

Redressing Disparities in English Self-Learning Modules: A Gender-Based Content Analysis

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Abstract— This qualitative research delved into gender prejudices embedded in texts and images of the English self-learning modules through a content analysis approach using the Eight-Factor Procedure of Gender Discrimination proposed by Amerian and Esmaili (2015). Although most features revealed an imbalance of gender representation as evident in recorded frequencies, two (2) features portrayed both genders with equal value and accorded equal treatment. Further, five (5) participants were interviewed for focus-group discussions, while another nine (9) shared their insights through in-depth interviews after assessing the gender-fair language compliance of the selected corpora. The thematic analysis procedure has drawn ten (10) significant themes revealing the perpetuating gender stereotypes, specifically in semantic roles, pictorial representations, and order of appearance. The study results will be a reference for sociolinguistics, curriculum developers, policymakers, and stakeholders for pursuing collective and transformative efforts toward a gender-inclusive society. Acknowledging the educational sector's response to the Covid-19 outbreak by developing self-learning modules used for distance learning, hence, the findings underscore the need for constructive evaluation and provision of specialized training for teachers to intensify the integration of gender-fair language and ensure the full implementation of gender-responsive basic education policy as mandated by the Philippine government so that 'No child is left behind.'

Keywords— content analysis, thematic analysis, gender-fair language, gender-responsive basic education policy, English Self-Learning Modules.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender-discriminatory discourses and practices have been a worldwide concern. It has primarily been observed and acknowledged in education. Despite the massive efforts of the United Nations to promote gender equality in education with the motto "*No child left behind*," policymakers, curriculum planners, and teachers worldwide continue to face challenges in ensuring gender equity within schools. Despite the massive efforts of the United Nations to promote gender equality in education with the motto "*No child left behind*," policymakers, curriculum planners, and teachers worldwide continue to face challenges in ensuring gender equity within schools. Gender inequalities are still tangible in many educational contexts, specifically textbooks and modules, affecting the learner's prospects (Ruiz-Cecilia et al., 2020).

In textbooks, language creates ideologies and determines social roles, influencing gender construction. Sociolinguistics has uncovered various aspects of sexism and gender bias in written and visual texts. Numerous content and linguistic analyses of textbooks and teaching materials have proven that an imbalance of gender representation is still prevalent, especially in countries where English is taught as a second language.

It is crucial to analyze content from a gender perspective, as textbooks are the most visible and often the only resource for teachers and students (Saputra, 2019).

In Punjab, Pakistan's public and private schools, highly gender-biased textbooks were observed. In most of the textbooks, genders were not represented in equal proportion. This bias in education has been a drawback to the quality of education and affects children's choice of careers. Textbooks are the source from which learners acquire gender stereotypes. Women are often limited to certain fields and careers in the professional sphere (Ahmad & Shah, 2019).

Moving on to the next area of concern, Masud (2017) concluded that English textbooks in Pakistan do not represent males and females equally. She considered it a matter of grave concern that needed urgent control for the greater benefit of future generations. Islam and Asadullah (2018) found strong gender stereotypes in 21 English language textbooks from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan through content analysis. Results have shown that the textbooks are pro-male while females were represented in inferior quality both in social and domestic roles. Subsequently, a study

conducted by Galamgam et al. (2021) in the Philippines found that some educators did not integrate gender stereotype elimination in learning curricula due to a lack of support, monitoring, and resources from agencies, particularly in the Department of Education.

Transitioning to a broader perspective, international and national guidelines promote gender-inclusive language. International institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, professional associations, universities, major news agencies, and publications have adopted guidelines for non-sexist language use. These guidelines are separate documents or specific recommendations within their style guides (Stadler, 2022).

Shifting focus to initiatives undertaken to address this issue, there have been efforts at the national level in the Philippines to adopt gender-fair language and evaluate its usage. The Department of Education (DepEd) issued the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in line with its *Gender and Development (GAD)* mandate as stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which states that using non-sexist language in all official documents, communications, and issuances is mandatory. It allows the integration of gender sensitivity principles in developing and providing learning resources that use gender-fair and inclusive language (DO 32, S. 2017 – GENDER-RESPONSIVE BASIC EDUCATION POLICY).

DepEd implemented the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) to carry out the gender-responsive basic education (GRBE) policy during COVID-19. They prioritize equity by using SLMs and new teaching methods, but no gender-based content analysis has been done on the modules since 2020-2021. Most previously mentioned studies by Jannati (2015), Ruiz-Cecilia et al. (2020), and Purwitasari & Floriasti (2021) focused only on the social aspect of gender representation in textbooks. Hence, this study investigates the linguistic aspect of gender representation. In this regard, studying self-learning modules is urgent as they are the primary materials used by teachers and students from 2020 to the present.

