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A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NEWSPAPER ADVICE COLUMN

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Abstract

This study investigated the feminist voice revealed in the advice-transaction column Women's World, Sunday issues of SunStar Daily newspaper. Specifically, as implied by the verbal transaction, it focuses on these feminist aspects: societal roles of women as advice-seekers and as advice-givers. Also, this research illustrated the socio-psychological thematic issues involved in this advice column. The data of this study are the advice columns in the Women's World published in SunStar Daily every Sunday of the week where twenty-two issues were examined. The results showed that women face particular and complicated obstacles in life and play a variety of roles in society. Their varied experiences have revealed insightful facts, such as the fact that women worry about things like their weight and appearance, patriarchal obligations, relationships, and career goals, among other things. These problems provide as an example of the intricate and varied difficulties that women encounter in daily life. The study found that women who seek guidance have a number of socio-psychological issues that represent the worries and difficulties they face in their daily lives, including psychological issues, relationship infidelity, family troubles, commitment uncertainty, and professional obstacles. The study also emphasizes the significant contribution that women have as advice-

givers in newspaper advice columns. Women offer guidance on a range of subjects, such as family problems, romantic relationships, and raising kids. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of women's support and guidance of others and the necessity for support systems that empower women to have fulfilled lives.

Keywords:

Advice Column, Advice-Giver, Advice-Seeker, Newspaper Column, Societal Roles, Socio-Psychological Issues, Women

Introduction

I. Rationale

While most women and men may not have probably written a letter either in newspaper or magazine advice column, surely most are familiar with an advice column. DeCapua and Dunham (cited in Locher 2006) define advice as opinions in the form of suggestions which are provided by the advice-givers who are deemed knowledgeable and in which the advice-seekers see them as credible sources of information. People are giving and taking in advice and they usually do it privately. But there are also those who seek advice to different organizations to ask for help in arriving solutions to their problems (Locher 2006).

Men and women in all age groups who are enduring an array of challenges in life have the choice to resort to other people to ask for help and advice. Among the choices at the moment are calling up a radio disc jockey, using online help, and writing in a newspaper or magazine. These choices provide avenues for people in knotty situations where anything can be tackled for a short span of time relieving themselves from telling their real identities to the listeners or readers. Indeed, Gudelunas (2008) affirmed that in the mid-1950s where newspaper advice columns have emerged became one of the avenues for various people to discuss controversial topics which are prohibited elsewhere. These topics vary from relationships, sex, etiquette, money, work, health, parenting, and others.

This study explored newspaper advice column, specifically the SunStar Daily's Column *Women's World*. It considers only women letter-senders where this paper uncovers their different tussles in the contemporary society. Furthermore, this study offers an analysis of advice-seeking and solicited advice-giving. Through this investigation, the study aims to determine the societal roles of women both as advice-seekers and as advice-givers which play a role in the understanding of women in general.

Despite entering the modern-day world, this paper still investigates on the feminist reading of the *Women's World* seeing that not all women read newspaper and talk about their concerns and issues in life. Thus, this avenue called the advice column gives opportunities to men and women grasping the social issues that are currently happening in the society, especially on the women's issues.

On the other hand, this research paper inquires only the advice columns written by women advice-seekers and women advice-givers. The reason for opting women as the research subjects is that according to Neville (2012), these advice columns are deemed to comprise a feminine content and are taken mostly by women since they are dubbed as advice column experts. Also, the advice-givers' character, skills, and attributes are deemed to be distinctly

feminized. Even in magazines, these advice columns are reckoned as highly feminized with women who are experiencing the agony and the “Agony Aunts” referred to as advice-givers who are providing the advice (Chang 2000).

This paper is expected to shed light on the local newspaper advice column and be part of the existing pool of research studies, specifically by exploring how women utter their motions in letter forms and at the same time, how women enact advice in situations reflecting concerns and issues commonly expressed by these women senders.

II. Review of Related Literature

Discourse Analysis. In examining the different letters written by the advice seekers and advice givers, this paper takes in the study of discourse analysis. Linguists have provided different meanings or definitions of what discourse analysis is. Gee (2014) elaborates that “Discourse is the sequence of sentences. It is the ways in which sentences connect and relate to each other across time in speech or writing. As we speak or write we choose what words and phrases we will put into or “package” into sentences. Discourse concerns how various sentences flowing one after the other relate to each other to create meanings or to facilitate interpretation.” He also emphasizes that “some linguists use the term discourse analysis for the study both of the connections among and across sentences as they follow one after the other, and for the study of language-in-use in specific contexts.”

Furthermore, the term discourse analysis was first introduced by Zellig Harris in 1952 as a way of analyzing connected speech and writing, Paltridge (2006). Another definition is by Demo (2001) who regards discourse analysis as an examination of the use of language present in the speech community. It also involves looking at language form and language function both in spoken interaction and written texts.

Theory of Feminism. It touches on the idea that “women are subordinate to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes” (Hannam 2013). Thus, this theory infers that women’s voices should be heard and be able to make representations of themselves in the world.

According to Tandon (2008) describing feminism is indeed challenging for some, but for those who have extensive understanding of feminism can rope in these essential concepts such as “women acting, speaking and writing on women’s issues and rights, identifying social injustice in the status quo and bringing their own unique perspective to bear on issues.” In fact, these women are now able to speak up their minds and articulate themselves

by desiring to be part of the advice column in the *Women's World* in SunStar Daily. Through their letter forms, different societal roles are distinguished from the women advice-seekers and from the women advice-givers. Moreover, their feminist voices do not just end up being published in the newspaper, but rather their voices aspire to reach out to other readers who may have endured the same snags in life.

It was then in the late 19th century when the feminist movement started (Tandon 2008). The word *feminism*, meaning *women's emancipation*, was initially used in political debates. To depict the feminists' goals and objectives, women concentrate on their rights, their emancipation and their movements. Likewise, those involved in the campaigns necessitated that women should have formal equality with men either in law, politics or in the society. Most important is the acceptance that "women were different from men and that feminine qualities should be valued in the public as well as in the private sphere" (Hannam 2013).

