GENDER INEQUALITY IS REAL: DOMINANCE OF MALE REPRESENTATION IN AN ELEMENTARY ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

Albert C. Albina
albertalbina@norsu.edu.ph
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Algen C. Mandalones
algenmandalones@gmail.com
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Rowena T. Layan
rowenalayan62@gmail.com
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Mayuan T. Calijan[4]
mayuancalijan@norsu.edu.ph
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Lylene J. Salva
lylenesalva20@gmail.com
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Elven Luther V. Cerbito
elvenluthercerbito@norsu.edu.ph
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines
Jestony M. Pagsuguiron
pagsuguironjestony@gmail.com
Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Sta. Catalina Campus, Philippines

ABSTRACT

As the primary source of information, educational materials like textbooks should be free of gender bias. This study primarily aimed to explore the portrayals of gender in the English textbook currently used in Grade 5 in one of the schools in the Philippines. Employing content analysis, we found out that based on the activity of genders, male characters were depicted more frequently in all three pre-identified categories, namely: school-related, daily life, and leisure activities. Also, men often handled fieldwork and livelihood, while women were more frequently involved in household tasks and childcare. As to occupations of genders, results indicate that male characters were significantly represented in jobs than women and a wide range like a pilot, farmer, company manager, and scientist. On the other hand, female characters are teachers, nurses, weavers, and writers. Regarding famous people or characters, findings reveal that men have a higher level of superiority over women, as shown in the predominance of male-renowned personalities. We conclude that women have limited representation in the textbook and that gender inequality persists in favor of men. Portraying females, for example, as individuals who frequently perform household duties could unconsciously provide female pupils with a very limited framework for their career options. This project's potential social benefit lies in the idea that the earlier we can empower children with the belief that all genders should be treated equally, the better prepared they will be for life.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, English textbook, Content Analysis

INTRODUCTION

School textbooks are a powerful tool for disseminating vast amounts of information, and teachers use them when planning their lessons and instructional approaches. In addition to providing information on academic subjects, textbooks often promote various ideological concepts, such as representations of gender (Alexopoulos et al., 2022). Therefore, textbooks should be devoid of gender inequalities and stereotypes (Aydemir et al., 2022). Despite the importance of textbooks in education, they need to be given adequate analysis, particularly concerning gender-biased depiction. Some textbooks are conceptually biased and promote gender inequalities (Ullah & Skelton, 2012). In light of this, Yang (2014) explains that gender representation occurs in textual, verbal, and visual languages. In both written and spoken texts, gender is commonly indicated through words such as verbs, adjectives, nouns, or noun phrases.

An English language textbook mainly upholds a typical portrayal of gender roles, including inaccurate representations of women, their employment in domestic responsibilities and lower-rank vocations, and their silence and invisibility of their feelings (Barton & Sakwa, 2012). It has been found that men are more active than women, particularly outside of the home. On the other hand, more women than men are seen performing unappreciated chores (Benlaghrissi, 2023). The elementary years are a crucial time in a child's development. Constant exposure to unfair and prejudiced representations of men and women in textbooks might give rise to a distorted perception of women and obstruct the pursuit of gender fairness for all people (Aljuaythin, 2018).

This study aimed to promote gender equality in the classroom through positive and equal textual representation of genders in textbooks, story books, and other reading materials. The earlier we can instill in schoolchildren the importance of treating both genders equally, the more equipped they will be to value the real potential of individuals.

There are two issues with how gender is portrayed in textbooks: a disparity in how males and females are portrayed and stereotypes of men and women are frequently used. The conventional depictions of male and female domestic roles and activities persist, with females undertaking more domestic and less energetic activities. In contrast, males

engage in more outside and active activities (Maesaroh et al., 2022).

This study primarily aimed to explore the portrayals of gender in the English textbook currently used in Grade 5 in one of the schools in the Philippines. The following research questions guided the investigation: (a) How are female and male characters portrayed in carrying activities, parental roles, and occupations in the Grade 5 English textbook? (b) What are the frequencies of the appearances of female and male characters in the Grade 5 English textbook? and (c) What are the frequencies of the appearances of famous people and characters of different genders in the English textbook?

This study utilized a qualitative research design. The primary data source is the Joy in Learning English Grade 5 textbook. The researchers analyzed the text and graphics from this textbook using content analysis. The text and graphics were extensively reviewed for a more robust analysis during content analysis. Coding was utilized to analyze the texts further.