A. Research Questions

This qualitative corpus-based study aims to reveal the presence eight-factor procedure of gender discrimination that could be embedded in texts and images of the selected English SLMs through a content

analysis approach. It also intends to document and highlight the practices of content developers and evaluators in integrating the features of gender-responsive-based materials into the creation of English SLMs through In-Depth Interviews and Focused Group Discussions. Thus, this study aims to provide answers to the following specific questions:

1. What features of male and female character representation are embedded in English Self-Learning modules using content analysis?
2. How do external evaluators assess the gender-fair language compliance of English self-learning modules?

B. Theoretical Lens

This study is based on the Eight-factor Procedure of Gender Discrimination, adapted from Amerian and Esmaili (2015), which suggests that gender bias exists in textbook content. Encapsulated in this procedure are the following: (1) inclusion/exclusion of males and females means delineating one gender more than the other gender, and the exclusion means less depiction of one gender than the other. Over-inclusion of one gender, whether in texts or images, implies that the particular gender has great worth compared to the other gender, which is less included or excluded; (2) stereotypical representation which is centered on the conceptions of roles of masculinity and femininity; (3) semantic roles is the inferiority or superiority of one gender compared to the other gender; (4) titular representation is the ascription of titles for both genders; (5) order of appearance means the “firstness” of being mentioned in a discourse; (6) representation in activities signifies the activities which males and females are involved in; (7) male generic construction is also known as androcentrism or the conscious practice of placing a masculine viewpoint at the center of one’s worldview; and (8) pictorial representation is the depiction of illustrations dominated by either male or female.

Additionally, this study is influenced by the premise of Galamgam et al. (2021), whose quantitative study revealed evidence of not fully implementing the GRBE policy in three of its five areas: learning environment, learning resources, and assessment.

It was further pointed out that eliminating gender bias is not entirely observed in the learning materials and teaching pedagogy due to the lack of monitoring and evaluation for learner support policy development and service delivery.

The study will examine the Philippines' educational system's commitment to gender equality in primary education. Gender bias-free learning materials that represent both genders equally and receive equal treatment can lead to equitable, gender-responsive education during the health crisis.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing a corpus-based approach and content analysis. This design was further utilized in a qualitative research format as a researcher. As defined, the qualitative research design is adequately interpreting social phenomena. It is a structured process that involves collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data to understand an underlying hypothesis, opinion, idea, or perception (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005).

A. Study Participants

The main subjects of this study are five in-depth interviews and nine focus group discussion participants. According to Creswell (2014), a study group should have three to fifteen members. In the context of this study, I believe that the current number of participants should suffice to provide all the necessary information. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. It is important to note that concerns regarding sample size for qualitative designs center around their comprehensiveness and suitability. Purposive sampling, also called judgment sampling, involves deliberately selecting participants based on specific qualities (Guetterman, 2015).

The inclusion criteria of the study are the following: external learning resource evaluator (not involved in the drafting and developing of the corpora); in-service teachers handling English subjects; either from public or private school; can either be male or female of any age and lastly and must have more than two years of teaching experience. Participants who were not qualified are the authors and evaluators of the English SLM corpora that were subjected to the content analysis procedure.

During the research study, a participant could withdraw at any point. If the participant decides to leave the study, they may inform the researcher of their wish to withdraw. The participant may explain to the researcher that they could not continue with the study, providing the reason(s) for their decision to withdraw.

B. Materials and Instrument

The DepEd Region XI recommended using self-learning modules (SLMs) in English as a learning modality during the early stage of the Covid-19 pandemic. Clark and Braun (2013) suggest that corpora-based studies should have between 10 to 100 entries. The researcher used 60 modules, each containing between 15 and 50 pages of SLM that were used regionwide. These SLMs were analyzed for the study and intended to continue serving as a learning resource for resuming face-to-face classes in the school year 2022-2023.

The researcher selected English modules for Quarter 1 based on the following criteria: a minimum of 15 pages, a maximum of 50 pages, sourced from DepEd Region XI recommended SLMs, and crafted by in-service teachers with quality assurance from the learning resources committee.

On the other hand, the IDI and FGD participants chose and preferred video conferencing as their mode of communication. Each discussion via video conferencing was conducted individually and lasted 30-45 minutes. Additionally, cellphone calls were utilized to improve the accuracy and adequacy of the data and for member check purposes. Some interview questions included: Were both genders equally represented in the English SLMs? What are the guidelines and procedures that should be utilized in assessing learning resources in compliance with the use of gender-fair language? How would you assess English self-learning module compliance with gender-fair language guidelines? What are your insights on implementing DepEd's gender-responsive basic education policy regarding using gender-fair language in developing learning resources?

