

Exploring Gender Representation in Selected 21st Century Philippine Short Stories Through Literary Analysis

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Abstract: *This study explores how gender is represented in selected 21st-century Philippine short stories, using conversation analysis and speech act theory to uncover gender differences and issues embedded in literary dialogues and narratives. Employing qualitative descriptive content analysis, the research examines how literary elements such as character, conflict, and theme reveal persistent gender stereotypes, discrimination, and societal expectations. The findings highlight that male and female characters are portrayed with unequal social roles and power dynamics, often reinforcing traditional domestic responsibilities for women and aggressive or dominant roles for men. By analyzing works from authors like Peter Z. Mayshle and Yvette U. Tan, the study underscores literature's potential to raise gender awareness and promote equity within the academic and educational landscape.*

Keywords: Gender awareness, Philippine Literature, speech act theory, conversation analysis, gender roles

1. Introduction

“Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men” (World Health Organization) (WHO). In other words, “it is the society and social institutions that shaped the concept of maleness and femaleness” (National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women or NCRFW, 2006, p. 3). This contrasts with the belief that “gender is very often conflated with sex” (Steans, 2013, p. 2), where sex refers to the biological structure and reproductive organ of an individual (“sex”, 2025). To put it simply, gender does not necessarily refer to the biological aspects of men and women but more on how these genders are shaped through social interactions.

Since gender is determined by how men and women are socially constructed, different gender roles emerged with respect to the culture where both men and women are expected to observe. According to Masilungan (2003), “gender roles are the product of a society’s culture, beliefs, and values” (p. 3). It only means that the different roles of men and women depend on how these genders are influenced by society.

Basically, gender roles are learned early. For instance, “girls are expected to be modest, submissive, and nurturing, while boys are expected to be assertive and, in the lead,” (NCRFW, 2006, p. 1). As young as they are, they are already exposed to an environment where adult men and women act as a role model. As a result, young girls and boys develop gender identity as they start to choose their own preferences.

Apparently, these gender roles had set gender differences for men and women. They differ in many aspects. According to Gray (1992, as cited in Talibong, 2015), “males and females are from different worlds” (p. 14). To put it simply, males and females use different languages that neither of them

understands. As a consequence, the females are often misunderstood by the males and vice versa.

Moreover, Steans (2013) also explained that “the notion of difference has been used to support the claim that women are inferior to men” (p. 258). In this case, women are viewed as the lesser gender compared to men. Unfortunately, this causes gender discrimination against women.

This, however, does not mean that the women are the only victims of gender discrimination. In fact, the World Health Organization or WHO stated that “when individuals or groups do not ‘fit’ established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion.” For instance, a man who cannot perform his duties as a father may be labelled as a disgrace to the family. As a matter of fact, Steans (2013) explained that “people who do not conform to widely held gender stereotypes might be castigated as odd, or deviant, or might even be represented as posing a threat or danger to mainstream society” (p. 257).

Fortunately, gender discrimination, as well as other gender-based issues, could be prevented if everyone develops gender sensitivity and gender awareness. These are abilities that people could use to establish an environment where men and women can co-exist (DepEd Order No.32 s. 2017). As a matter of fact, gender sensitivity is defined as the “ability to identify gender differences and integrate them into actionable strategies.” Fortunately, many organizations worldwide, such as the United Nations, have already implemented programs addressing the issue of gender discrimination and other gender-based issues. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender and education by emphasizing how literary texts can be utilized to cultivate gender sensitivity in classroom discussions and curriculum design.

The main aim of this study is to identify the gender differences and issues reflected in the selected short stories in the 21st century Philippine literature.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the gender differences reflected in the selected short stories of the 21st century Philippine literature along:

1.1. conversation analysis; and 1.2. speech act theory?

2. What are the gender issues depicted in the selected short stories of the 21st century Philippine literature along:

2.1. character;

2.2. conflict; and 2.3. theme?

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design to examine gender differences reflected in selected short stories from 21st-century Philippine literature. As Paller-Calmorin (2016) emphasized, the descriptive method is essential for understanding the nature of objects and individuals. Anchored in the principles of qualitative research, which seeks to explore and interpret meaning within textual data, the study focused on identifying recurring patterns and gender-related portrayals through close reading and interpretative analysis. Content analysis was used as the primary technique to systematically examine literary elements such as characters, themes, and conflicts, which serve as key indicators of gender representation.