As intoned by Santiago (1996), the reconstruction of women in the Philippines is a challenge at present. The reason why women are nonexistent in Philippine History books is that most of the historians are males; thus, the perspective of telling about the history is from the male point of view. In this case, the encounters of the women in the past were not at all laid out in the context of Philippine culture and society (Camagay cited in Santiago 1996). To these male historians, they reckoned their experiences to be exactly the same with women. Hence, not bringing to light the latter's experiences in writing the history of women. The explicit experiences of women are now made available in the advice column specifically, the *Women's World* in SunStar Daily where diverse socio-psychological thematic issues are observed from the 44 letters. Through a close-reading examination of the content of the letters, the different issues and concerns being laid out by the women advice-seekers are now given initial help by the women advice-givers through the latter's advice list.

It is through this advice column where the voices of women are heard and are given high importance by everyone. Their outcry in life as a struggling wife, troubled mother, confused daughter, abused daughter, and etcetera exhibits the readers their collective feminist voice. Thus, their experiences are not just shared by one person where in this case-- the advice-giver, but rather their chronicles are disclosed to everyone. It is through their stories where readers are heartened to also commence opening up themselves to the world.

In a newspaper advice column, two people are always involved: the advice-seekers and the advice-givers.

First, advice-seekers are those letter senders who write in questions which can be characterized as complaints, indirect requests, rhetorical questions, or pleas for the advice-giver to agree with the letter writer on some issues being tackled. “In other words, a letter writer may pursue different goals with a question: to get a problem solved, to draw the reader’s attention to an issue, to solicit agreement on an argument, to get into print, and so on” (Kreuz and Graesser cited in Locher 2006). These advice-seekers are anonymous people who either choose to use a pseudonym, an initial of their names or an adjective that describes their mood such as ‘worried’ or ‘confused’ (McKay cited in Neville 2012).

Second, advice-givers provide or work towards a solution based on the advice-seeker’s problem. Hence, the advice is given with high hopes that the advice-seekers will treat the suggestions as relevant and helpful in solving the issues being broached (Locher and Limberg 2012). Furthermore, these advice-givers will use warranting strategies to build credibility in their recommendations and most importantly to show expertise in their work. These advice-givers usually cite a source, quote facts and numbers, and refer to a personal experience in responding to the letters of the advice seekers (Locher and Limberg 2012). Alternatively, DeCapua and Dunham (cited in Locher 2006) presented principal strategies of the advice-givers and these are: helping the senders clarify their problems, helping them explore their options, and offering direction, usually regarding some action to be taken in the future.

With the insights exemplified about the advice-seekers and the advice-givers, this study will now delve into the distinctiveness of the women as letter senders and as letter advisers.

On Societal Roles of Women as Advice-Seekers and as Advice-Givers. In view of the fact that this present study blitzes on how these women advice-seekers and women advice-givers in the *Women’s World* characterize themselves in the advice columns published in *SunStar Daily*, it is then a good channel to keep count on how these women were portrayed before. This paper showcases how women were specifically represented in print media, particularly in the advertisements. Research in the early 1970s suggested that women were largely portrayed in stereotypical roles. Courtney and Lockeretz (in Pearson, West, and Turner 1995) observed that “no women were depicted as professionals or in high-level managerial positions; however, they were portrayed as entertainers, clerks, airline flight attendants, assembly-line workers, airline employees engaged in food preparation, and school teachers.”

Another observation in the mid-1970s by Culley and Bennett (in Pearson et al. 1995) in the portrayal of women in advertisements is that “(1) women are more concerned with their appearance and domestic duties than with complex decisions, (2) women are more often portrayed in domestic settings than men, (3) women are rarely portrayed in occupational settings, and (4) women wear pants or slacks in only a few ads.”

Quite the opposite is Mitchell Siegel’s observation where according to him “women are equally disapproving of the housewife who is in “endless” pursuit of dirt and the chauffeur-driven working woman” (Pearson et al. 1995). This observation is substantiated by Judith Langer, a market researcher who asserted that “what is evolving is a new kind of woman who is active, alive and out in the world...She cares about her home but isn’t obsessive about it. If she has a career, it isn’t necessarily as a TV anchor woman. Advertisers are showing a softer woman who cares about relationships yet at the same time is strong” (Bralove in Pearson et al. 1995). Likewise, advertisements are starting to convey to everyone that women are no longer portrayed as unable to make important decisions, dependent on men, or primarily sex objects (Pearson et al. 1995). Thus, women are now described as multifaceted women.

These agony aunts who are labeled in this paper as advice-givers are deemed to possess full credibility, approachability, and empathy. They are charged with the ability to offer trustworthy, to provide reliable advice, and to take the senders’ problems seriously (McKay in Neville 2012). Furthermore, these agony aunts usually take the roles as nurses, counselors and psychologists in the advice columns where this professional expertise where according to McRobbie (in Neville 2012) restates the role of females as a professional helper.

With these previous portrayals of women in print media, this paper seeks also an answer on the women’s diverse societal roles as advice-seekers and as advice-givers in the newspaper advice columns, specifically in these modern times. Aside from recognizing the different distinctive roles played by women in the advice column, readers of the *Women’s World* are flaunted with different topics of the issues raised by the women letter senders. The readers themselves have an array of choices on what to read in the advice column depending on what issues they deemed are relevant at the moment.