The results of the study are expected to provide a deep understanding of gender inequality in an elementary English textbook that is used in one of the schools in the Philippines. This is expected to be a good reference for the author to promote gender equality in their books. Advocating for gender equality is crucial for students to realize their full potential.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Gender inequality is centered on the unequal responsibilities played by men and women. Hence, men and women can take undue advantage of social resources and opportunities (Acar-Erdol & Gözütok, 2018). Despite being more acceptable in the community, gender issues remain an issue of concern for discussion in society (Dewi, 2022). There are many instances of thematic bias in English textbooks, particularly in the themes of silence, the social status, occupations, subordination, and general activities of women compared to men (Clark, 2016). Other textbooks have been changed to improve female representation and lessen sexist representations. However, the modifications were frequently minor because textbooks go via several departments and hands (Blumberg, 2008). In terms of how men and women are portrayed as participating in various

activities, women are typically portrayed as stay-at-home mothers who spend most of their time doing chores around the house, such as cleaning, making tea, and baking cakes, with occasional breaks for studying or watching TV (Amini & Birjandi, 2012).

Additionally, even though girls perform academically better than boys in all areas of school life and have a more positive attitude toward learning, their success is not reflected in how their peers and teachers construct stereotypes of girl schoolgirls, which continue to be very traditional and stereotypical (Marmani, 2002). Consequently, the gender roles and the proportions of male and female characters in literature likely significantly affect gender role development and self-perception in these kids (Hamilton et al., 2006). Although textbooks assert that women are the subjects of the public sphere, it has been noted that the roles of the public sphere are concretized, established, validated, and replicated using a variety of examples. Additionally, it has been determined that conventional roles such as motherhood, raising children, embroidering, and needlework are linked to the gender roles of women (Pamuk & Muc, 2021). The way that students and teachers view gender roles can be

particularly impacted by gender stereotyping in educational textbooks and texts (Tyarakanita et al., 2021).

Even in the most industrialized nations, women are still paid less than men, and they are disproportionately employed in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs as well as on the periphery of the economy, such as petty trading and jobs that are sporadic, labor-intensive, and subject to exploitation (Leach, 2003). Women typically fill caring professions like teaching or nursing in the public domain. As a result, a character analysis of the three textbooks reveals that male characters are predominant in the chosen texts, while female characters are underrepresented (Ali & Hussain, 2019). The recommended number of occupations for women was still inadequate, while the number of occupations for men had increased (Nurlu, 2021).

Most textbooks rarely feature women outside the home, but men are usually featured in public places and general work—additionally, stereotypes and gender prejudice against women. In most cases, female characters were underrepresented in terms of appearance frequency, frequency of talk, representation in familial and other social and professional positions, distribution of

domestic duties, and free time and leisure activities (Demir & Yavuz, 2017). The study of İvgin et al. (2021) revealed that most scientists shown in scientific textbooks were male. In contrast, more than half of the students were unsure or uninterested in becoming scientists for their future professions due to their dissatisfaction with scientific research and a mismatch between their traits and those of scientists. Furthermore, textbooks portrayed males as strong, prestigious, and wealthy, while female jobs were typically traditional, domestic, and less prestigious, e.g., housewife, mother, and secretary (İncikabı & Ulusoy, 2019). Textbooks have always played a significant role in disseminating knowledge and ideals in contemporary educational institutions. However, they might pass along numerous gender-based stereotypical roles that could harm students' ability to form their worldviews (Benlaghrissi, 2023).

Education is one of the most effective methods for attaining gender equality since it helps all students, regardless of gender, succeed and be equally effective and capable citizens, regardless of their gender. Therefore, it must be devoid of gender bias, stereotypes, and discrimination (Bursuc, 2013). However, males are more prevalent in images, characters, mentions, gender role models, female/male activities, and mention patterns, among other things (Sudewi, 2021). Similarly, an English-language textbook widely used in Uganda is explicitly sexually prejudiced. The reason for this is that it mostly upholds a conventional picture of jobs for women in household responsibilities and lower-status occupations; being invisible and quiet and having an unequal representation of women are characteristics of their gender roles (Barton & Sakwa, 2012).