Content analysis, as defined by Koçak and Arun (2006, as cited in Özüdoğru, 2018), requires careful selection of units of analysis, category definition, and validation procedures to ensure reliability. Adanza (1995) described descriptive content analysis as a method of gathering information from written texts to address specific research concerns. Similarly, Krippendorff (2004, as cited in Aquino, 2015) characterized it as a research technique that enables valid and replicable inferences from texts within their contextual use. Through this qualitative approach, the researcher was able to interpret implied meanings in the

narratives and assess how these contribute to broader gender constructs embedded in the literary works.

3. Results and Discussions

The researcher of this study analyzes the conversations and dialogues from the men and women characters in the selected short stories in the 21st century Philippine literature namely: “Touchmove” by Peter Z. Mayshle; “There Was This Really Fat Girl” by Carla M. Pacis; “Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women” by Timothy R. Montes; and “Seek Ye Whore” by Yvette U. Tan. Specifically, conversation analysis and speech act theory were the literary approaches employed to determine the gender differences reflected in the literary works.

Moreover, the researcher also presents the gender issues depicted in the selected short stories through the analysis of the literary elements namely: character, conflict, and theme.

3.1 The Gender Differences Reflected in the Selected Short Stories

The researcher systematically shows how the gender differences are reflected in the selected short stories as portrayed by the men and women characters. Consequently, the specific dialogues, conversations, and statements of the men and women characters were quoted to justify the findings of the researcher. Moreover, related studies and statements from prominent authors and personalities were also used to corroborate the researcher’s findings.

The following table illustrates the different gender differences reflected in the dialogues of the men and women characters through conversation analysis and speech act theory. The table also shows where the specific gender difference was reflected from conversation analysis and/or speech act theory. To further elaborate the findings of the study, the interpretation and analysis were also provided by the researcher as well as the specific short story where the gender difference was sourced.

Table 1: Gender Differences Reflected in the Selected Short Stories

Gender Differences	Conversation Analysis	Speech Act Theory
1. Men are more aggressive towards women than women towards men.	√	√
2. In giving remarks to a woman, women are more solicitous than men.	√	√
3. Women prioritize family needs while men spend on pleasure first.		√
4. Women do domestic duties while men are breadwinners.	√	√

1) Men are more aggressive towards women than women towards men.

In *Touchmove*, men exhibit greater aggression toward women than vice versa. The woman customer’s bruises—including cigarette burns, fresh cuts, and a purple bruise—suggest abuse by a man (p. 135). The masseur’s description of her injuries is a locutionary act, while his reaction—“It was a terrible sight; I wanted to get out of there”—reflects the perlocutionary act, revealing his distress at her apparent sexual abuse.

Roman’s aggression is further evident when he calls the masseur an “idiot,” a perlocutionary act conveying hostility.

The masseur suspects Roman’s chess move (“check”) subtly threatens the queen—not the king—mirroring societal devaluation of women. In chess, the queen, though powerful, is less vital than the king (Rouffy, 2016), paralleling women’s secondary status (Yalom, 2004, as cited in Carpenter, 2009). This dynamic reinforces male dominance and aggression toward women.

2) In giving remarks to a woman, women are more solicitous than men.

In *There Was This Really Fat Girl*, women are more solicitous in their remarks toward Ana than men, who are often heedless or insulting. Ana’s mother carefully frames her

concern, saying, “Ana, darling, when will you ever lose your baby fat? You’re too old to still have it” (p. 139). This illocutionary act softens criticism with endearments (“darling”) and euphemisms (“baby fat” instead of “fat”), reflecting maternal concern.

Similarly, Tina, the dressmaker, advises Ana directly but affectionately (“Ay, anak, you should lose at least 10 pounds”), a locutionary act meant constructively. Ana’s friends Kat and Mikey also support her, with Kat offering diet pills (“You’ll be fabulously sexy by prom”), another illocutionary act masking concern as encouragement.

In contrast, men’s remarks are careless or mocking. Ana’s father defends her (“She’s pleasantly plump”), an illocutionary act meant kindly, but her brother Joey snickers, undermining the gesture. This aligns with Dobrin’s (2024) observation that teasing can be hurtful, highlighting men’s comparative lack of solicitude.

Thus, women’s remarks—whether maternal (“Little Comment,” Whippman 2018), friendly, or professional—are framed as concern, while men’s are often blunt or dismissive.

3) Women prioritize family needs while men spend on pleasure first.