C. Design and Procedure

Phase 1 [FEBRUARY 2023-MARCH 2023]

1. Sought Approval from the University of Mindanao Ethics and Review Committee (UMERC - 2023-017).
2. Sought Permission to Conduct Study (DepEd Davao Del Norte)
3. Requested e-copies of the English SLMs

Method Used: *Content Analysis using the Eight-factor Procedure of Gender Discrimination*

1. Collected the electronic copies of the corpora
2. Used AntConc 4.1.4 for the textual representations

3. Used Manual analysis for the pictorial representations
4. Consolidated the data and presented it in a tabular format (features, sample statements, and frequencies for male, female, and equally shared)

Phase 2 [APRIL 2023-JUNE 2023]

1. Sought Permission to conduct study letters (School Heads of the Selected Participants)
2. Selected Participants (External Evaluators) through purposive sampling
3. Collected Signed Consent Forms
4. Scheduled and conducted the Virtual IDIs and FGDs through Google Meet.

Method Used: *Thematic Analysis using the six-phase model by Braun and Clarke (2006)*

1. Transcribed and translated the recorded IDI and FGD
2. Identified and Labeled Potential Codes
3. Reviewed, Compared, and Organized the codes
4. Recognized the Potential Themes
5. Refined the Themes and presented the data using the format suggested by Creswell (2013)

Member verification was carried out in addition to the triangulation approach to address credibility. First, participants were given the interview transcript and FGD sessions to review and confirm accuracy. So far, no informant has contested the transcript or provided statements to the contrary. They all signed the

participant verification form, indicating their consent and permission.

Additionally, I consulted my research adviser and data analyst from UM graduate school to categorize emergent themes for peer debriefing. After the debriefing process, we were able to refine and clarify the language used to discuss various topics, resulting in smoother and more effective communication. Some categories were eliminated since the data collected had reached a sufficient level of depth and redundancy. This signaled that topic saturation was attained, as Creswell and Poth (2018) defined it. Triangulation was also achieved since, as defined by Creswell and Plano (2017), this study used multiple sources, methods, and data to validate and corroborate research findings. Thus, internal validity has been firmly established due to these procedures.



III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research execution produced a critical and substantial amount of data required for this study. In addition, this study used multiple sources, methods, and data to validate and corroborate research findings. Thus, internal validity has been firmly established due to these procedures.

This part provided details on the result of qualitative analysis to answer *Research Question No. 1: What features of male and female character representation are embedded in English self-learning modules using content analysis?*

Table 1. *Embedded Features of Male and Female Characters in English SLMs Through Content Analysis*

Features	Sample Statements		Frequency		
			Male	Female	Equally Shared
Inclusion and Exclusion	Mang Ambo, Selena	Nouns	104 (50%)	86 (41%)	20 (9%)
	His, She, Everybody, Their, Them	Pronouns	58 (41%)	73 (52%)	10 (7%)
Stereotypical Representation	managing, leading	Masculine roles	25 (50%)	23 (46%)	2 (4%)
	housekeeping, cooking, childcare	Feminine roles			
Semantic Roles	nurse, teacher, housekeeper	Inferior	1 (12%)	7 (88%)	0
	mayor, manager, editor-in-chief	Superior	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0
Titular Representation	Captain, Mang, Mr, Ms, Mrs.		7 (30%)	16 (70%)	0

Order of Appearance	Christian and Bella, Johannes and Jean, Ben, and Emm, Christine and John, Betty and Timmy		16 (67%)	8 (33%)	0
Representation of Activities	biking, driving, hiking, playing tennis and basketball	High risk	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	0
	baking, singing, dancing	Low-risk	3 (14%)	19 (86%)	
Male Generic Construction (Male Pronoun Tendency)	Policemen	Male-generic	5 (21%)	n/a	n/a
	military, army, police officers, medical practitioners,	Gender-neutral	n/a	n/a	9 (79%)
Pictorial Representation		monopolized	49 (36%)	36 (26%)	26 (19%)
		dominated	11 (8%)	14 (10%)	

Discrimination Through Inclusion/Exclusion

Indeed, turn-taking is present in English SLMs, males were dominant with 104 occurrences (50%) compared to females with 86 (41%). On the other hand, males were represented using pronouns with 58 (41%), while females were presented in pronouns with 73 (52%) of total occurrences. Surprisingly, gender-neutral nouns with 20 (9%) and pronouns with 10 (7%) cases were also present. To a small extent, male characters are slightly overrepresented but almost balanced.