Curaming & Curaming (2020) used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the depictions of gender roles in a well-known English textbook series in elementary schools in the Philippines. This country ranks highly in worldwide gender equality indexes. Their findings revealed that gender inequality persisted in favor of men. Based on the principles and practices of human rights, such as the fundamental respect for human dignity and the right to equal and fair treatment regardless of differences among people, gender equality is a crucial component of social justice, inclusivity, and social cohesion. The right to Education for All has also benefited from the equality of rights between men and women, particularly regarding access

to school (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). Additionally, textbooks offer the possibility of introducing pupils to notions they have never heard of, places they have never seen, and individuals with whom they are unfamiliar. This opportunity can be taken advantage of, for example, by depicting famous personalities from various fields using photographs and content. However, the textbooks analyzed by Piatek-Jimenez et al. (2014) need to use this opportunity.

In the textbook analyzed by Ahmad & Shah (2019), all areas of life depicted in the texts exhibit gender prejudice, except family tasks or activities. Males and females have not been evenly represented in the textbook, even in activities considered appropriate for each gender. Additionally, males have been assigned vigorous and highly respected activities, while females have been assigned passive activities. Limiting women to household tasks demonstrates the stereotyped and concentric treatment of women.

METHODS

This current study employed a qualitative research design. The secondary data source includes the Grade 5 textbook Joy in Learning English. Texts were analysed through content analysis. In contrast to other types of research, content analysis does not rely on obtaining information directly from subjects. However, it involves examining information already preserved in text, books, documents, and other material or digital forms. As stated in the definition of qualitative content analysis, it is characterized as a research technique for the subjective interpretation of the textual content of data by using the methodical categorization process of coding and determining themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The researchers employed five codes, including frequency of gender, activities of gender, parental roles, occupation of gender, and famous people or characters. In order to achieve a more thorough examination of the data, each code was given a set of subthemes. First, the researchers meticulously reviewed the textbook's content. Based on the five provided codes, each character in the textbook was explicitly analyzed. When a

character's name was unidentified, the pronoun adjacent to it was utilized to denote the gender of the character. To identify the findings, the tally was used to pinpoint the areas where gender inequality is most apparent.

In this study, the researchers used content analysis in analyzing the data of the elementary English textbook. Texts were read multiple times to provide a more robust analysis. Coding was used in further analyzing the textbook. Content analysis is a powerful method of reducing data when performed correctly. Its primary advantage stems from its methodical, repeatable process that uses specific coding principles to condense large amounts of text into smaller topic groups (Stemler, 2001).

A sample analysis with code explanations was presented parallel to the coding scheme. The book was examined independently by four academic researchers. The five objectives were used to analyze the book. Each objective has been given codes and subthemes. The pronoun next to a character's name was used to denote their gender when that character's gender was ambiguous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings
Activities of Genders

The various activities that the characters engaged in were divided into three categories: activities that took place in school (such as projects, studying, and doing homework), activities that took place in daily life (such as working to earn a living, cooking, moving around, and selling), and activities that were done for fun (e.g., swimming, playing, and drawing). When a character's name is subjective, the pronouns next to it are utilized to determine that character's gender.

The data presented below shows the inequality of gender based on three

categories: school-related activity, daily life activity, and leisure activity. Figure 1 indicates that male characters were depicted more frequently in all categories.

The consistent gender imbalance was seen in education, everyday life, and leisure activities. Also, it can be seen from the most common activities for each gender that men often handled fieldwork and livelihood while women were more frequently involved in household tasks and child care.