In the short story titled “*Off Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women*”, it was revealed that women prioritize family needs while men spend on pleasure first. This contrasts with the gender norm that the father serves as the breadwinner of the family while the mother acts as the nurturer. In the following statements, the narrator of the story explained her situation as a mother and as a battered wife in her family. It reads:

You fall in love with a slick-haired young man at a fiesta dance ten years ago and the next thing you know you’re pregnant so you have to marry him. Before the year is out you realize your husband’s an alcoholic, spends all his money on tuba and cockfighting. And so you try to sell fish to feed the children, and when you don’t give him he beats you black and blue. And then those gossips laugh at you behind your back saying you’re a fool not to leave your family. (p. 152-153)

In speech act theory, the excerpt above is interpreted literally; hence, it is a locutionary act. It can be noted in the story that the narrator was speaking to Mana Biben who never engaged herself in the conversation.

Based on the narrator’s revelation, she became the breadwinner of the family instead of her husband by selling fish. While her husband was wasting his money on alcohol and cockfighting, she was busy feeding their children. This alone serves as evidence that the family is not the main priority of the father.

As a result, in terms of family needs, it can be concluded that the narrator is better at earning and spending money for the benefit of the family. One can also claim that she exemplifies a working mother.

According to Poduval and Poduval (2009), a working mother is “a woman with the ability to combine a career with the added responsibility of raising a child.” With the additional burden of having an irresponsible husband, the narrator needs to work harder to support her family.

In addition, one good explanation as to why women prioritize family needs is stated in the study of Doda (2014) where it was explained that “women in general are responsible of food, house articles, and articles for children while the men spend on big things e.g. a house, a car, a brand-new TV set, etc.” (p. 50).

This idea alone explains why the narrator in the short story was so concerned about how she can feed her family, considering that her husband is wasting his money on other things, such as “tuba” or alcohol and cockfighting instead of doing his job as the breadwinner.

Based on this analysis, one can simply claim that when the father is incapable of providing the basic needs of the family due to his vices and alcohol addiction, the mother takes the full responsibility by looking for ways to earn money. Hence, one cannot deny the fact that women are better at handling finances because their main priority is to earn money to support the family.

4) Women do domestic duties while men are breadwinners.

In the short story titled “*Seek Ye Whore*”, it was revealed that women are bound to do the domestic duties while men are the breadwinners. This was shown in the conversations between the men characters describing the woman they want to marry.

In the following conversation between Donovan and Foster, it can be noted how Donovan was extremely happy describing his married life:

“So what’s it like?” Foster asked, “Being married?”
“It’s great!” Donovan exclaimed, spewing out pieces of roast beef. “It’s like a vacation. I wake up, the wife’s made breakfast and packed my lunch. I eat, she kisses me off, and I go to work. I get home, the house is sparkling, the wife’s made dinner, and has a Bud chilling in the fridge for me. Some nights, we chill and watch TV, but most of the time—” he paused, then said, with eyes closed as if remembering, “We fuck like rabbits. It’s a really sweet deal.”

In terms of speech act theory, it can be observed that the conversation between Foster and Donovan can be interpreted literally; hence, it is locutionary. In other words, what Donovan uttered about his wife is real.

Therefore, the description of Donovan reveals the fact that women are meant to do the domestic duties or household chores. As a matter of fact, it was also shown in the conversation how caring Donovan’s wife is by consistently preparing delicious food for him. Apparently, Donovan is happy to tell Foster how lucky he is to have a wife who does her duties well.

In the following excerpt, it was further revealed how men regarded their wife to be bound to their domestic duties.

"I've stocked the pantry," he said, kissing the back of her hand, "You will make me something tomorrow, won't you?" Luli's hand shivered, which he took to mean that she was giggling.

In the excerpt above, it can be observed that Luli is unable to speak to Foster because her body is not yet complete. In this case, the turn-taking is difficult to apply. However, considering that Luli can respond to Foster through minimal non-verbal action i.e., shivering, it can be concluded that turn-taking is still possible to happen.

In line with this, Foster's utterance i.e., *"I've stocked the pantry,"* gives the impression that he wanted Luli to cook

something delicious; it is an illocutionary act. This was confirmed when he later said, *"You will make me something tomorrow, won't you?"*

From the conversation, it can be gleaned that Foster expected his wife, Luli, to prepare meals for him. In relation to this, Hogan (2025) stated that two of a wife's duties to her husband are to cook for him and to take care of household chores. These duties are among the things that a wife must follow to have a successful married life.

3.2 The Gender Issues Depicted in the Selected Short Stories

To illustrate the gender issues in an orderly manner, the researcher opted to present the gender issues in three tables: one for each literary element.