Although the overall number of male and female nouns and pronouns fluctuates throughout the SLMs, the cited related literature has indicated a significant gender imbalance in textbooks and other language learning materials, specifically in Asian countries such as Iran and Pakistan (Ahmad and Shah, 2019; Dahmardeh and Kim, 2020).

The present study only partially shows bias by omission, as Amerian and Esmaili (2015) pointed out. Bias by omission occurs when one gender is included while the other is excluded, leading to social exclusion and undervaluing of the excluded gender's behaviors.

Discrimination Through Stereotypical Representation

In summary, among accounts of depicted roles, 25 (50%) were masculine roles associated with males, while the remaining 23 (46%) were feminine roles exclusively depicted by female characters. At the same time, both genders represented 2 (4%) for equally-shared roles.

It is possible that these findings were influenced by societal norms that consider males as breadwinners and females as skilled household caregivers, which have

been deeply ingrained and widely accepted as the norm (Lestariyana et al., 2020). During the colonial era, women were often seen as weak and unsuited for war, relegated to serving men, which may have contributed to these beliefs. These historical ideas have continued to influence gender perspectives even in the post-colonial era.

Discrimination Through Semantic Roles

Of the ten superior roles, six (60%) were male characters, while only four (40%) were female. The male character has only been depicted in an inferior role once (12%) compared to the female character, who has been shown in a subordinate role seven times (88%). From a critical standpoint, the distribution is biased toward specific fields of work. Female characters like nurses, housekeepers, teachers, and receptionists tend to be portrayed in domestic or indoor jobs. Although there is an attempt to depict women in superior occupations, like the principal role, the frequency of such occurrences should be increased. In contrast, male characters are favored and portrayed in various occupations, including mayor, manager, and editor-in-chief.

This finding is congruent with the study by Amad and Shah (2019), in which females have been depicted in inferior positions to those of males, who are shown as dependent on men. Furthermore, Pillay (2017) emphasized that gender bias is present in occupational roles and careers, with women and 'others' often depicted in low-paying occupations or domestic settings. In contrast, white men are predominantly shown in high-paying, high-status technological careers, primarily absent from domestic settings. Furthermore, the study indicates a balanced representation of both genders in specific roles, such as principal or teacher, comprising 2 (10%) instances. Yang and Yan (2020) previously reported these as gender-shared occupational roles. In the modern era, teaching and leading as a principal are not restricted to any particular gender.

Discrimination Through Titular Representation

The title of a person can also indicate gender biases. Titles in the English language emphasize the marital status of women and gender differences. The findings revealed that female characters dominated the distribution of titles, with 70% occurrences of "Ms." and "Mrs." Male characters, on the other hand, were represented by titles like "Mr.," "Mang," and "Captain," with only 30% occurrence.

However, a contrasting pattern emerged in the study of international ELT textbooks conducted by Amerian and Esmaili (2015), where "Mr." dominated with 75% occurrence, and other titles like "Mrs.," "Miss," and "Ms." had significantly lower distributions. In addition, in the study by Purwitasari & Floriasti (2021), the title "ma'am" was associated with domestic roles, particularly in contexts related to cooking and teaching.

Discrimination Through Order of Appearance

Surprisingly, the statements mentioned above show that females appeared first in the sentences' order of appearance in five (33%) occurrences. However, out of the 24 total co-mentions of males and females in the same sentences, 16 (67%) males have been mentioned in the first positions. It is believed that in textual stretches of the SLMs, the first mention carries more weight than subsequent mentions. This results in the reinforcement of male superiority and dominance when females are mentioned after males. Thus, it implied that male characters were dominant in English SLMs, and it weakens females. This result contradicts Amerian and Esmaili's (2015) findings. They reported that females were in the first position 75% of the time, while males were in the first position only 25%.

Meanwhile, Ahmad and Shah (2019) disclosed that out of 31 instances where both males and females are mentioned in the same sentences, males were discussed first in 65% of cases, suggesting a tendency towards male representation in the initial position. The 'male-first' phenomenon is still prevalent in contemporary Japanese textbooks, revealing the secondary status of women, according to a corpus study by Lee (2018). Variations were observed in different textbooks regarding the representation of women and men in quantitative balance and gender stereotyping.

Discrimination Through Representation of Activities

The data reveals that males represented 16 (89%) high-risk activities whereas only 2 (11%) high-risk activities were attributed to females. Males also depicted 19 (86%) low-risk activities, compared to 3 (14%) low-risk activities associated with females. However, regarding classifying the types of activities, females are frequently assigned to low-risk activities such as dishwashing, baking, reading, housekeeping, parenting, and teaching. Meanwhile, the activities related to males are categorized as high risk, such as playing basketball, biking, hiking, and driving.

