

A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ROLE & STATUS AND GENDER RELATIONS AMONG CHURCH WORKERS IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The study identifies attitudes, cultural beliefs, and perceptions regarding women and men, and manifestations and effects of gender biases on the role and status of clergywomen and deaconesses of The United Methodist Church. It analyzes the role of the Church as it contributes in the reproduction of gender biases, as well as a site of resistance to the reproduction of gender biases. Church doctrines, gender-related attitudes, and beliefs of church workers, gender relations, and women's responses are the analytical domains being examined. Women church workers articulate their roles, strategies, and methods of resistance to patriarchy in different ways. The study concludes by highlighting the role of culture in the persistence of gender biases and discrimination within the Church.

INTRODUCTION

Every society has a "sex-gender system" which prescribes specific tasks and roles to women and men based on culturally approved sexual and procreative behavior and functions (Eviota, 1992). In many societies, this system reproduces relations of inequality, of dominance, and subordination of men over women. Notions of masculinity and femininity shape women's and men's attitudes and expectations, and, in turn, institutionalize gender differences (Eviota, 1992).

Central to the understanding of gender is the role of ideology which serves to perpetuate the dominant gender definitions. Ideology plays an important role in the construction and reproduction of gender attitudes, beliefs, and discriminatory behaviors. As Sobritchea (1987) had explained, gender ideology is a specific type of ideational distortion which functions to legitimize and reinforce the unequal status between sexes (p.92). In the same manner, patriarchy as an ideology or system of male authority, oppresses women through its social, political, and economic institutions and justifies the continuing male control over women's lives (Mackenzie, 1993).

In the Philippine context, patriarchal practices are evident in Church traditions and biblical teachings, in theological discourses, in polity, and in gender relations. Patriarchy in the context of religion is legitimized and reinforced by making itself more difficult to see amidst the injustices of the church system. Therefore, feminist analysis of women's subordination and contemporary gender relations within the Church fails to be adequately comprehensive, if it

neglects the role of religion. The structural features of religion include a body of ideas, beliefs, doctrines, dogmas, rituals, and ceremonies (Panopio, I and Raymundo A, 2004).

The study aimed to identify attitudes, cultural beliefs, and perceptions regarding women and men, and manifestations and effects of gender biases and discrimination on the role and status of clergywomen and deaconesses of The United Methodist Church. It also hoped to discover and describe forms of resistance by church women workers to address gender biases. There were two primary reasons for conducting this study:

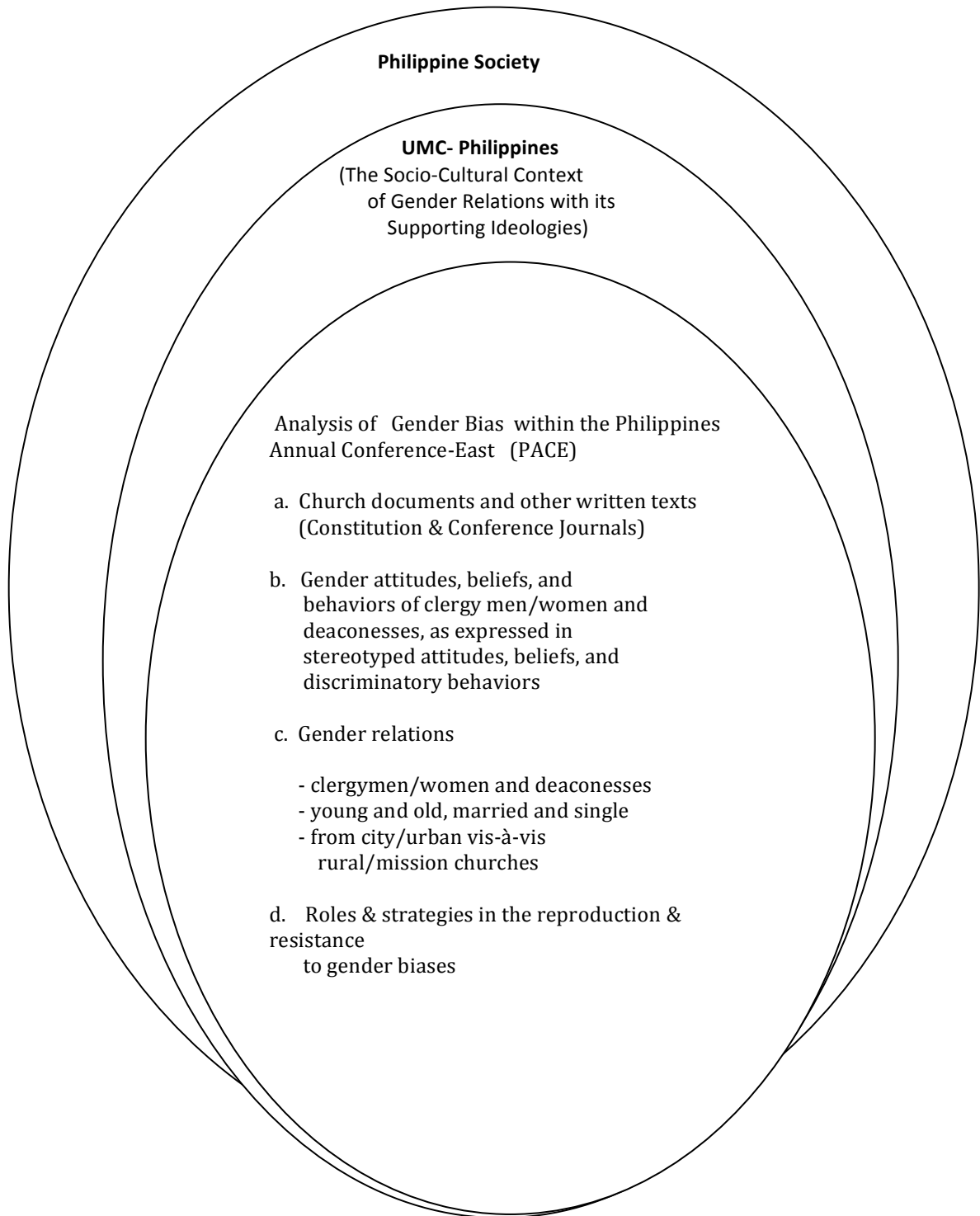
1. Since few researches have been conducted along this topic, the study hopes to generate a deeper understanding of the church's role in shaping attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about gender. Crucial to this understanding is the realization that gender biases exist in all aspects of church life. Though, within the Protestant Church, while churchwomen have always played an active role in various ministries of the Church, they continue to experience different forms of gender discrimination.
2. The advent of the women's movement in the Philippines in the 1980s and the birth of feminist theology in 1985, paved the way for raising awareness of churchwomen about the unequal status of women and men in society. Such awareness of socio-political and economic issues then contributed to their willingness to undertake an analysis of their situation, and challenge sexism and patriarchal practices within the Church. The study therefore, would identify different forms of resistance by church women to address gender discrimination and patriarchal practices within the Church.

RESEARCH AIMS

The study examined the role and status of clergywomen and deaconesses in The United Methodist Church. It aimed to identify a) attitudes, cultural beliefs and perceptions about women and men; b) manifestations and effects of gender biases and discrimination, and (c) resistance to it by women church workers. Specifically, the study answered the following questions:

1. What are the prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of clergymen/women and deaconesses in the Philippines Annual Conference-East of the United Methodist Church regarding women and men, women's rights, issues, and concerns? What gender ideologies justify or rationalize them?
2. How do these gender biases manifest themselves in gender relations (male and female, young and old, from city/urban or rural/mission churches)?
3. What roles and strategies have clergywomen and deaconesses used to resist and challenge the existing biases against them?

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework



The study took off from the assumption that the Church, with its elaborate, formal, and bureaucratic structure, hierarchy of church officials, and well-developed dogmas and system of beliefs, provides the ideology that defines gender status and gender relations. The Church organization represented by The United Methodist Church, given its liberal traditions as demonstrated in its quest for liberty and individual freedom, and the rise of feminist theologies in the 1970s within the Church, influences the religious and social orientation of its members through the production of its written texts/church documents, particularly its Constitution, doctrines and doctrinal statements, social principles, general rules, and rules of order. These documents are the basic foundational materials that guide the mission and ministries of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines.

The Church interacts in a very dynamic way with cultural norms and traditions of a society. The interpretations of written texts and church documents are influenced by the specific cultural locations of male and female church members. As the Church interacts with society, it is thereby implicated in the reproduction of gender biases and resistance to the reproduction of gender biases and ideologies.