Table 2.1: Gender Issues Depicted from the Characters in the Selected Short Stories

Character/s	Short Story	Gender Issues
-woman customer	-Touchmove	
-narrator	-Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women }	Violence against women
-Angelica & narrator	-Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women	Single motherhood
-Mikey & Ana	-There Was This Really Fat Girl	Vanity among women
-Roman	-Touchmove	
-Foster	-Seek Ye Whore }	Gender stereotyping
-Angelica & narrator	-Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women }	

In Table 2, the specific gender issues depicted in the characters of the selected short stories are illustrated. It can also be noted that the different characters from the different short stories were categorized based on the gender issue which they were reflected. Moreover, the excerpts from the short stories were used by the researcher to justify the findings. Related literatures were also used for further justifications.

1) Violence against Women

In *"Touchmove"*, the woman customer is implicitly portrayed as a victim of sexual violence. The masseur observes her injuries: *"Her stomach had cuts ... [and] a dozen cigarette burns [on] her bush ... [with] a dark bruise ... on one breast"* (p. 135). Though unstated, these marks suggest sexual abuse.

Similarly, in *"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women"*, the narrator endures domestic violence from her alcoholic husband, who *"beats [her] black and blue"*—a phrase denoting severe physical injury (The Idioms, 2019). These cases reflect global patterns: 30% of partnered women experience physical/sexual violence (WHO, 2014), and 85% of domestic abuse victims are female (Vagianos, 2017).

While men also experience abuse (Campbell, 2010; NCADV, n.d.), the disproportionate victimization of women underscores gender-based aggression. This disparity positions violence against women as a systemic gender issue.

2) Single Motherhood

The short story *"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women"* portrays Angelica as a *"disgrasyada"* - a term describing unwed mothers in Philippine society (Ching, 2017). The narrator

defends Angelica against societal judgment, stating: *"Don't believe what others may say about you... There's nothing to be ashamed of"*, highlighting the stigma these women face (p. 150).

Ching (2017) notes the cultural preference for virgins in marriage, marginalizing unwed mothers. The story illustrates their struggles through Angelica and the narrator, both single mothers. The narrator describes their plight: *"too dazed to understand why so small a thing can be so heavy a burden"*, emphasizing the challenges of single parenthood.

The narrator's situation mirrors real-world statistics: 38% of Philippine births in 2008 were to unmarried mothers (Valete, 2017), while the U.S. has 13.7 million single parents raising 22.4 million children (Wolf, 2019). This global trend suggests single motherhood may become an emerging family norm.

3) Vanity among women

The short story *"There Was This Really Fat Girl"* illustrates vanity through Mikey's pride in her prom preparations and Ana's desperate pursuit of thinness. Mikey boasts about her expensive Rustan's gown, demonstrating the "willingness to incur personal costs for public image" that characterizes vanity (Smith, 2017). Meanwhile, Ana's body dissatisfaction manifests when comparing herself to her "model-thin" friend Kat, reflecting how "exposure to thin models increases body dissatisfaction" (Cahill & Mussap, 2007, as cited in Ko, 2010, p. 8).

Ana's dangerous weight-loss attempts mirror real-world cases. Her fainting from diet pills parallels reported deaths from cosmetic procedures, like a Filipino mother who died

during liposuction (Cabalza, 2019) and a New York woman who perished during elective surgery (Lewis, 2019). These cases confirm Whitbourne's (2014) observation that vain individuals prioritize self-image over safety.

The text reveals vanity's gendered dimensions. While Ana embodies female body anxiety, Wells (2016) notes men prioritize appearance more (para. 4). However, women face greater societal pressure, as shown when Ana risks health for prom - a consequence of vain behaviors that ultimately cause self-harm (Smith, 2017).

4) Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping reflects society's rigid expectations about how men and women should behave, often limiting individual potential (Ellemers, 2018). Research shows that men are typically associated with assertiveness and competence, while women are expected to embody warmth and care (Kite et al., 2008, as cited in Ellemers, 2018, p. 10). These stereotypes, defined by the United Nations Human Rights Office (2019) as the attribution of fixed traits based on gender, frequently lead to discrimination.

Real-world examples, such as a fifth-grade girl being labeled a "slut" for wearing a bikini (Valenti, 2014), demonstrate how quickly women are judged for defying prescribed norms.