The study conducted by Yonata and Kepulauan (2021) validates that female characters in media are often portrayed as engaging in low-risk activities. While there are efforts to show balance in gender roles through examples of girls participating in activities like running and swimming, there is a need for more emphasis on involving female characters in outdoor and high-risk activities to break gender role stereotypes. Further, Purwitasari & Floriasti (2021) also accentuated that the females' most frequent activities are housekeeping and parenting, defined as domestic roles. At the same time, the most frequent activities males attend are social functions such as producing music and working.

Discrimination Through Male Generic Construction

The overall results indicated that the masculine pronoun tendency had occurred five (21%) times, while gender-inclusive vocabularies appeared in 19 (79%) cases. Thus, this indicates that English SLMs manifested the criteria of gender-responsive learning material.

These results can be validated by the analysis made by Hameed and Jabeen (2021) of the English textbooks, which specified that most texts avoided phallogocentric terms. Hence, frequently using gender-neutral terms like *people, humans, persons, everybody, children*, etc., was expected. Although not prevalent, some texts still used masculine generic constructions. Overall, there were 44 instances of such terms: 26 occurrences of male pronouns referring to all-purpose human beings and 18 occurrences of masculine nouns.

Discrimination Through Pictorial Representation

Also presented in the table is the pictorial representation of male and female characters, which contains a total of 136 images and illustrations, out of which 49 (36%) cases manifest 'male only,' and 36 (26%) images illustrate "female only." Meanwhile, 11 (8%) cases for 'male-dominated,' and 14 (10%) are classified as 'female-dominated.' Moreover, 26 (19%) are categorized as 'equally shared' out of 136 images. Pictures above have shown that females were

represented in domestic activities and traditional roles, which showed traces of sexism. Thus, the depiction of males and females in stereotypical biased occupations in illustrations can be another reflection of sexism in English SLMs.

According to Amerian and Esmaili (2015), 35% of pictures in international language learning materials depict only males, while 24% depict only females. In Saputra's 2019 study, 55% of 924 images were categorized as male and 45% as female. 24% of pictures showed equal gender representation. In a nutshell, the achieved findings stress the inequality between females and males regarding pictorial representation. Studies show how males and females are depicted in textbooks and educational materials affects a child's perception of gender roles and personality (Kaur, 2018). Educators need to recognize gender stereotypes in educational resources and act to promote gender equality.

After analyzing content using the Eight-factor Procedure of Gender Discrimination by Amerian and Esmaili (2015), we found imbalanced gender representation in most features and their contextual interpretation. Some features depict gender discrimination through stereotypes, semantics, pictorial representation, and order of appearance. In contrast, female ascendancy was prevalent in terms of discrimination through titular representation and representation of activities. Astoundingly, the features of inclusion and exclusion and masculine generic construction needed to be more evident due to the proliferation of gender-inclusive vocabularies, indicating that both genders are represented equally in numbers and their value. The Department of Education should ensure compliance with gender-fair language policies for SLMs.

To solidify these findings, it's crucial to answer *Research Question No. 2: How do external evaluators assess the gender-fair language compliance of English self-learning modules?*

Table 2. Significant Themes and Core Ideas on How Do External Evaluators Assess the Gender-Fair Language Compliance of English Self-Learning Modules

Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Existing Discrimination Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actually, I have observed some gender biases in the SLMs, and then to make it particular, there is discrimination in terms of stereotypical representation. For example, most of the male characters they're

Stereotypical Representation

represented as mayor, manager, or even those roles that are very active and superior in society. Whereas most female roles or characters are only represented as teachers and traditional roles like housewives or housekeepers. Unlike when you compare male roles as journalists, basketball players, or managers, which society highly regards. **(IDI_1)**

- So, women were underrepresented or portrayed in stereotypical roles such as homemakers or passive characters, while men are shown to be more active or associated with leadership roles. **(FGD_3)**

Flourishing Women's Empowerment

- As I have observed, I have seen portrayals of women being independent in different roles that they're being represented in the modules. This inclination increases motivation for women to pursue their desired careers and interest without being dependent on their husbands or male counterparts. This may also open up more opportunities for women to perform non-traditional roles and responsibilities and not be bounded by what society expects from them. **(IDI_7)**

- So, from what I have observed, there are still tendencies of gender biases in the module. Most of the examples here state that "*she met with her friends and talked to them,*" "*her mother noticed not only her lack of enthusiasm but also her lack of self-confidence,*" "*her garden is full of blooming flowers and colorful butterflies,*" "*my grandmother is a great cook, she can either make you delectable dessert or some meals.*" As per my observation, ma'am, women have overpowered men in terms of frequency in using nouns and pronoun representations. It has to be balanced because too much still means gender inequality. **(FGD_4)**