Gender biases include 1) stereotypical attitudes about the nature and roles of women that have negative impacts on women's status and welfare and on gender relations; 2) cultural perceptions and beliefs about women's relative worth; and 3) myths and misconceptions about the social and economic realities encountered by both sexes (Feliciano, Conaco, & Sobritchea, 2005). Attitudes are defined as likes and dislikes--favorable or unfavorable valuations of and reactions to objects, people, situations, or other aspects of the world, including abstract ideas and social policies (Atkinson, R. & Hilgard, E., 1981).

Gender relations are analyzed by looking into the church positions of key informants: 1) between clergymen and clergywomen; 2) between clergymen and deaconesses; 3) between clergywomen and deaconesses; in terms of their chronological age (young or early adulthood and old or middle adulthood); civil status (married and single); and geographical locations (city/big churches and small/rural/mission churches).

The study examined what roles and strategies have clergywomen and deaconesses used to resist and challenge stereotyped beliefs and attitudes (e.g., prejudices) and discriminatory behaviors against them. Women's daily experience provides the setting for identifying their roles and strategies.

METHODOLOGY

As a feminist research, the study used qualitative research. Integrated in this approach are questions which raise consciousness of the research participants on issues pertinent to structural dimensions of the church, and which explores the representation of stereotypical gendered roles. Case study as a research strategy was used to provide in-depth analysis of a social phenomenon, in this case, the reproduction of gender biases and resistance to the reproduction of gender biases within its real-life context, the Church. The study utilized multiple sources of data also known as triangulation to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question, such as semi-structured, in depth face-to-face interview, document analysis, and life stories.

Research Participants

Key informants were the selected clergy members, local pastors, and deaconesses who belong to the Philippines Annual Conference-East (PACE) representing three (3) districts namely: Quezon City District, Rizal District and Laguna-Quezon Mission District. There are 21 local churches where pastors and deaconesses are appointed. There are 23 key informants (8 clergymen, 7 clergy women, and 8 deaconesses) chosen based on the following criteria: 1) they are church workers under Episcopal appointment; 2) they are either appointed in city/urban church or mission/rural church; and 3) they represent the young (25-40 or early adulthood) and old (41-60 or middle adulthood) clergymen, clergywomen, and deaconesses.

Data Gathering Techniques

1. Document Analysis

There were five documents that were analyzed. These include the Church Constitution including its Organization, doctrines and doctrinal statements, general rules and rules of order, social principles, and conference journals. Annual Conference journals from 1996-2007 were scrutinized but only four were used for document analysis. Conference journals were selected on the basis that: 1) they were only produced once in four years for Central Conference journals; and b) that they would have something to contribute in identifying existing gender biases within the Church.

2. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were used to study general attitudes, beliefs and behavior of church workers toward women and men; and to analyze the prevailing gender relations between and among church workers in the areas of decision-making, leadership participation, and in the allocation of benefits and privileges. Interviews were conducted in the church office, in their place of residence, during the Annual Workers'

Convocation and district meetings/gatherings. The key informant interviews took about two to three hours per informant.

3. Life Stories

Life story which is a “record of one’s inner life” from the individual’s point of view is another useful approach (Guerrero, 1999). It could be complete and “cover the entire sweep of the subject’s life experiences” or topical, covering only a phase of one’s life (Guerrero, 1999:54). Life stories were employed to describe and highlight women’s everyday forms and methods of resistance. Participants were selected on the basis of their experience of important/critical life events that got them to deal with gender issues and enabled them to challenge notions of femininity and masculinity. Through life stories, specific issues and aspects of women’s experience were thoroughly explored and analyzed. There were six women workers who shared their personal experience of gender biases in the local church: two were clergy spouses, two were clergy women, and the other two were deaconesses. It took three to three and a half hours per person to share their life stories.