On Socio-Psychological Thematic Issues. Advice columns published in newspapers or magazines are dedicated in giving advice to all advice-seekers’ letters or emails. Various themes emerged from those letters which enclose the different concerns of these women who are hunting for advice to their fellow women, as well. Wilbraham (n.d.) provided 18 content-

based themes which were developed through close examination of the domains of experience represented as problematic in the sample of published advice texts. **(1) Family or Friendship Problem** where first this can involve parent-child relationship, sibling disputes and second is a relationship with a friend where romantic or sexual involvement is indicated. **(2) Commitment Confusion** where this pertains to hesitation about entering a committed relationship. **(3) Relationship Dissatisfaction** speaks of a specific problem within a relationship which has led to a deadlock in negotiating for what one wants within a relationship. **(4) Sexual Relationship Problem** brings up sexual difficulties expressed as threats to relationship-survival. **(5) Jealousy or Possessiveness** includes any references to jealousy. **(6) Infidelity or Desertion by a Partner** denotes a partner's sexual unfaithfulness or exit from the relationship. **(7) Own Infidelity** touches on extra-relationship sexual activity done by the advice-seeker. **(8) Partner's Abusive or Addictive Behavior** brings in personal problems which result from a partner's addictive or abusive behavior. **(9) External Pressures** rope in to the disapproval of the relationship from an outside source. **(10) Financial problem** includes mention of financial strife which is recognized to threaten the function of a relationship. **(11) Homosexuality** incorporates any reference to homosexual experience. **(12) Rape and Child Sexual Abuse** implies any form of forced sexual activity either a current or a previous experience. **(13) Psychological Problem** suggests any reference to emotional or psychological distress. **(14) Physical Attractiveness** alludes to dissatisfaction with appearance of the body. **(15) Medical Information** indicates requests for specific professional information pertaining to general health. **(16) Spiritual or Value Conflict** brings up any mention of spiritual disquiet or clashes of values between self and society. **(17) Legal Advice** raises any request for legal information on rights. **(18) Career or Educational Problem** insinuates any problem related to study or information about career-planning.

Some of these themes, if not all are the socio-psychological thematic issues that may come out in the letters written by the advice-seekers as they recount their experiences in the real world, ranging from simple matters to major concerns and issues.

The following are the researchers fostering interest in advice columns.

The study done by Gudelunas (2008) traces the development of the advice column where his analysis focused on the changing topics emerging in the column from the characteristics of women, to courting practices down to issues on sexuality and various problems such as medical concerns, abuse and many others.

Rojo-Laurilla (2002) on her part initiated to determine the genre of advice columns found in Filipino magazines and newspapers. She specifically determined the letter-writers' disclosure of themselves and at the same time, how they were able to present themselves in their letters as they have become advice-seekers and as advice-givers.

In fact the existence of advice columns proves its worth. For one, Gudelunas' (2008) paper argues that these advice columns become an important avenue for sensitive matters to be discussed. His data consisted of Ann Landers' column on the topic of masturbation. In addition, the study done by Kistnasamy (2006) explored how the newspaper advice column as a community psychology resource can be improved and extended so that it could serve as a valuable community support. Kistnasamy who is acting as an advice columnist in a community newspaper has engaged himself in answering the readers' concerns. The author combined his personal experience and a professional psychological approach in answering the letter-writers' concerns. He evaluated a newspaper advice column focusing on the themes of problems, appropriateness of advice given, and assessment of the quality of advice.

The different styles employed in the advice columns are also investigated by different scholars. Decapua and Dunham (2007) explored the advice-giving done by both the native and non-native speakers of American English, specifically on how the giving of advice was done on each of the letters. The results showed that there are dissimilarities in giving of advice by the native and non-native speakers of English. The native speakers yielded narrative responses that required coding and analysis based upon content categories. On the other hand, the giving of advice by the non-native speakers was briefly done and there were patterns of formulaic answers.

On the other hand, Liao and Liao (2009) studied how advice writers employed move sequences and modal verbs. Their paper aimed to testify that advice writers of different topics employed different moves and modal verbs to achieve discourse function and second that the differences may imply writer's intentions, emotion and expectancy of effects on the readers to interpret. The results showed four frequent moves: advice, assessment, explanation, and general information. The columnists also used different modal verbs in dealing with different issues. Also, Kanervo, Jones and White (2013) contrasted the two forms such as the content and style of Dorothy Dix and Abigail van Buren's advice columns. Results illustrated that between the two columnists, it was Miss Dix's column which appeared longer. In terms of their writing style, it was observed that their styles have not really much changed over time.

These advice columns reveal the various advice-seekers' personalities as they present issues in life. Dibner's (1974) research paper highlighted that those letter senders of a newspaper advice column find fault with other people with the misfortunes they had in their lives, thus, not seeing the need to do something better to solve the problems. Because advice columns have proven their worth to millions of advice-seekers as well as to avid readers, Molnar et al. (1999) determined the quality of the medical advice presented to the readers published in Canadian newspapers in 1995. The 50 articles that were selected included advice which could be read in references such as the book of geriatric medicine. Results proved that one of the goals of an advice column is to help the elderly in their health conditions for them to be better. But on the other hand, there were suggestions in the column where they were not fitting for all readers; thus, the advice lists become perilous.

Few studies have closely examined the newspaper advice column which has a focal point in seeking for advice and in giving of advice. Through this present study, as well as the other cited research studies, all of these make great contributions in the understanding of letter senders and the letter advisers in any form of advice column, may it be from a magazine advice column, internet advice column, radio advice segment, and similar texts.

III. Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the feminist voice revealed in the advice-transaction column *Women's World*, Sunday issues of *SunStar Daily* newspaper. Specifically, as implied by the verbal transaction, it focuses on these feminist aspects:

1. societal roles of women as
 - 1.1 advice-seekers,
 - 1.2 advice-givers;
2. socio-psychological thematic issues involved

IV. Significance of the Study

Specifically, the results of this study will benefit the following: The Academics, Communication Researchers, Readers of the advice column, and the Women in general

The *academics* like the professors in various fields in communication, literature, media studies, pragmatics, social psychology, counseling, and etcetera will gain valuable insights and be able to learn from the simplest to the toughest experiences from the women advice-seekers and from the women advice-givers. Thus, the societal roles played by women

(advice-seekers and advice-givers) in the contemporary society can be discussed in class pertaining to relevant issues.

The *communication researchers* who might have the same interest as that of the present researcher can hopefully unveil other images of women in different sources such as the radio advice column, internet advice column, magazine advice column, and etcetera where similarities and differences can be divulged and at the same time, presenting the specific kinds of women in the past and the specific kinds of women at the present.

The avid *readers of the advice column* can inspire both men and women to liberally express themselves where this newspaper advice column provides an avenue to some challenging issues that may be difficult for them to impart to people who know them personally. Those topics which are considered taboo can now be discussed in the advice columns either written on newspapers or magazines.