Utilizing Gender-Fair Language Mindfully

- So far, I do appreciate the conscious effort of the content creators of the SLMs used by DepEd since it clearly shows gender sensitivity using appropriate languages and terminologies that comply with the use of gender-fair language to eliminate gender bias. Although there are some discrepancies, it only means re-evaluating and validating each module during the quality assurance process. **(IDI_9)**

- Yes, I observed a few presences of gender-neutral vocabularies. For instance, using generic pronouns such as *their* and *them*. On a positive note, with DepEd, I could say that the modules are geared towards full compliance with the gender-fair language policy with minimal discrepancies. **(IDI_8)**

Prevailing Unbalanced Gender Representation in Terms of Semantic Roles

- There is also discrimination in terms of semantic role. Men were usually represented with superior characters and were usually rich. Superior roles are associated with male characters, while females are represented with inferior characters. So this shows that the Philippines still has this patriarchal mindset, leading to unequal treatment between males and females. **(IDI_1)**

- So, based on my observation, superior roles are more associated with male characters, whereas female characters are ascribed to inferior roles. Moreover, male characters were represented in higher positions, such as *president, mayor, and manager*, compared to female characters represented as *nurses, housekeepers, or housemaids*. **(IDI_2)**

Perpetuating Stereotypes and Inequality in Pictorial Representations

- I have observed biases in English SLM, particularly in the grade 7 module; most picture examples displayed faces of female personalities. From what I can remember, there was a time a few months ago when I let my students utilize the modules for our picture analysis activity; one of my male students exclaimed, “*Ma’am! How come only girls are in the picture washing their hands?*”. So, that was when I realized that if there were boys featured in the images with the same number as the girls in the picture, then I think that male students would not react negatively that way. *(FGD_3)*
- In my experience as a grade 5 teacher, I think the most prevalent discrimination next to stereotypical representation is the pictorial representation and the order of appearance. Most of the drawings are depicting male-only or male-dominated. Also, I have noticed that the male always comes first in order of appearance. *(FGD_2)*

Requiring Recalibration and Intensification of the Inclusion of Gender-Fair Language in the Assessment Tool for Quality Assurance

- So, for me, modifying the existing guidelines and procedures for content and language evaluation should be done. So, I would agree or suggest that there is a need to modify the guidelines and procedures, and that is to include gender-fair language in the guidelines of the quality assurance process. *(IDI_1)*
- I would say that implementing the Gender Responsive Basic Education Policy by DepEd is still in the initial stage of flourishing and incorporating gender equality into the learning materials. So, I think DepEd needs to intensively implement the gender-fair use of language so that both genders are duly represented. *(FGD_4)*

Specifying the Compliance to Gender Fair Language Guidelines and Gender Responsive Basic Education Policy

- After assessing the SLMs, I could conclude that the compliance is only partial. Gender bias was generally observed in pictorial representation, semantic roles, and stereotypical representation. Meanwhile, it was somehow balanced regarding textual representation, such as using nouns and pronouns for male and female characters. *(IDI_7)*
- I would like to rate it seven over ten because most SLMs partially comply with gender-fair language guidelines due to some discrepancies. For example, in some modules, male dominance and superiority are prevalent, while in others, women empowerment exceeded and overpowered their male counterparts. Thus, there is still a need to represent both genders in equal numbers and value. *(FGD_4)*

Turn-taking of Male and Female character Representation through Inclusion and Exclusion Features

- I agree that gender-neutral language is exerted to represent both genders equally. I religiously checked all the English modules in grade 3 for the first quarter to see the overall picture. So, regarding inclusion and exclusion features such as the use of nouns and pronouns in module 1, men are dominant, while in modules 2 and 3, there was no gender bias observed. It was surprisingly balanced. While in module 4, woman empowerment emerged and outshone men. Somehow, there is an alternating turn within the set of modules for a specific year level. This is just based on how I perceive it in a broad sense. *(IDI_4)*
- Perhaps the writers in grade 9 and 10 modules are somehow oriented toward gender-fair language. So far, as I have gone through the modules, I haven’t encountered any gender bias words that imply the

dominance of boys over girls or vice versa. The nouns and pronouns used were equally shared, and there is what we call turn-taking in the order of appearance of each gender in the sentences. Although there are cases of unequal representations regarding the illustrations and images, it was only very minimal. (*IDI_9*)

Establishing Task-Force Committee Dedicated to the Full Implementation of Gender-Fair Language Policy