Study Design

Data Requirements	Methodology	Analytical Domains
a. Church Constitution including its Organization b. Church Doctrine & Doctrinal Statements c. General Rules & Rules of Order d. Social Principles e. Conference Journals	Document Analysis	Church doctrine & doctrinal statements, Social Creed & Social Principles, hierarchy, and structures, (Objective 1)
Gender-based attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of church workers	Key informant interviews and document analysis	General attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of church workers toward women and men (Objective 1 & 2)
Prevailing gender relations between clergymen/women and deaconesses; young and old; from urban and rural churches	Key informant interviews and document analysis	Decision-making process, leadership participation, and allocation of privileges and benefits (Objective 2)
Roles and strategies in dealing with gender issues/biases	Life stories	Women’s everyday life (Objective 3)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As a characteristic of a qualitative research, the researcher made use of thematic analysis. Banister et al., defines a thematic analysis as “a coherent way of organizing or reading some interviews in relation to specific research questions” (Banister, Burman, Parker, & Tindale, 1994). Themes qualify as statements or issues that appear repeatedly throughout the raw data. Data analysis includes the use of three types of coding: 1) Open coding where data were analyzed by organizing them into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, or similar features. Concepts were in the form of themes or generalizations. Data were in the form of text from documents, observations, and transcripts (Neuman, 1997). The researcher focused on events and activities, and how these were perceived by participants. In the process, points of transformation and changes in the discourse were noted as participants reflected and analyzed their own experiences of gender discrimination. Side margins were used to identify any emerging themes and looked out for contradictions as well. 2) Axial coding where concepts were re-examined and comparisons between a category and its sub-categories were made. It is therefore a process of developing main categories and their sub-categories (Pandit, 1996). A new sheet was generated with the main theme heading and participants’ pertinent quotes. 3) Selective coding which refers to the process of selecting the core category and relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Document analysis, key informant interviews, and life stories were coded according to these three types.

RESULTS

Results of the study are presented below in response to the research questions.

1. What are the prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of clergymen/women and deaconesses in the Philippines Annual Conference-East of the United Methodist Church regarding women and men, women’s rights, issues, and concerns ? What gender ideologies justify or rationalize them?

Prevailing attitudes of church workers towards women demonstrate a generally positive evaluation of them as reflected in the image of *ulirang ina* where it describes a woman who cares for and nurtures her children, supports and assists her husband in the planning and in decision making in the home, and sets a positive example for her children by practicing what she teaches. Women are believed to be good home managers, nurturers, and spiritual guides in the homes. Another imagery is that of a “super woman” where it describes the ability of women to perform multi-faceted work at the same time; has the skill and facility to relate with different kinds of people; and has the capacity to meet the demands of both domestic and church responsibilities. The role of the wife-mother is seen and experienced by women church workers as a glorious and noble calling. Furthermore, women are also perceived as change agents. As women

called by God into the ministry of love and service, women church workers believe they are called to effect change in the lives of people through their life and service. Rachel finds herself actively involved in the Church and other social concerns as a teacher, a facilitator and a counselor to broken families, victims of rape, and battered women from their outreach communities. Clergywomen and deaconesses are viewed as partners in church ministries.

However, in playing out their multi-faceted roles, balancing the demands of both the ministry and profession and that of their family or personal life is a difficult task that women church workers commonly meet. Crisis situations arise when their work runs counter to those of their husbands' work; when their schedules conflict; when their readiness to move to another church vary; or when arranging schedules for caring for the children becomes complicated.

Nonetheless, there are also attitudes and beliefs about women that affect their well-being and status. First, women's procreative or reproductive function is regarded as their most important role in life. As such, women's worth is measured through their capacity to bear a child. Typifying this attitude is Anna, a clergywoman, who claims that "having a child is the fulfillment of being a woman." Second, because of their procreative function and other reproductive roles such as doing household chores, child rearing, and managing the homes, many have lost their economic independence. A clergy spouse quit her work to support and attend to the needs of her clergy husband. Economic disempowerment is the consequential effect of that decision as she began to depend to her husband for economic support in return for her attention and services at home. Third, women are now confronted with the issue of 'double burden' as they try to cope with the simultaneous responsibilities at home and in the church. The accompanying result is the extension of daily working hours of women which deprives them to engage in other productive activities that will sharpen their intellectual and creative potentials as members of society.

It must be noted that most of the male clergy believe that the domestic and childcare roles of women are merely supportive, and therefore, secondary or even marginal in relation to the traditional male roles. Among the research participants, there is a dominant thinking that man is the head and provider of the family. As head, he is looked up to as the authority figure in the home where decisions must emanate. The idea of women's submission to men was justified by Naomi's father, who happens to be a pastor, by citing biblical passage found in Ephesians 5:22-23, which says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husband's as to the Lord. For a husband has authority over his wife..."