This harmful stereotyping is evident in several literary works. In *"Touchmove,"* Roman immediately sexualizes a

female customer based on her appearance, assuming she is a prostitute rather than considering she may be a victim of abuse. His reaction aligns with research showing that men are more likely to pursue women they perceive as vulnerable (Fugère, 2017). Similarly, in *"Seek Ye Whore,"* Foster expects his wife to excel at domestic tasks like cooking, reinforcing traditional gender roles that disregard individual abilities. These assumptions create unrealistic standards, particularly for women who deviate from societal norms.

The consequences of gender stereotyping are further illustrated in *"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women,"* where Angelica, once celebrated as a fiesta queen, is harshly judged for becoming an unwed mother. The narrator, a fish vendor and battered wife, also faces scrutiny but ultimately resists societal expectations by building her own business. Their experiences reflect how stereotyping restricts personal and professional growth, as noted by the UNHR (2019). While Angelica withdraws from society, the narrator's resilience shows that overcoming these limitations is possible, though difficult.

These stories collectively reveal how gender norms enforce restrictive standards, disproportionately punishing those who defy them. Whether through sexualization, domestic expectations, or moral judgment, stereotyping perpetuates inequality by prioritizing conformity over individual circumstance. As literature and real-life cases demonstrate, challenging these norms remains essential for fostering a more equitable society.

Table 2.2: Gender Issues Depicted from the Conflicts in the Selected Short Stories

	Conflict	Short Story	Gender Issues
1.	Man vs Himself	-There Was This Really Fat Girl	Body Shaming
2.	Man vs Man	-Touchmove -Seek Ye Whore	Male Chauvinism
3.	Man vs Society	-Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women	Deviance From Gender Norms

1) Body shaming

The short story *"There Was This Really Fat Girl"* explores the psychological impact of body shaming through protagonist Ana's internal struggle with self-image. Ana's constant comparisons to her "model-thin" friend Kat (p. 140) and extreme self-criticism - including avoiding mirrors (p. 139) and describing herself as "hideous" - exemplify the harmful effects of body shaming, defined as humiliating remarks about body shape or size (Schluger, 2025). The narrative reveal show both external criticism (from male characters like Joey and Santi) and well-intentioned but painful comments (from female characters like Tina) contribute to Ana's deteriorating self-esteem. Her despair culminates in dangerous weight-loss attempts, illustrating Guard's (2018) observation that body shaming affects individuals across all demographics. The story highlights the urgent need to address this pervasive social issue, even though supportive friendships cannot counteract Ana's internalized body hatred. Through Ana's experience, the author demonstrates how societal beauty standards and careless remarks can lead to severe psychological distress and self-destructive behaviors.

2) Male chauvinism

The short stories *"Touchmove"* and *"Seek Ye Whore"* demonstrate male chauvinism - a belief that men are

superior to women (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) - through their male protagonists' objectification of women. In *"Touchmove,"* the male masseur and his brother Roman compete over a female customer, metaphorically treating her as a chess queen to be "captured" (p. 136), thereby reducing her to an object of male conquest. Similarly, in *"Seek Ye Whore,"* Foster asserts dominance over his wife Luli, dismissing her attempts at care and perceiving her as needing "saving" due to her perceived innocence. These portrayals align with Bonino and Szil's (2006) observation that chauvinistic men often treat women as dependents rather than equals (p. 9). Both stories reveal how traditional gender roles encourage men to view women as subordinates, with male characters emphasizing their superiority through possessive behavior (in *"Touchmove"*) and domestic control (in *"Seek Ye Whore"*). These narratives collectively illustrate how chauvinistic attitudes manifest in interpersonal relationships, ultimately reinforcing patriarchal power structures that disadvantage women.

3) Deviance from gender norms

The short story *"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women"* illustrates deviance from traditional gender norms, defined as behavior that violates societal expectations (Newman, 2010, p. 2). The narrator, a fish vendor and battered wife, challenges conventional roles by becoming the family

breadwinner while her husband neglects his responsibilities through alcoholism and cockfighting. This reversal of typical gender roles contrasts with research showing women often leave paid work for domestic duties (Kendall, 2010, p. 7). Despite community judgment labeling her a "fool" for staying (p. 152), the narrator defends her choices, asserting there is *"nothing to be ashamed of"* (p. 152). Her situation reflects modern trends, as mothers now serve as primary earners in 40% of U.S. households (Roy, 2018), suggesting such "deviance" is becoming normalized. The story ultimately questions restrictive gender norms, supporting Weingarten's (2015) argument that rigid gender roles can harm well-being (p. 11). Through the narrator's resilience, the narrative demonstrates how perceived deviance may represent necessary adaptations to challenging circumstances.