- Undoubtedly, there should be a need for a task force for an intense and comprehensive implementation of gender-fair language because if we have taken action on developing such materials, there should be a group of experts who would evaluate it properly. Not only that we need an appropriate evaluation tool to assess compliance with the gender-fair language policy accurately, but all the more, we needed well-trained individuals in this area of specialization. DepEd has been advocating GAD – or gender and development protocol in approving school programs and activities. (*IDI_5*)

Providing Constructive Evaluation on Gender Bias

- It could have been better that the GAD or gender and development coordinator will be included among the evaluators so that they could work with the language experts to assess the SLMs. As far as I remember, the evaluators for the SLMs are also fellow writers who have just been tasked to check each module's grammar, spelling, and copyright issues. Little to zero attention was given to integrating gender-fair language guidelines in the evaluation tool. In conclusion, there should be strong collaboration between DepEd administrators, writers, evaluators, teachers, and GAD focal persons from region offices down to school administrators, faculty, and staff. (*FGD_3*)
- Then maybe the DepEd should provide exclusive training regarding the gender-fair language policy for teachers who will be given tasks to write or evaluate a certain learning material, not just an SLM. Afterward, before a learning material is officially used in the field, there should be a pilot testing first to get feedback from the teachers and ensure that the materials are free from gender bias. It would also be helpful if the teachers utilized the materials that provided effective and efficient teaching strategies and pedagogies to ensure inclusive education and mainstreaming our learners, especially those with special educational needs. (*FGD_1*)

Key Findings

The study's findings offer insights into gender representation and discrimination within the analyzed content, highlighting both positive developments and ongoing imbalances. Analyzing the material, the research uncovers gender-shared tendencies, with gender-inclusive language playing a significant role in this positive trend, as seen in the "Turn-taking of Male and Female Character Representation through Inclusion and Exclusion Features" and the use of "Utilizing Gender-Fair Language." These conclusions are consistent with prior work by Stout and Dasgupta (2017) and Fahriany et al. (2019), indicating the integration of gender-fair language in educational materials. Nevertheless, it's recommended that authors gain a comprehensive understanding of gender representation techniques, including sentence construction, image

usage, proper names, pronouns, and other elements that contribute to gender equity. The research underscores the importance of teachers recognizing and addressing their own gender biases in the classroom.

Despite some positive shifts towards gender equality in language usage, the study identified persistent imbalances in gender representation, evident in stereotypical portrayals, semantic roles, order of appearance, and visual depictions. The analysis consistently revealed a pattern of male dominance, emphasizing male superiority and relegating females to domestic roles, reflecting enduring patriarchal attitudes and resulting gender disparities. These observations align with the themes of "Existing Discrimination Through Stereotypical Representation" and "Prevailing Unbalanced Gender Representation in Terms of

Semantic Roles." This pattern was substantiated by research such as Briones's (2019) investigation, which found stereotypical occupational associations in Philippine English coursebooks, and Hameed's (2014) work, revealing gender bias in English textbooks for Pakistani elementary students, reinforcing traditional gender roles tied to domestic and career responsibilities.

Drawing attention to another facet of the study, it is interesting to note that the analysis exposed instances where female representation surpassed that of males, particularly in features such as titular representation. The analysis exposed the impact of societal norms on gender equality, exemplified by the practice of signifying marital status through surnames. The study also brought attention to the lack of representation of non-binary individuals, illustrating the missed opportunity for inclusivity through the non-binary alternative "Mx."

Addressing another critical aspect of the study, the unequal assignment of activities to genders was a salient observation. In this sense, women were frequently linked to low-risk pursuits whereas men were mostly associated with high-risk ones.. Amerian and Esmali (2015) argue that gender bias in educational content is deeply ingrained. This not only perpetuates stereotypes but also accentuates the disparity between "Flourishing Women's Empowerment" and "Perpetuating Stereotypes and Inequality in Pictorial Representations." Consequently, gender portrayal in self-learning modules is influenced by these factors. Dahmardeh & Kim's (2020) study shows that Iranian textbooks predominantly feature male characters, implying the underrepresentation of females. Prastikawati and Yonata (2022) find a 56% predominance of male characters in module images, aligned with the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) that repeated exposure to biased images reinforces gender stereotypes, a notion supported by IDI_1's observation that male characters are consistently mentioned first, possibly contributing to the reinforcement of male dominance and female marginalization.

IV. IMPLICATIONS CONCLUDING REMARKS

A. *Implication for Practice*

In the realm of education, fostering gender equality and inclusivity is not just a goal but a moral imperative. However, this recent study delves into the hidden biases within the English self-learning modules (SLMs) perpetuating unequal power dynamics and reinforcing traditional gender norms. It further unravels ten

emerging themes, each offering profound implications that can transform the educational landscape.