The prevailing beliefs, values, and norms of church workers are attributed to the existence of three ideological presuppositions:

a. Women are the nurturers and natural caretakers of the home which justifies the nurturing functions as exclusive to women and therefore a woman's place is in the home. While clergywomen and deaconesses were freed from their confinements in the home because of their church work, their church involvement is perceived to be an extension of their domestic work. Deaconesses are typecast to ministries dealing with children, youth and women.

b. Inherent difference between a man and a woman, which stereotypes women and men according to biological or physiological differences. Following this belief, women are consequently described as weak, passive, dependent, less competent and fearful, while men are considered strong, aggressive, independent, competent, and fearless. Men are viewed as more worthy of high positions and more competent at the things that "count most" (e.g., church administration). The preference given to senior male pastors to be appointed as administrative pastors in big city churches likewise discriminates clergywomen on the basis of sex. These actions result in the continued marginalization of clergywomen both in the appointment and election processes.

Likewise, women workers are taught to stay at home, limit their physical activities at night, or go home early at night because they are perceived as easy preys of bad guys in the streets. This is true among single deaconesses where their administrative pastors perform the role of their fathers in case they are staying in the deaconess quarters near the parsonage. Single clergywomen are not only expected to have a chaperon during visitations to evade unsolicited comments or gossips from church members, but also to observe proper decorum in dealing with men, (or especially when dealing with married men) particularly when they are beautiful and smart, lest these men's wives would feel threatened or be insecure.

c. The separate spheres for men and women that institutionalizes the dichotomy between what is perceived to be private and public domain, between reproductive and productive work. Women's governance within the family is legitimate only as it applies to the children and house helpers. Other aspects of decision making such as choice of employment, participation in civic and community activities, and the transfer of place of residence or church assignment (or those that are considered as major decisions) are supposed to be decided by the male.

2. How do these gender biases manifest themselves in gender relations (male and female, young and old, from city/urban or rural/mission churches)?

Gender biases in the church are manifested in four areas, namely:

a. Unequal access to income and other benefits between male clergy and women church workers. The disparity in privileges is explained in terms of 1) church position (e.g., administrative pastor vs. associate pastor and associate pastor vs. Christian Education/Kindergarten Education deaconess); 2) educational qualification (e.g., longer years of studies of clergy members compared to those of the deaconesses); 3) conference status (e.g., being a deacon or elder); and 4) the length of service. Based on these four considerations, the administrative pastor would consequently receive better privileges than those of the associate pastor and the deaconess.

b. Unequal allocation of workload, duties and responsibilities. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church provides the list of duties and responsibilities of a pastor (whether male and female) and the deaconess. However, because of the existence of a hierarchy of power, whereby the male administrative pastor occupies the top position, and the clergywomen and deaconesses those below, oftentimes, this hierarchy is used to take advantage of by the former. This is done by delegating to his associate woman pastor or deaconess some of his responsibilities, thereby putting additional burden on them.

c. Unfair treatment of church members due to male-centered leadership orientation of the Church. It has been experienced and observed by clergywomen in many local churches, whether big or small, male pastors are preferred than clergywomen. Clergywomen assigned in a local church often receive negative feedbacks, and experience prejudices and other discriminatory acts. According to clergywomen-informants, as soon as they arrive at their newly-assigned local church appointments, male lay members would receive them with dismay; such unwelcome comment as "*Ay! Babae ang pastor natin,*" is commonly made. Deborah and Sarah claimed that because they are women, some lay members perceive them as incapable of exercising leadership function. The idea of assigning a clergywoman in a local church is not generally acceptable, more so if she is young. Clergywomen experienced being put down or belittled on account of their age. Some male church members do not like a young woman pastor because they think of her as inexperienced, weak, incapable of making decisions, and fickle-minded. Related to this is the preference for single deaconess over married ones. The reason given is that the church can only afford to give housing with free water and electricity to their Administrative pastor. On the other hand, what can be given to the deaconess is only a small quarter which was used previously as a choir room or an office. Should a married deaconess be appointed, the church members are faced with the problem of providing a house for her family.

