender identity—cisgender—and one sexual orientation—heterosexual. Baldo, Leon, and Maria are defined as cisgender and heterosexual. Their gender identification aligns with the gender that they received at conception, yet they are attracted to the other sex.

There are 3 predominant themes found in the short story: Women Empowerment, Gender Stereotypes, and Hegemonic Masculinity.

Summer Solstice

Only one gender identity and one sexual orientation are disclosed in the narrative. The primary protagonists, Donya Lupeng, Don Paeng, and Guido, are heteresexual, meaning they have an attraction to the other sex. They identify as cisgender as a result since it matches the sex they were given at birth.

Three gender themes prevailed in the short story. These include Dominance, Gender Stereotyping, and Women's Empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The characterizations in the short stories showcase different sexual orientations and gender identities. Hence, the short stories may be utilized in the language classroom not only for grammatical structures but also to provide a wider perspective on the complexity of gender.
2. Considering the gender issues portrayed in the selected stories, these literary pieces have the capacity to either support or contradict gender concerns. In order to guarantee that every classroom is geared toward eliminating gender disparity, particularly in the academic context, it is thus advised that additional research be done on literary works that are being used in the classrooms.

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