Some examples of the activities of genders coded are presented below. First, in this text, "Kyle has always been hardworking, that is why he submits his projects on time" (p. 28); the character was a male. He has always been hardworking in his study. Therefore, the text was coded as a 'male in a school activity. Second, "He used his strength and cunning to trap animals and kill them for food" (p. 284). As seen from the text, it used the pronoun he, which indicates a male character. He traps animals and kills them for food. Therefore, the case was coded as a 'man in daily life activities.' Third, in this text, "Angelie was baking cookies when her friend came" (p. 20); Angelie is a girl. She was baking cookies when her friend came. Therefore,the text was coded as a 'girl in leisure activity.
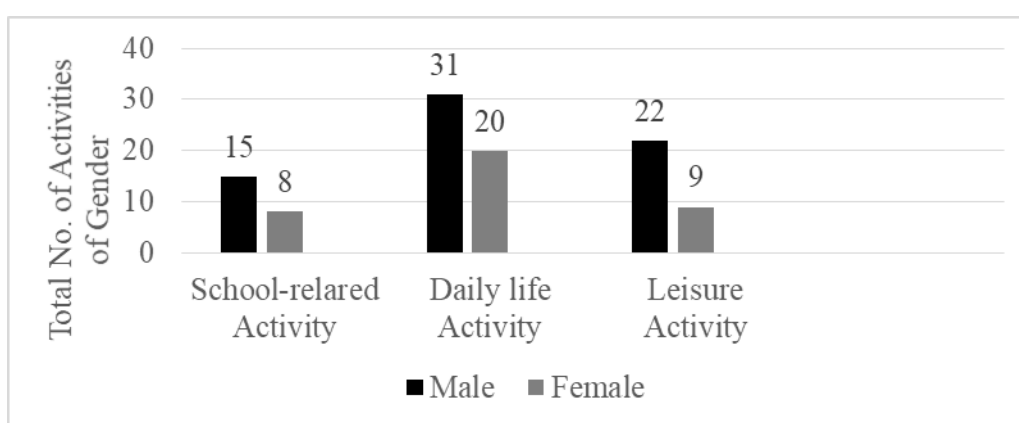

Figure 1. Activities perform according to gender

Parental Role

Figure 2 below shows that mothers have a greater frequency of dominance than fathers. No significant difference defected in the frequency of grandparents. The researchers also observed balance parenthood in the textbook. It occurs when both parents communicate their role as parents to their kids.

Creating a default list for coding the parental obligations was unnecessary. The mother, father, grandfather, and grandmother roles were all explicitly included in the coding method. The sample analysis of parental role codes is shown below.

For example, in these texts, "I never saw my mom get tired of serving me, or feeding me and fussing over me" (p. 45); the character was a mother who cared for

her son/daughter. Therefore, the text was coded as 'a mother'. Another example is,

"He would go with his father in the farm and would pasture carabao to the fields" (p. 274). The texts above identify a son and father who works in the farm. Therefore, the text was coded as 'a father'.

Furthermore, in these texts, "Our eldest daughter lived her first two years with the influence of her paternal

grandmother who is quite a spoiler" (p.316).The character was directly indicated by a kinship term, a grandmother and the eldest daughter. The text was coded as 'a grandmother'. Lastly, the text "My grandfather owns an Italian sports car" (p. 160) identify a grandfather who owns an expensive car. Therefore, the text was coded as 'a grandfather'.
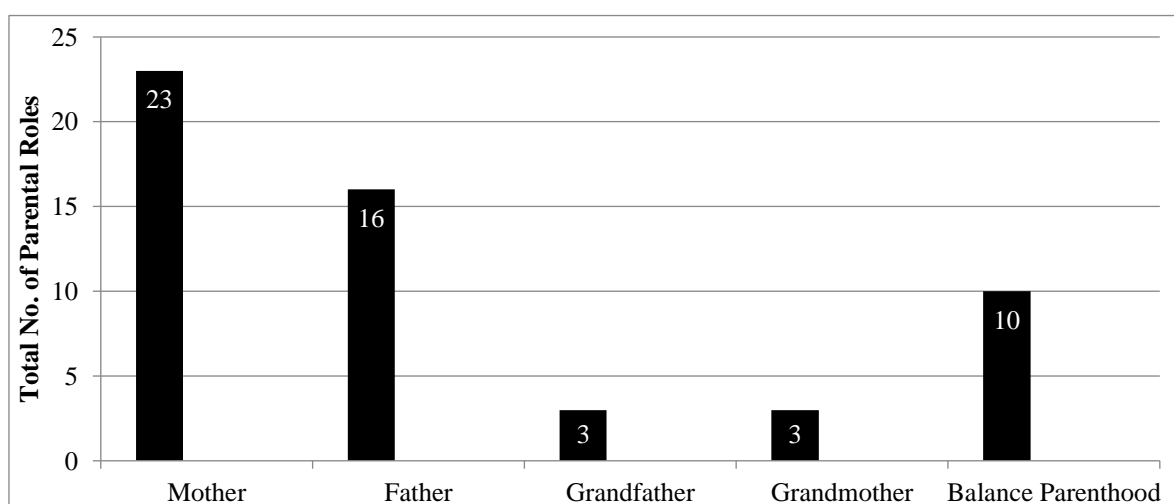

Figure 2. Total number of parental roles

Occupations of Gender

The occupations of gender have been analyzed in two categories: variety of occupations and frequency of occupations. The results indicated in Figure 3 shows that male characters were significantly represented in jobs than women. The male presents various jobs like a pilot, farmer, company manager, scientist, etc. On the other hand, female characters are teachers,

nurses, weavers, and writers. Men were more frequently present at work than women, and men's occupations were more diverse.