The *women* in the society, who are reticent, can finally find a voice where they can open up issues that may be controversial or non-controversial to talk about to other people and where their experiences in the real world might also be identical to other women's encounters. Their being able to speak for themselves in the advice column showcases to readers that this is how women are able to express themselves in their struggles as a mother, wife, co-worker, daughter, teenager, student, employee, and etcetera. On the other hand, the advice columnists who are also women themselves are able to display different identities of them in responding to the different issues being tackled in the letters of the senders. Thus, these women (advice-seekers) can truly be given compassion by the other women (advice-givers) who are also able to understand their scuffles in life.

The *Department of Communications, Linguistics, and Literature* (DCLL), which is actively involved in DYRF, particularly Bulawanong Tunob can benefit from this study. The results can be one of the highlights during the celebration of Women's Month where the different societal roles of women and the different socio-psychological thematic issues can be discussed thoroughly raising awareness about women's world through the long-month celebration every March.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used the qualitative research design where each of the letters was closely analyzed. For the research question, the detailed characteristics of both the advice-seeker and

the advice-giver was illustrated so that the different societal roles of women were elaborated. This paper depicted who women are in the newspaper advice column in a local newspaper where a discussion of their diverse roles happening in the family, involving their relationships, and in their workplaces revealed their identities. Furthermore, the various socio-psychological thematic issues in each of the letters by the women letter senders was also closely examined so that the specific themes that emerged were exemplified in the results and discussion.

Research Data

The data of this study are the advice columns in the Women's World published in SunStar Daily every Sunday of the week where twenty-two issues were examined. Given that the study clearly examined only letters written by women advice-seekers, those advice-seekers who are men are not part of the study. Since every issue has two advice-seekers and two advice-givers, then an overall total of forty-four letters was investigated. The Sunstar Publishing Inc. has stopped publishing this column about Women's World and is replaced by Single's Talk. The last release of its publication is in 2015. Hence, this study was focused on its 2015 newspaper advice column. Given that anyone can send in their letters, this study centered on women may they be working professionals, students, single, married, adults, teenagers, and etcetera. The two women advice-givers in this study are responsible in providing or working towards a solution based on the advice-seeker's problems.

Research Procedure

A letter of consent was given to SunStar Daily Publishing Company. The six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke's (2006 cited in Nowell et. al 2017) Thematic Analysis was applied in identifying the different societal roles of women as advice-seekers and as advice-givers.

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with the data

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Phase 6: Producing the report

A close-reading is done in each of the letters and then follows the identification of roles presented. Also in identifying the socio-psychological thematic issues involved, the six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis was utilized. The titles

provided in the advice column give hints as to the prevailing concerns in the letters sent in by the advice-seekers.

Results and Discussion

Societal Roles of Women as Advice-Seekers and as Advice-Givers

Table 1 exemplifies the different societal roles of women acting as advice-seekers and as advice-givers. This paper depicts who women are at present where a discussion of their diverse roles happening in the family, involving their relationships, and in their workplaces reveal their real identities. The different experiences recounted by the advice-seekers in their letters are deemed true to life stories. These women are going through depression, anxiety, and confusion and they face unique problems. This is why they often seek out help from the advice-givers whom they credit knowledgeable of their apprehension and distress in life. These advice-givers despite not showing any credentials have shown their expertise to the readers by proving their greater knowledge which includes their real life experiences and family background.

Table 1. *Societal Roles of Women as Advice-Seekers/Givers*

SunStar Daily Women's World TITLE OF THE LETTER	ROLES OF WOMEN	
	ADVICE-SEEKERS	ADVICE-GIVERS
• Sleep Problem	Health Anxious Woman	Professional Helper (Nurse)
• Visitors Unwelcome	Baffled Granddaughter	Compassionate Counselor
• Being A Good Mom	Remorseful Mother	Family Counselor
• Sibling Wars	Worried Mother	Family Counselor
• My BF Has No Time For Me	Abandoned Girlfriend	Guidance Counselor
• Moody Husband	Struggling Wife	

		Marriage and Family Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarreling Parents Dismay Daughter 	Struggling Daughter	Family Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping A Diet 	Weight-Conscious Young Woman	Health Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always The Last To Know 	Doubtful Wife/Suspicious Woman	Marriage and Family Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faddish Son 	Apprehensive Mother	Family Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse in the House 	Abused Daughter	Guidance Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insecure Boss 	Confused Employee	Career Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should I Follow My Heart? 	Worried Girlfriend	Guidance Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitive Skin 	Beauty Conscious Woman	Medical Doctor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking God for Signs 	Heart-broken teenager	Spiritual Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Work vs. Singing Career 	Puzzled Daughter	Guidance Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-Range Family Vacation Planning 	Anxious Mother	Travel Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help for Low Back Pain 	Health Anxious Woman	Medical Counselor

• Nanny Makes Mom Insecure	Insecure working mother	Family Counselor
• Playing with Fire	Troubled Teenager	Guidance Counselor
• Some People Don't Appreciate Teachers	Questioning Concerned citizen	Guidance Counselor
• Son Declares Independence	Worried Mother	Family Counselor

Advice-Seekers. Most of the advice-seekers in the Women's World can be typified as anxious and worried. In particular, they are health anxious women and worried mothers. Some of the apprehensions of these health anxious women are on sleep problems, healthy diet, sensitive skin, and back pain. Wanting to achieve the desired number of hours a person must sleep results in the advice-seekers writing in the Women's World section where they make illumination about sleeping habits. In her letter, she asserts

I am deeply bothered with my sleeping habits in the sense that I have trouble sleeping. I know that sleep is as essential to us as food, air and water. That's why I'm worried because I have difficulty falling asleep. And if and when I do fall asleep, I also suffer from frequent awakening during the night.

These lines establish that women themselves are trying their best to meet the minimum requirements of getting enough sleep, thus becoming anxious for not being able to have a good night's sleep most of the time. An article affirms that everyone needs to make sure that he/she gets enough sleep and this is especially true for women today since the quality of her sleep has a great effect in her daily life (*Sleep and Women 2014*).