The unbalanced gender representation in English learning modules, perpetuating gender biases and stereotypes, could provide sociolinguistic insights into what extent can cultural norms, expectations, and context affect language use. To address this, curriculum developers and policymakers may prioritize the integration of gender-fair language guidelines in learning materials and conduct training programs for teachers and writers. Establishing a dedicated task force committee can ensure continuous evaluation and improvement of educational materials to eliminate gender discrimination.

In curriculum development, the study highlights the critical role of educational materials in perpetuating gender biases. Curriculum developers will have to intentionally incorporate gender-inclusive language and promote balanced gender representations to challenge traditional gender norms and foster an equitable learning environment.

In the field of inclusive education, the study emphasizes the importance of promoting gender equality and inclusivity in educational materials. Educators and school administrators will have to proactively ensure that materials are free from gender biases and create a classroom environment that values diversity and challenges gender stereotypes. Collaboration and specialized training are vital in implementing gender-responsive policies, creating an empowering and inclusive learning environment that nurtures gender equality.

Gender biases in educational materials present both challenges and opportunities. Education can transform by embracing gender-fair language, inclusive curriculum, and constructive evaluation. With empowering learning resources and gender-responsive policies, we work towards an inclusive learning environment for all students. As educators, policymakers, and stakeholders unite, we empower and elevate the voices of every learner. Together, we embrace diversity, equality, and inclusivity, carving a path toward a brighter, more equitable educational future. These findings urge us to drive positive change and foster an educational landscape that nurtures every individual's potential and ensures a more just and inclusive world.

B. Implication for Future Research

The findings from the emerging themes highlight the pervasive presence of gender biases and imbalances in English learning modules, perpetuating traditional gender roles and stereotypes. To address these issues, future researchers may employ a multi-dimensional approach, using gender-based content analysis, qualitative interviews, and quantitative measures to understand the scope and impact of gender biases comprehensively. They may also focus on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, such as gender-sensitivity training for content creators, to challenge gender stereotypes and promote inclusivity in educational materials. By adopting innovative techniques like eye-tracking studies and experimental designs, researchers can uncover students' cognitive and emotional responses to gender-biased content, developing more inclusive and equitable learning resources.

As for future research, investigating the impact of gender-fair language on academic performance, self-esteem, and engagement would be valuable. Additionally, exploring the influence of gender representation on career aspirations and examining cultural and societal factors through ethnographic research methods and comparative studies involving diverse participants would provide insights into gender biases in the learning environment.

C. Concluding Remarks

As the researcher of this study and, at the same time, an English teacher, I became vigilant of the significant discrepancies in gender-based content found in English SLMs, perpetuating gender biases and stereotypes. The implications for practice call for prioritizing gender-fair language guidelines in learning materials and providing training and workshops for teachers and writers to create gender-inclusive content. Establishing a dedicated task force committee may ensure continuous evaluation and improvement of materials to eliminate gender discrimination.

In terms of curriculum development, this study highlights the need for a comprehensive review to address unbalanced gender representation. Incorporating feminist theory and diverse literature can challenge traditional gender norms and foster critical thinking. Designing learning resources requires avoiding stereotypes and ensuring equal gender

representation, using constructive evaluation and piloting to gather valuable feedback.

Most importantly, gender injustice in society challenges established social structures and individual privileges, making it essential to initiate a gender transformation agenda to improve equality. This requires collaborative efforts between the government and society to bring about social changes focusing on gender equality.

However, as evidenced by a plethora of gender and language studies conducted worldwide over the past 60 years, there has only been a slight improvement in the advocacy for gender equality. It may be time to assess the degree and nature of this bias's impact on gender representation using a comparative analysis of various SLMs from various grade levels and subject areas.

In conclusion, due to the social construction impacted by patriarchal ideas, various cultures, and religions, addressing the gender gaps in our learning materials will not be adequate to ensure gender parity in classroom instruction. To ensure that instructors support the implementation of a gender-responsive education and do not obstruct it, further research must be done to study how they use and understand the gendered text in the classroom.

Finally, as essential agents in shaping students' perspectives, teachers may integrate gender-sensitive materials and encourage balanced gender perspectives. While the curriculum guarantees equal opportunities for success, educators will have to personally advocate gender-transformative undertakings in their teaching pedagogies and strategies to challenge stereotypes and ensure a truly inclusive and empowering learning environment for all students. By actively engaging in this effort, society will soon pave the way for a more equitable and just future.

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