Gender-specific occupations were immediately coded based on the text in which the characters' occupations were revealed. There are several examples of analysis shown. First, "It's pilot, a young

man of the coastal patrol" (p. 6). In this text, the character is a young man who is a pilot. It uses the noun "man". Therefore, the case was coded as 'a male character'. Second, "Our teacher in English inspires us to do our best because she prepares and teaches our lesson in English language well" (p. 232). Based on the text, the teacher is a girl because it uses the pronoun 'she.' Therefore, the text was coded as a 'girl in occupations of gender.'

Another example is, "Justine works as an assistant at the office" (p. 197). The text shows that the character is an assistant and Justine is a male name, so the case was coded as 'a male assistant worker'. Still, another example is, "Mother, who is a teacher…" (p. 201). As shown in the text, the character is a teacher, and the mother is a female character. Therefore, the case was coded as 'a female teacher'.
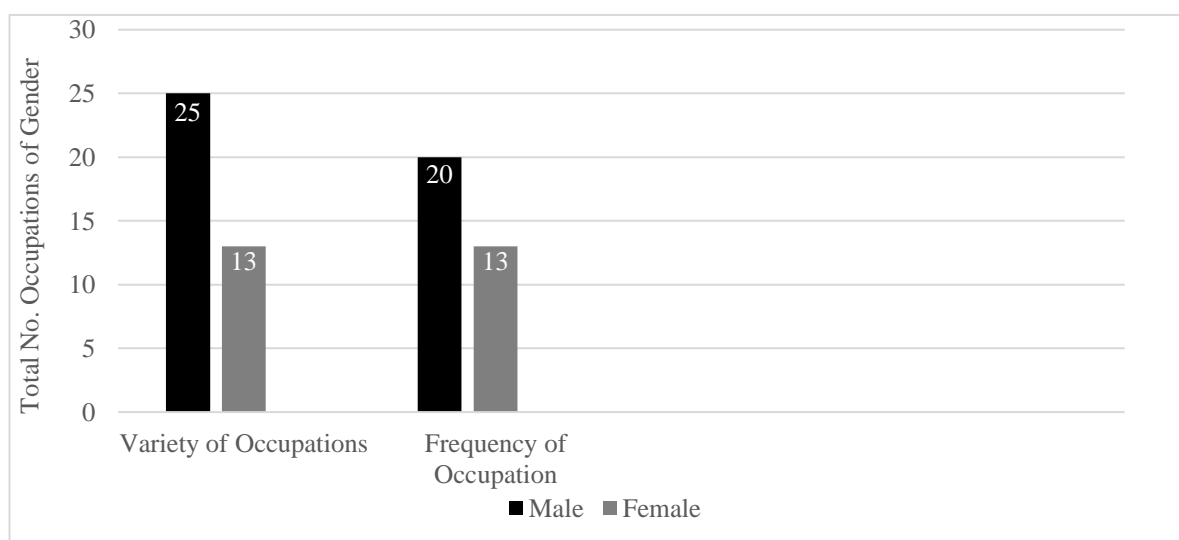

Figure 3. The overall number of occupations of gender

Frequencies of Gender

As shown in Figure 4, male characters are far more dominating than female ones. Character distribution for males and females differs significantly. In addition to that, pronouns in textbooks were also examined. The results show that there are more male pronouns than female pronouns.

The text's mention of a character was coded as either a boy or a girl. The usage of a first name by one of the characters was taken to define the child's gender. Here are some examples. First,