Aside from getting anxious on sleep problems, these women advice-seekers are reckoned as weight-conscious women too. Needing to look good and desiring great health are the topmost reasons of women imploring advice about keeping a healthy diet. This woman advice-seeker divulges in her letter that

After spending my summer vacation in my grandparents' hometown, I noticed that my pants and shorts have become almost impossible to fit into.

Of course I wanted to look good again but I was not committed enough to a diet and exercise program. I'm a little bit alarmed because most members of my family are overweight and obese.

An article reveals that compared to men, women have high interest in reading and understanding food labels primarily because of health issues (*Women are More Health Conscious 2014*).

Also, the young women of today are health anxious because of enduring low back pain. The kind of work women have at present has hugely thrown in to their problem. She cites

I'm only in my late 20s but I'm already suffering from low back pain. It usually occurs after busy day at work and at home. It's been keeping me up late for nights, so in the morning, I don't really feel rested.

One article avows that compared to men, women undergo more intense pain. Also, it made clear that women can experience the pain more, especially if they focus on their negative emotions (*Why Women Endure More Pain Than Men 2014*).

Moreover, women are vain about their skin. Owning a sensitive skin type has fronted them to ask about the different tips in treating scars. The woman advice seeker owns up having this skin type and points out in her letter that

My skin is very sensitive. A small mosquito bite can lead to scarring. When I unconsciously scratch myself, I'm sure it would show on my skin. And I am also accident-prone or as you may call it, clumsy.

Persadsingh (2015) confirmed that the skin of women is drier compared to men's. He particularized that because women have tender skin and usually use skin care products, and so they have higher chances of irritation and redness.

On the contrary, women who are mothers grieve over in becoming a good mom, in experiencing sibling wars, in having a faddish son, in planning a family vacation, in being a working mom, and in son's asking for independence.

In her letter, a mother's guilt has turned her to be a despondent mother. Her tussle in life is her aspiration to create an almost perfect home for her family. But because the letter-writer ruminates that her efforts as a mother in the previous years were not enough, this negative

feeling brings to her the assumption that she falls short as a mother. This kind of experience of women depicts that in general, family women always dream of crafting a perfect life for their families. This mother uncovers in her letter that

Everyone said that a mom's life is a work in progress. We are forever fixing things, whether it's our houses, children's problems and even our own relationships. Sometimes, I feel that I can never create the home and the life we have always dreamed of.

Przeworski (2012) in her article mentioned that as mothers, it is always good to remind oneself of the reason of wanting to become a mother and the meaning of being a mother. Because she supposes that a slew of worries and concerns about something bad will only lead to losing wonderful moments of motherhood. Moreover, Stevens (2005) clearly explained that "Anxiety only gets in the way when you experience too much of it. Your attention gets distracted by anxious thoughts and feelings, disrupting your self-confidence. It's these secondary effects that prevent you from performing to the best of your ability."

Indeed, the struggles of a mother in reality will never finish off easily just like these advice-seekers who are very much worried about the sibling's endless squabbles. Part of a mother's apprehension is that it might give rise to some severe fights which can instigate broken relationships in the future. This kind of fear of women exemplifies how worried they may become seeing that their children are not in good terms with their other siblings. Because of her anxiety, she poses questions like

My husband and I have four children, ages 14, 12, 8 and 5. It seems that they are always quarreling.. What if their fighting turns serious? I'm afraid they might drift apart as adults.

For Dreisbach (2010) being anxious is regarded as a normal feeling because according to him, it helps recognize real problems and identifies solutions.

Having children who are growing up is one of the adjustments that parents make especially those mothers who are apprehensive about their children's weird behavior. This mother is troubled the way her son has dressed up, has put earrings on his left ear, and has dyed his hair. This over-reaction by the women leads them to construct in their minds the possibility of their children involving into drugs. She reveals in her letter that

I have a son who is acting weird these days. I mean, he was not faddish before. But I cannot seem to accept the fact that my son is acting and looking weird. Honestly, doc, sometimes I'm afraid that he is already into drugs.

Przeworski (2012) illuminated that those who are characterized as worriers deemed themselves as showing true love and care for other people.

Women who have great plans for their family vacation transpire them to be anxious travelers especially in the financial issues. Women generally would want to make sure that what is stated in the budget is being followed. She brings up in her letter some of her concerns like

Our family is planning to have an overseas trip. This will be our first time to travel abroad. As early as now, I'm busy planning for this trip. We are all excited about it. Could you give some tips on how to avoid some of the mistakes that travelers make?

Stevens (2005) indeed validated that "many women struggle with worry and anxiety over the course of their lives". She further said that because women always think and plan ahead of time, this act has turned women to be worried and anxious about the future. Since women are considered to be worriers, she added that they benefit also out of worrying because they themselves can already think of the possible solutions to problems coming in their way even if these have not yet happened.

Another adversity encountered by most busy working mothers is the feeling of insecurity towards the nanny. Having this kind of set-up would insinuate that it is the caregiver who mostly attends to the children at daytime while they are at work. This mother talks about her experience one day and she reveals

As I turned to walk out the door, my baby looked at me with big round eyes, pauses and happily waved goodbye. I said to myself, that is what I wanted, right. A guilt-free exit before going to work? Why then did I feel like crying?

Another situation that will make mothers become really worried is when their young adults would decide to live independently after landing a job. Their anxiety is a picture of all mothers where letting go is still the toughest thing to do. This mother discloses in her letter that

After graduating from college and landing a job, my son suddenly told me that he wanted to live independently. He also told me that he has to take charge of his life. And that it doesn't mean he doesn't need his parents anymore.

Przeworski (2012) validated in her article that most mothers worry from time to time and they agonize most about their children. One obvious cause of anxiety is parents who are overprotective and over controlling their children's lives (*Causes of Anxiety: Overprotective and Controlling Parents* 2014). Moreover, Church (cited in Espina 1996) stated that in the Philippines, showing overprotection is one of the maternal roles considered to be a norm for almost all mothers.