d. Discriminatory behaviors and practices of male pastors, part of which is the androcentric interpretation of the Bible and the use of language which excludes women. A repertoire of discriminatory practices include 1) exclusionary tactics which was a deliberate attempt of the pastor to exclude the deaconess from attending special occasions hosted by church members; 2) lack of proper decorum where pastor's feedback about the deaconess' work was never conveyed to the deaconess concerned but was channeled instead to church members, thereby discrediting her work; 3) utmost neglect or lack of concern for the welfare of women church workers e.g. housing & other fringe benefits; 4) indirect sexist jokes belittling the capacity of women church workers; 5) sexual harassment; 6) appointment process that privileges senior male clergy limiting the leadership opportunities of clergy women to be appointed as administrative pastor to a big local church; and 7) election process that privileges senior male clergy and limits the participation of young and able clergywomen. Patronage politics has seeped in inside the Church. Election and appointment processes get influenced by giving favors, such as good local church assignment, and a top leadership position either in the district or the annual conference level in exchange for political

support. It becomes payback time during election of delegates to the Central and General Conference as different groups re-align themselves in support of a particular delegate. Clergywomen are often left out in the process since they do not fully subscribe to the ways clergymen conduct themselves. Other cultural factors such as *pakikisama*, kinship ties, debt of gratitude, regionalism, and presence of different small groups affect the participation of women. All the clergywomen informants declared that they do not stand a chance to get elected as senior male clergy members engage in a tug-of-war for positions. They were not invited in any process where they can voice out their opinions and participate fully in any discussions about criteria for selection of delegates.

The pastor-centered leadership orientation of lay members and male clergy; women's marital status which discriminates married women from single women; chronological age which favors young deaconesses over married ones; and cultural factors such as kinship ties, debt of gratitude and 'padrino system' are the sources of gender biases.

3. What roles and strategies have clergywomen and deaconesses used to resist and challenge existing biases against them?

Table 1 summarizes the different roles and strategies that both clergywomen and deaconesses have used to address gender issues within the church.

Table 1: Women's Roles & Strategies to Gender Biases

GENDER BIASES	SPECIFIC CASES	WOMEN'S ROLES & STRATEGIES
1) Unequal access to income and other benefits	Big discrepancies in salaries and benefits received between male administrative pastors and women church workers	a) Followed existing church arrangements. b) The issue was brought to the attention of concerned bodies of the church.
2) Unequal allocation of workload, duties, and responsibilities	a) heavy work expectations of the male administrative pastor and church members; b) multiple burdens as a wife, a mother and a church worker	a) Complied with the demands of administrative pastors and some church members. b) Adhered to job descriptions but began to be selective in attending church activities. c) Learned to say 'no' to other church requests. d) Asserted to enjoy day off

<p>3) Unfair treatment of women church workers by church members</p>	<p>a) Belittling women's capacities because of gender, age, and civil status</p>	<p>a) Improve work performance to gain church members' support, trust, and respect;</p> <p>b) Visible and active presence in all the activities of the church and meetings of lay organizations;</p> <p>c) Practice accountable and servant leadership;</p> <p>d) Assertion of her rightful place as administrative pastor of the church</p>
<p>4) Discriminatory behaviors and practice of some male pastors</p>	<p>a) Belittling women's capacities because of education qualifications and age;</p> <p>b) Unsolicited comments discrediting their works and personalities;</p>	<p>a) Simply ignored it.</p> <p>b) Focus more on improving one's work.</p>
	<p>c) Lack of concern for women's rights and welfare;</p> <p>d) Husband's Infidelity;</p> <p>e) Social stigma re: husband's infidelity case;</p> <p>f) Unhealthy comments from church members re: husband's case;</p> <p>g) Sexual harassment case;</p>	<p>c) Brought their concerns to selected key leaders of the church.</p> <p>d) Filed a written complaint to the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Committee on Deaconess Service.</p> <p>e) Ignore church members' comments.</p> <p>f) Concentrate on work performance; confide her problems to fellow deaconess and her counselor; and through prayers.</p> <p>g) Filed a written complaint to the Board of Ordained</p>

		Ministry and the Committee on Deaconess Service.
5) Male-dominated leadership structure	<p>a) Lack of deaconess' representation to the annual conference with voice and vote;</p> <p>b) Local church appointment that privileges male, senior pastor;</p> <p>c) Appointment to key positions and election process that favor male, senior pastors.</p>	<p>a) Walked-out during the annual conference session as a sign of protest.</p> <p>b) Accept and follow existing church practice;</p> <p>c) Do not participate in clergymen's meetings during election process.</p>

It could be said that women's responses are located along the continuum of responses from full acceptance of patriarchy to passive resistance to active resistance. The process of reproduction and resistance co-exist at the same time. These were demonstrated in many different ways. The role of culture contributed to this co-existence.