"Alfred's sense of mixing colors enables him to articulate reality in his paintings" (p. 101). As presented in the text, Alfred is a male name, and the text uses the

so, therefore, the case was coded as 'girl.' Third, "Judy stays in a dormitory" (p.196). The text was coded as a girl because Judy (a female name) was used alone.
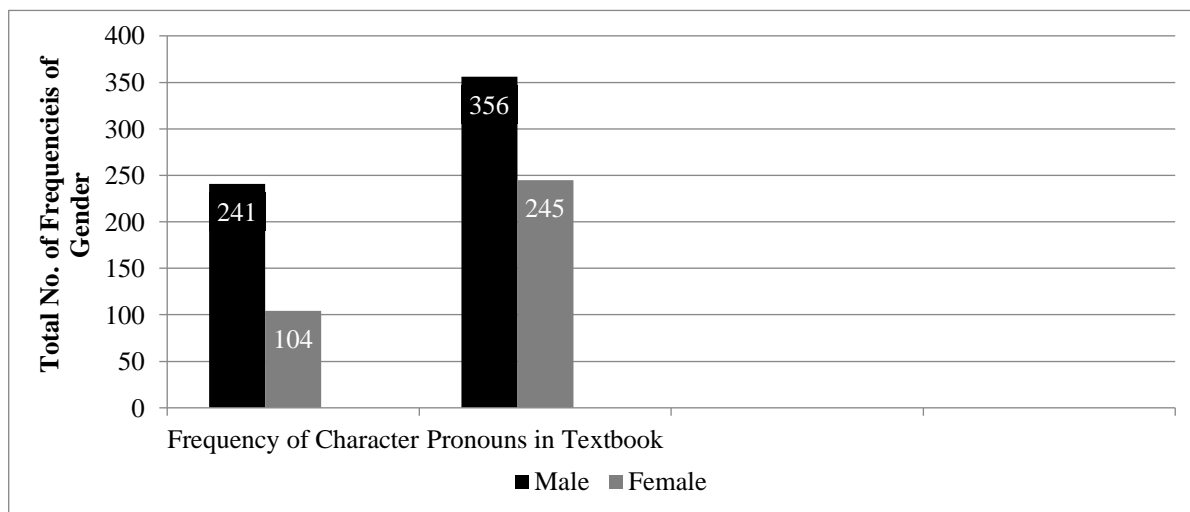
pronouns 'him' and 'his' that identify a male character. Therefore, Alfred is a boy. Another example is this, "Judy Abbot, a 16-year-old orphan wrote letters to a rich man who helped her with her studies" (p. 192). As shown in the text, the character was used alone at it uses the pronoun 'her;

Figure 4. Frequencies of gender

Famous People/Character

Figure 5 presents the number of famous people or characters in the textbook. The findings indicate that men have a higher level of superiority over women regarding the predominance of renowned persons or personalities.

Famous persons or characters greatly influence children who read the

material. We looked at the genders of notable persons and fictional characters. Here are some examples of the analysis. First, "Archimedes was a famous Greek scientist who lived in Sicily, Greece" (p. 310). It is known that Archimedes was a famous Greek scientist. Therefore, the statement was coded as a 'famous male character.' Second, "On the radio, the voice

of Fairuz, the popular Lebanese singer" (p. 310). Fairuz is a Lebanese singer. She is considered by many as one of the leading vocalists and most famous singers. Therefore, the text is coded as a 'famous female character.'
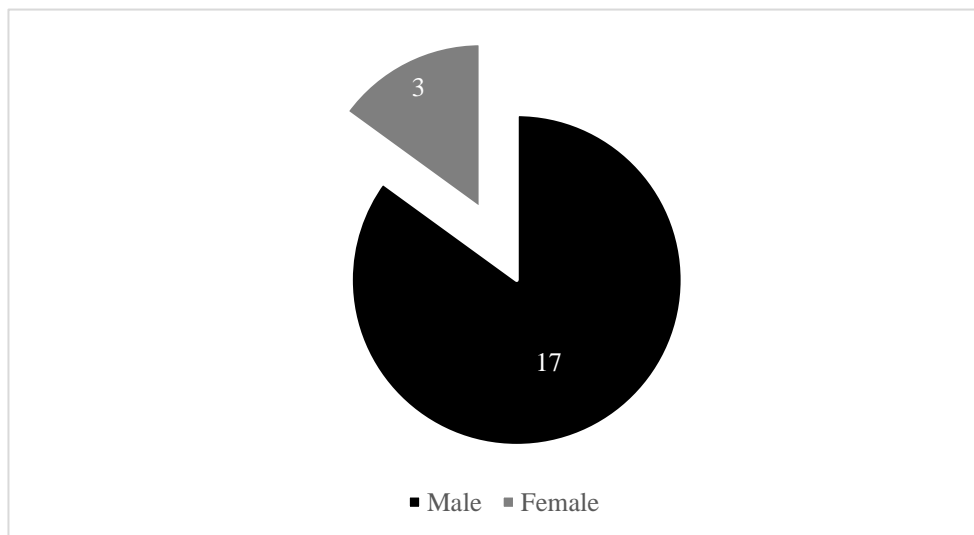