Many young women already cart the burden for being part of a broken family. Their parents' gloomy experience has frontaged on them to become struggling daughters. Because of the parents' separation, children are bemused whether to live with their mom or dad. She unveils that

My parent's marriage is on the brink of a break-up. Fights and anger fill our gloomy home. They are going to sell the house and plan to divide the pay-off between them. It's over, actually. It was difficult for me to decide whether I would stay with either mom or dad after their split-up.

These children are onlookers of their parents' marriage plummeting into pieces. This advice-seeker epitomizes other children who are also products of broken families where their respect to their parents is bit by bit losing. With this happening, Green (2014) asserts that one of the effects of a broken family on older children is that they experience some problems in their social, emotional and educational functioning.

Several maltreated young women in this generation utter hatred, bitterness and disappointment bluntly in their letters especially that their nightmares towards their own fathers are great factors in shaping who they have become today. She expresses in her letter that

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. My father was a womanizer. As a result, I have many half-brothers and half-sisters. I don't recall my father ever giving me a hug. I ended up marrying at a young age. I thought this would free me from the bondage of fear and abuse. But then, I still feel bitter and hate my father.

But despite going through the abuse, the women now are so heartfelt to let their negative feelings turn into positive feelings of forgiveness and understanding. One study acknowledges that children who belong to a happy family can result them to be happy children and thus, giving them a positive impact (Quinn 2014).

Advice-Givers. Advice-givers work out issues that have stemmed from the conflicts evolving different members of the family or even concerns outside the family. They help women manage and overcome their problems with their family and relationships.

When these women write in the advice columns, they ask for help from people where they have high hopes in giving them the answers to their queries. These women advice-givers in the *Women's World* take in the roles of counselors concerning family, marriage, work, and relationships. Their advice centers on helping apprehensive mothers, struggling and abused daughters, worried and abandoned partners, and struggling and doubtful wives.

Showing their empathy to women advice-seekers, family counselors prove how they are able to understand their tussles in life and accede to that what these women are going through is deemed normal.

Apart from that, a reassuring attitude of a family counselor bolsters these women advice-seekers. From time to time, citing what experts usually say about a specific problem is one of the strategies used by the advice-givers. For instance, there is a remark conveyed by the advice-giver that

Your case is a typical sibling rivalry scenario, with the close gap among your children. Experts say that the rivalry between siblings is always there, but the intensity of their fighting can be reduced with parental supervision.

Also, imparting reminders in the advice column like giving parental support and guidance to the children exhibits one quality of a good family counselor. This woman advice-giver utters in her advice column

Help them to be friends with each other now, and they will remain close even as they get older. Maybe, they won't become the best of friends, but that doesn't mean there won't be a home situation of acceptance and caring. Their relationship will not improve by itself; they need parental support and guidance.

Likewise, these advice-givers also console struggling daughters who lug the burden for being part of a broken family. The advice-givers who are daughters themselves have shown their full understanding, as well. This was manifested through emphasizing the word 'forgive' which has been their key word in the response letters. Thus, this hints the readers that women advice-givers have a non-judgmental and a forgiving heart to flawed parents. She conveys

Myra, the key is forgiveness. The more we forgive and pray for our parents, the more we are able to love them despite their shortcomings. Forgive. Only then will the respect for our parents return and grow. Forgiveness plays a major role in our family relationships. As we forgive our parents, God forgives us of our sin against them. Your parents need your forgiveness, understanding and gratitude.

As Decapua and Dunham (in Limberg and Locher 2012) explained that as advice-givers provide suggestions, they also recurrently attempt to establish a sense of rapport with the advice-seekers. Again, the rendering of the advice-giver's emotional support and informational support particularly in showing compassion and giving of suggestions are proven in this study. Furthermore, these women advice-givers also tender comfort to apprehensive mothers having faddish sons. Functioning as family counselors, they fire up their advice by citing the typical things that the young population would want to get done even if everything turns up bizarre. This was done to let these mothers understand about the nature of the teenagers. The women advice-givers finish off the advice column by prompting the mothers that the youth need reassurance of acceptance with their folks regardless of looking different in the society. She asserts that

Most of the time, the youth just want, rather crave, for reassurance that their folks will accept them even if sometimes they dared to be different.

Another struggle of the mothers is concurring on the fact that their grown-up children would like to exercise their right to live independently. As a family counselor, the advice pinpoints on letting the mothers understand about adult children's rights to choose for themselves. With the given advice, they aspire that these worried mothers can now rethink on the likelihood in consenting to their children to live independently and maturely. She articulates in her column that

Individuals have the right to choose for themselves. Parents may not agree with those choices, but must recognize their adult children's right to make them.

Indeed, Agadoni (2014) clearly explicated that one of the challenges of parents now is to find ways to prepare their children so they may become independent and productive adults in the future.

Aside from comforting apprehensive mothers, these advice-givers also provide solace to busy working mothers where the latter's sense of insecurity is rising up. Doubling up as a family counselor, they broach some research studies in their advice column as one strategy that reassures these busy mothers that even with the fact that the daughter has spent more day time with the caregiver; the child is more likely to secure attachments to her mom and dad. She highlights in her column that in one research, the children would more or less acquire affection from their parents despite there is an existence of child-caregiver relationships. Part of the family counselor's advice is itemizing some strategies that will make most of the mother-daughter time together enhancing their bond with each other. Her suggestions include:

Tell stories and sing songs. Babies and toddlers enjoy the repetition of favorite tales and tunes and especially mom's voice. Before leaving for work, maximize your mornings, sneaking in some fun by, for instance buying colorful toothpaste and brushing away together. Before putting her to bed, establish simple and enjoyable nighttime rituals. Little ones thrive on these constancies. So make them dependable but easygoing.

The advice-giver is very helpful as she provides informational support by giving several suggestions where these are deemed helpful in finding solutions to the working mothers' problems. In fact in one of the studies conducted, the findings uncover that full-time employed

mothers who spend less time with their infants are willing to compensate for their absence and so making use of the weekends and holidays for interacting actively with the infants is being done by most working mothers (Hoffman, Grasmuck, Weidman, and Skinner 2008).