Table 2.3: Gender Issues Depicted from the Themes of the Selected Short Stories

Theme	Short Story	Gender Issues
Respect is deserved by everyone.	-Touchmove	
Vanity leads to destruction of one's self.	-There Was This Really Fat Girl	sexism
Parenting is a serious responsibility.	-Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women	gender roles in the family
Marriage is sacred.	-Seek Ye Whore	

The themes presented in Table 4 were derived from the analysis and conclusions of the researcher, whereby other researchers and/or readers of the selected short stories may also generate other themes that best suit their own understanding of the short stories.

1) Sexism

Margaret Mead's assertion that "men have always been afraid that women could get along without them" underscores the underlying anxiety that often manifests as sexism - defined as discrimination based on gender (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019). Unlike male chauvinism, which reflects individual beliefs in male superiority, sexism represents broader societal patterns of gender-based discrimination (Napikoski, 2019). This distinction emerges clearly in the selected short stories.

In *"Touchmove,"* sexism appears through Roman's immediate sexualization of the female customer and his assumption that she is a prostitute. The masseur's observation that Roman is *"just a kid, untaught in the ploys of the heart"* (p. 136) suggests how early these discriminatory attitudes form. The woman's bruises further indicate gender-based violence, reinforcing Lampen's (2017) finding that women routinely experience harassment across multiple settings.

"There Was This Really Fat Girl" demonstrates sexism through Ana's brother Joey's cruel remarks about her weight and appearance, exemplifying the "jokes or comments" the Australian Human Rights Commission identifies as sexist behavior. Ana's subsequent dangerous weight-loss attempts reveal how internalized sexism can lead to self-destructive behaviors when women strive to meet unrealistic beauty standards.

These narratives confirm Kasumovic and Kuznekoff's (2015) finding that sexism often surfaces when women enter male-dominated spaces (p. 5), whether physical (like the massage parlor) or psychological (like the realm of body image expectations). The stories collectively illustrate how sexism operates at both interpersonal and societal levels, from overt harassment to subtle pressures to conform to gender norms.

2) Gender roles in the family

Gender roles continue to disadvantage women, particularly by assigning them primary responsibility for housekeeping and childcare (Atkinson, 1987; Coltrane, 2000; Hochschild, 1989, as cited in Strong, DeVault, & Cohen, 2008). This reinforces the persistent inequality in family dynamics.

In *"Of Fish, Flies, Dogs, and Women,"* the female narrator assumes the role of breadwinner, while her husband neglects his familial duties. This reflects Strong, DeVault, and Cohen's (2008) observation that mothers are expected to take on more parental responsibilities, even while employed (p. 7).

Contrary to this, Panopio and Rolda (2007) argue that both spouses should cooperate to meet the family's economic needs. Yet in the story, this ideal is not realized.

The character Angelica, labeled as *"disgrasyada,"* represents another gendered burden—raising a child alone after becoming pregnant as a teenager. Her unfinished education and lack of partner support highlight her vulnerability. According to Article 176 of the Family Code, custody of a child born out of wedlock falls on the mother. While fathers retain visitation rights, the mother bears the primary caregiving role, often without sufficient support.

In *"Seek Ye Whore,"* gender roles are further emphasized. Foster views Luli as a domestic partner, not an equal. The website in the short story i.e. *siquijorbrides.com* objectifies women, showcasing them alongside their domestic skills, reinforcing traditional gender expectations, and limiting women's opportunities outside the home.

Overall, the selected stories reflect ongoing gender disparities in Filipino society. Literature, therefore, serves as a meaningful tool for exposing and discussing gender issues, promoting greater awareness, especially in educational settings. While the study examined a limited sample, it underscores the value of literature in analyzing social roles and advocating for gender equality.

4. Conclusions

In light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

- 1) Men and women are different in terms of their treatment of each other as influenced by society.
- 2) Women are placed at a more disadvantaged position than men as perceived by society.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

- 1) Short story writers may illustrate in their stories the other relevant gender differences, which may help in developing gender awareness and gender sensitivity.
- 2) Short story writers may focus on women's empowerment as the theme of their short story.
- 3) Other researchers can conduct future studies on how gender is reflected in other types of literature, such as poems, novels, drama, etc.
- 4) Educators are encouraged to choose textbooks that contain literature that promotes gender sensitivity and awareness.
- 5) The teaching manual designed for teaching literature may be adopted for a better understanding of gender as reflected in literature.

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