Figure 5. Total number of famous people or character

2. DISCUSSION

Gender inequalities are based on the unequal roles that men and women play. In other words, both genders have access to social opportunities and resources and use them unfairly (Acar-Erdol & Gözütok, 2018). Our result shows that male characters significantly outnumber female characters regarding activities linked to school, daily life, and leisure. Following it, male characters are depicted as individuals engaged in important outdoor activities such as selling, playing sports, and attending school. On the other hand, female is typically seen engaging in domestic and indoor tasks. This result is consistent with the claim that most housework, childcare, etc., is done by women.

Jobs and obligations were used to represent men, who were shown as figures working outside the home (Aydemir et al., 2022).

According to our findings, mothers are more dominant than fathers in parental

roles. This supports the previous findings that mothers were typically in charge of raising the child, while fathers served as the family's primary provider of income (Nurlu, 2021). In addition to being a housewife, it has also been observed that mothers were portrayed as multitasking professionals who shared balance responsibilities with their fathers. Regarding occupational roles, men were more frequently shown performing various professions than females. Both men and women were presented in traditional "gender roles," which show males in leadership positions, having jobs in offices or various public domain professions.

In contrast, women are portrayed mainly as housewives, mothers, caregivers, and teachers or doctors (Ullah & Skelton, 2012). The study also discovered an evident rise in the number of professional roles for women. It has been noted that women are increasingly taking up roles such as teachers, hospital nurses, vocalists, and even a writer. A female scientist was also present. This is an excellent step toward a more balanced gender representation in textbooks. In textbooks, equal representation of men and women in professional settings and various occupations could motivate girls to explore various career options (Yasin et al., 2012).

Our findings highlight that women have limited representation in the textbook. This pattern of results is comparable with a prior study by Curaming and Curaming (2020), who used critical discourse analysis to evaluate the depictions of gender roles in a well-known English textbook series used in elementary schools in the Philippines. This country ranks highly in worldwide gender equality indexes. Their findings revealed that gender inequality persisted in favor of men. The prevalence of famous people or characters is also examined in this study. The textbooks examined in this research poorly depict women regarding famous characters. This result is consistent with the claim that textbooks offer the possibility of introducing pupils to notions they have never heard of, places they have never seen, and individuals with whom they are unfamiliar. For example, this opportunity can be exploited by depicting famous personalities from various fields using photographs and content. The research's textbooks, however, fail to use this chance (Piatek-Jimenez et al., 2014).

The results of our study lend credence to the idea that gender inequity persists to this day. The English textbook, which serves as the primary source of information in the educational setting, should advocate for gender equality,

especially for young students. This is because early childhood is crucial for developing a child's viewpoint, ideas, beliefs, ideologies, and other traits (Maesaroh et al., 2022). Thus, promoting a balance depiction of gender roles in textbooks is essential.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to understand better how gender inequality is depicted in a Philippine elementary English textbook. To sum up, the research results from the study revealed that gender inequality is still present up to this day in educational textbooks. However, instead of being blatantly male-dominated, the gender roles are somewhat ambivalent because there are certain areas where females are depicted more favorably. In addition, there were also instances in which both genders have been portrayed in nearly equal measure, specifically in parental roles. As the primary means of information, particularly for elementary school students, educational materials should be free of gender prejudice. Elementary education is the beginning of one's academic life, which is why a strong foundation of knowledge is necessary. Providing a balanced representation of genders in textbooks will give the students professional ideas and options. Portraying females, for example, as individuals who frequently perform household duties could unconsciously provide female pupils with a very limited framework for their career options. This project's potential social benefit lies in the idea that the earlier we can empower children with the belief that all genders should be treated equally, the better prepared they will be for life.

Gender equality education for young children, especially in textbook depictions, is vital. The development of gender identity during early life must be taken into account, both cognitively and emotionally. The kinds of abilities, character traits, and professional goals are taught from what the kids read in textbooks.

It should also be emphasized that the scope of this study is limited to exploring gender inequalities in the English learning textbook used in the Philippines for the school year 2022-2023. In light of this, additional research should be done beyond this. For instance, this study can be replicated for subsequent years by examining the textbooks from that particular

year to determine if the frequencies of gendered features have changed over time.

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