Aside from acting as family counselors, these women advice-givers also double up as guidance counselors. It is observed in the advice columns that they are able to incorporate different kinds of values. One of these is making an attempt to help the women advice-seekers in becoming subservient granddaughters to their grandparents but still becoming a welcoming friend. She articulates in the advice column

Yes, I agree with you that hospitality is important, but it also important for you to understand your grandparents' position. Both sides need to respect each other. It should be possible for you to be able to come to a reasonable agreement on what is a suitable level of hospitality to be offered to visitors. This will probably mean compromise on both sides. Tolerance and patience with one another will be important and should always be a part of any relationship.

Moreover, giving comfort to abandoned girlfriends is one of the roles being played in by the guidance counselors. As they provide informational support, their advice pertains to giving suggestions. Some of these are finding other means to live life to the fullest by focusing on their studies and by getting engaged in their other interests. Her reminders include:

Vivian, a woman must have some activity to define her life. Focus more time on your studies and aim for personal and professional growth, pursue other interests. Let your door be open to other suitors. Perhaps there is another man who is much more deserving of your love.

In fact Norman (2015) in her article pointed out that one of the key characteristics of counselors is their yearning to help people overcome their personal problems. They support their clients by helping them work through their problems and finding new ways of viewing and solving them.

Another tough role played by the guidance counselors is advising the abused daughters. Thus, they lay emphasis in their response letter that even with the reality of being physically and emotionally ill-treated by her father should not be a reason not to adhere to the commandment

of God. The guidance counselors' reminder that healing is a process and not a one-time event divulges that they too concede the roots of the women advice-seekers' harsh feeling concerning their father. She articulates in her column

Remember that forgiveness is a process, not a one-time event. We move through anger and on to acceptance, which may fluctuate, especially if the people we are forgiving still behave the same way.

Indeed these women advice-givers also impart time in helping the single women in coping with their emotions, particularly those women who have fears about commitments. The guidance counselor has tipped off that

Being emotionally healthy for marriage is as important as being financially ready for the ups and downs of marriage.

This prompting augments the advice-giver's knowledge on what is needed to be prepared before getting married. Aside from managing those single women's fears, these advice-givers also hand in help to puzzled daughters where they mull over choosing between fulfilling their ultimate dream to become a singer or satisfying their parent's dream to become an accountant. With the counsel from the advice-giver, the latter is permitting the women to take in the consequences that they might be struggling once they will opt with what their heart desires. As women advice-givers, they did not put off the advice-seekers from living up to their dream in becoming a singer rather urging them to make sacrifices. She mentions in the letter

I know it's probably not what you want to do. But remember, you must be willing to make sacrifices for something you love. If you truly desire your parents' blessings on your choice of career, you'll have to meet them halfway, seeing their own dream come true.

Moreover, these guidance counselors also reach out to teenagers rummaging around for guidance because of doing petting and necking with a family member. Their advice columns contain explanations about the veracities of being young. So the guidance counselor advocates that curtailing communication with a family member is a better way to ward off any worst scenarios that may be occurring in the future between them. Her reminders are:

Stay put where you are now. Do everything to minimize contact with your cousin. Create all possible excuses not to join the vacations in Manila. In this way, you can save what can be saved. You are only 16, sweet 16! The whole world is waiting for you to conquer! By all means do so. You are a sensitive, loving and God-fearing person. You can do it! Live, love and be happy

The societal roles of women as advice-seekers and as advice-givers substantiate their diverse characters in the *SunStar Daily* newspaper advice column. The various and interesting roles of advice-seekers are health anxious, weight and beauty conscious women; remorseful, apprehensive and insecure working mothers; struggling wives; and abused daughters. While the different roles of women advice-givers are family and guidance counselors taking at hand the issues on family, relationships, children, and others that are wrestled with by the advice-seekers.

Socio-Psychological Thematic Issues

Table 2 discloses the various socio-psychological thematic issues tackled in each letter sent by the women letter senders. Various themes emerged from the women's letters which encompass their concerns in life.

Table 2. *Socio-Psychological Thematic Issues*

SunStar Daily (Articles and Issues)	SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL THEMATIC ISSUES
• Sleep Problem	Medical Information
• Visitors Unwelcome	Family Problem
• Being A Good Mom	Psychological Problem
• Sibling Wars	Family Problem
• My BF Has No Time For Me	Desertion by a Partner

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moody Husband 	Partner's Abusive Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarreling Parents Dismay Daughter 	Psychological Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping A Diet 	Physical Attractiveness and Medical Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always The Last To Know 	Psychological Problem and Infidelity by a Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faddish Son 	Psychological Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse in the House 	Psychological Problem and Child Abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure Boss 	Psychological Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should I Follow My Heart? 	Commitment Confusion and Psychological Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive Skin 	Medical Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking God for Signs 	Spiritual Conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Work vs. Singing Career 	Career Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-Range Family Vacation Planning 	Psychological problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help for Low Back Pain 	Medical Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nanny Makes Mom Insecure 	Psychological problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with Fire 	Own Infidelity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some People Don't Appreciate Teachers 	Psychological Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son Declares Independence 	Psychological Problem

All different types of women are affected by all different types of problems. These common arguments like psychological problem, infidelity, commitment confusion and health problems that arise in many women have caused them stress and anxiety.

In table 2, most of the issues ran into by the women advice-givers center on psychological problem. This kind of problem entails any reference to emotional or psychological distress experienced by women advice-seekers. Thus, they are likely to worry a lot from the simplest to the most challenging issues. Their dissatisfaction in life as mothers renders them to be emotionally gloomy. The sacrifices they have done to their family are presumed not enough, and so this results to mothers becoming so worried and disgruntled in life. As the woman advice-seeker expresses in her letter

I feel unhappy and wish that I've worked harder at being a good mother.

Likewise in the study of Gudelunas (2008) the column correspondents also expressed their feelings of loneliness in the advice column letters sent in the American newspapers.