Full acceptance of patriarchy by some women church workers could be explained by their having internalized the practice which, in turn, has led them to ignore it or just simply accept it as normal. Though other women have recognized the existence of gender biases, they were afraid to go against them and rock the boat, for it has been considered part of church traditions. Some were afraid to resist those biases openly for fear of setbacks and retaliation from male administrative pastors and some church members. Others stated that they do not want to create tension nor conflict inside the church. In any case, full acceptance of patriarchy tends to reproduce the existing gender asymmetrical relations in the homes and in the workplace.

Resistance as actions or processes that challenge difficulties those women church workers experience in their everyday lives, were expressed through their silent/passive resistance in the following manner: 1) by adhering to job descriptions but being selective in attending church activities; 2) disregarding the Pastor's remarks and focusing on work performance; 3) delegating other tasks to church members; 4) asking for transfer of appointment; and 5) maintaining a neutral position to avoid conflicts in the face of cultural norms and traditions that emphasize kinship ties, patronage system, debt of gratitude, etc. ; and 6) praying for change.

Active resistance which causes the identity creation and self-realization of women church workers about their situation brought about personal empowerment. Aside from gaining self-confidence and dignity, the outcome of personal empowerment and acts of resistance by which women church workers contest and challenge gender biases are manifested

in the following manner: 1) assertion of their rightful positions within the church as administrative pastors and deaconesses of the church; 2) outright reproach to sexist jokes; 3) saying 'no' to invitations and activities to enjoy day-off; 4) being firm in making decisions that upholds the integrity of the church; 5) bringing economic benefits and welfare issues to concerned bodies of the Church; 6) practicing accountable and democratic style of leadership; 7) filing sexual harassment and infidelity case when necessary; 8) filing a leave status or withdrawing from the deaconess service; 9) not getting involved in any group or activities organized by male clergy; 10) educating and re-orienting church members about their role and status as women church workers with specific duties and responsibilities; 11) historic walk-out of the deaconesses; and 12) a commitment to share knowledge and skills in order to help in the empowerment of future deaconesses.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church through its doctrinal statements, Social Principles, and Constitution provides a gender sensitive/gender fair orientation of the Church as reflected in its emphases in a) the inclusiveness of the Church; b) equality between women and men; c) parenting as shared responsibility; and d) use of appropriate and gender-sensitive language. This progressive orientation interacted with traditional norms and values of Philippine culture as characterized by machismo and patriarchal worldview and systems, which have contributed to the persistence and reproduction of gender biases within the Church as manifested in the: 1) unequal access to income and other benefits between male clergy and women church workers; 2) unequal allocation of workload, duties and responsibilities; 3) unfair treatment of church members which includes among others, the lack of women's representation in decision-making bodies of the church; and 4) discriminatory behaviors and practices of male pastors, part of which is the androcentric interpretation of the Bible and the use of language which excludes women. These gender biases experienced by both clergywomen and deaconesses greatly affected their role and status as women church workers. The pastor-centered leadership orientation of lay members and male clergy; women's marital status which discriminates married women from single women; chronological age which favors young women; and cultural factors such as kinship ties, debt of gratitude and 'padrino system' are the sources of gender biases.

The prevailing beliefs, values, and norms that rationalize male-oriented leadership of the church are attributed to the existence of three ideological presuppositions such as: 1) women are the nurturers and natural caretakers of the home which justifies the nurturing functions as exclusive to women and, therefore, a woman's place is in the home; 2) inherent difference between a man and a woman, which stereotypes women and men according to biological or physiological differences; and 3) the separate spheres for men and women that institutionalizes the dichotomy between what is perceived to be private and public domain, between reproductive and productive work.

Women church workers have employed different strategies to address gender biases within the Church. It ranges from full acceptance of patriarchy to passive/silent resistance to active resistance. Nonetheless, the process of reproduction and resistance co-exist at the same time. The role of culture contributed to this co-existence.

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