Another worry that embarks upon mothers, concerns those who have growing children. As mothers, holding back their emotions towards the physical changes transpiring in their children is becoming their weakness. They inculcate fear within themselves which has led them to envisage that there is something iniquitous with their children's physical changes. This woman advice-seeker professes in her letter saying that

I cannot seem to accept the fact that my son is acting and looking weird.

Furthermore, mothers also get worried in planning a family vacation. Their uneasiness encompasses the financial aspect of the trip, the enjoyment of the family, and the chances of coming across the frequent mistakes made by the other travelers. One of the concerns that she brings up is

how to make sure that we don't go beyond our budget for the trip. Some of the travel guides over-schedule daily activities. I'm afraid that we might not be able to relax and enjoy.
--

One of the findings of a study has illustrated that the cause of women's anxiety is that they possess low levels of a brain substance and this explains why women are bigger worriers compared to men (*Women are Born Worriers 2014*). This could be an elucidation on why most of the women letter senders worry too much.

Likewise working mothers also feel emotionally unstable where they have this compelling reaction that those children who are left with the caregivers will develop a stronger bond with the latter. In her letter, she raises questions like

Does my baby prefer to stay with nanny than to be with me? Is she developing a stronger bond with her caregiver than with me? All of a sudden I feel insecure about my baby's affection for me.

Indeed, the study done by Quaye (2011) asserted that the sacrifices being made by the working mothers have affected their well-beings negatively because they have a hard time making a good balance between the demands of their work and the demands in the family.

Like most mothers, women advice-seekers are so anxious hearing their children's decision to be living independently where this would insinuate being away from the mother's presence. She utters in her letter that

I'm worried and hesitant to let him go because his career is not established yet and the course he graduated from wasn't what my husband and I wanted him to take.

In like manner, the findings of a 2007 research done by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute mentioned that those overprotective parents have difficulties letting go of their children even if they have gotten their degrees and worst is, even if they have landed a job (Agadoni 2014). Moreover, similar findings have been found by much earlier studies conducted in the 1960s where "the pattern of overprotection emerged and remains pervasive until now" (Espina 1996).

Married women have different struggles contrasted with those previously mentioned women in this research paper. Thus, women advice-seekers are also going through an emotional distress. As a wife, she intuitively feels that her husband is having an affair with one of his clients. The second one is having a strong suspicion that indeed there is another woman that her husband is

playing around. Even when there is no solid proof yet, women always confide in their instinct. Apart from these two issues, married women however would covet to cling to their marriages still. Just like this woman letter sender as she expresses

I love my husband. He is a good man. Besides, there are children to consider. How can I hold on to my marriage?

Women letter senders who are the end results of a broken family are enduring intricacies because of what has turned out in the marriage of their parents. This daughter expresses her dismay

I witnessed their relationship crumble into pieces. Throughout the crisis, my respect for my parents diminished. I blame them for the breakup of the family. They had severe marital problems I couldn't understand.

Mathers (2011) rationalized that people who have been exposed to series of stressful situations would find themselves also experiencing anxieties from time to time. In addition to women being part of a broken family, some of these women also struggle emotionally and physically because of their father's abuse. Because of her wobbly emotions, her sullenness and detestation towards her own father can't be warded off. This young woman imparts in her letter

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. I grew up fearing him because he often maltreated my mother and us children. I still feel bitter and hate my father.

Leahy (cited in Mann, 2014) pointed out that one of the reasons why people would feel the apprehension is that they come from divorced homes in which they are more likely to have the anxiety.

On the contrary, young women also have their own shares of struggles in life. The first issue encompasses a grandparent-grandchild relationship. The young advice-seeker is baffled as to why her grandparents have bad viewpoints pertaining to her friends. Because of her grandparent's overprotection, it has led the young woman to be mystified and anxious. She throws up questions like

I don't want to hurt my friend but should I tell her about my elder's feelings?
Or should I just keep this to myself and let her visit me no matter what?
What should I do to change my elder's attitude?

Espina's study (1996) explicated that "overprotection usually involves various forms of fears, anxieties, and worries which concentrate in one way or another on the handling of the child".

Another problem of young women is on commitment confusion where the situation pertains to their hesitation in going into a more committed relationship. They agonize so much about the future which hampers them from getting married. She conveys in her letter

I'm worried about what might happen if we settle down. I don't want to suffer and live in misery. I don't want to start from where I was before I reached what I am now.

Likewise, a lot of American women are also struggling with commitment anxiety. It was becoming clear that those women who are experiencing anxiety related to commitments have the tendency to keep postponing the dates of marriage (Furman 2014).

These young women who have completed their education are stumped whether pursuing their chosen career is right or going after their parents' dream is more desirable. She asks questions like

Is there some way to tell them while still showing them that my choice of career is not a sign of disrespect, and that I still love them?

One article avers that "parents are said to be very good career counselors" but unfortunately it has been observed that when parents enforce their will on their children, it thus brings not only harmful effects but also psychological problems to their children (*Role of Parents 2014*).

Conclusion

The study was able to examine different social roles that women play as advice-seekers and advice-givers in the SunStar Daily advice section. The results showed that women face particular and complicated obstacles in life and play a variety of roles in society. Their varied

experiences have revealed insightful facts, such as the fact that women worry about things like their weight and appearance, matriarchal obligations, relationships, and career goals, among other things. These problems provide as an example of the intricate and varied difficulties that women encounter in daily life. The study found that women who seek guidance have a number of socio-psychological issues that represent the worries and difficulties they face in their daily lives, including psychological issues, relationship infidelity, family troubles, commitment uncertainty, and professional obstacles. The study also emphasizes the significant contribution that women have as advice-givers in newspaper advice columns. Women offer guidance on a range of subjects, such as family problems, romantic relationships, and raising kids. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of women's support and guidance of others and the necessity for support systems that empower women to have fulfilled lives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are taken into account:

1. that the various societal roles of women be understood by all genders and that everyone will start to contribute in lessening the struggles of women in different ages.
2. that the socio-psychological thematic issues be revealed in other local advice columns to fully expose the other concerns and issues of Cebuano women.
3. that the editors of the periodicals may develop guidelines to address different issues of women in order for the readers regardless of gender be able to help women in general.

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