



Webtoon Pupus Dropout of School as Educational Media of Gender Equality for Young Generation

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ABSTRACT

Gender is a concept that identifies differences between men and women. With the social and cultural developments that have occurred over time, gender limitations should not complicate the execution of work or activities. Both men and women have rights and responsibilities when it comes to gender equality. Indonesia ranks low in terms of gender equality due to the persistence of patriarchal culture in certain segments of society. The role of the young generation is essential in raising awareness of gender equality in the modern era. The younger generation's proximity to gadgets and technology makes Webtoon a platform that can educate readers because it is easy to access and free of charge. The 'Pupus Putus Sekolah' (Pupus Dropout) webtoon can serve as a medium for delivering messages about gender equality through its characters, with the hope of increasing awareness about gender equality.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18 May 2023

Revised 06 Jul 2023

Accepted 23 Aug 2023

Available online 03 Oct 2023

Keywords:

Education,
Gender equality,
Webtoons,
Young generation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'gender' was first introduced by Robert Stoller in 1968. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, gender refers to the visible differences between men and women regarding values and behavior. Meanwhile, the Women's Studies Encyclopedia explains that gender is a cultural concept that seeks distinctions in roles, behavior, mentality,

and emotional characteristics between men and women that develop within society (Sofiani et al., 2020).

Gender indicates a biological grouping of two sexes, namely men and women. The term 'gender' refers to the social differences between women and men throughout the life cycle that are learned and rooted in every culture, can change over time, and have many differences, both within the culture itself and between

cultures. So, in broad terms, the notion of gender is a concept that identifies the differences between men and women when viewed in terms of social and cultural influences (Ummah, 2021).

With social and cultural developments over time, gender limitations should not complicate the execution of work or activities. Both men and women can have rights and obligations regarding gender equality. According to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2017), gender equality fulfills the rights and obligations experienced by men and women. In Indonesia, achieving gender equality can be challenging due to the persistence of patriarchal culture in some segments of society, and society's limitations in the perspective of gender are often a subject of debate.

Young generations have a crucial role in increasing gender equality awareness in Indonesia and supporting SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) programs for gender equality in the upcoming 2030 modern era. The young generations in the contemporary era are familiar with digital media, and they obtain many educational resources from various digital platforms, including information about the importance of gender equality. One platform that is currently favored by young generations is Webtoon, known for providing a variety of free and easily accessible digital comic content.

This research focuses on the young generation, who are closely connected to digital media, especially Webtoon. The study aims to explore how awareness among young readers, the younger generation, regarding Webtoon characters, whether explicitly or implicitly, can contribute to education about gender equality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gender Equality

According to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2017), gender equality fulfills the rights and obligations experienced by both men and women. Gender can be interpreted by the roles formed in society and the behavior embedded through socialization processes related to men and women. However, biological differences impose social demands that differentiate behavior, rights that must be obtained, resources, and power between them. Upholding gender equality can advance the country's development, increase Gross Domestic Happiness, and reduce poverty, enabling the realization of development strategies aimed at empowering and improving people's lives (kemenpppa.go.id, 2017).

2.2. Low Gender Equality in Indonesia

The practice of patriarchal culture persists today despite numerous feminist movements and women's activists advocating for women's rights. This practice remains evident in various domestic, political, cultural, and economic activities, leading to several social problems, including domestic violence (KDRT), social harassment, early marriage, and the stigma surrounding divorce (Sakina & Siti A, 2017).

Gender discrimination is not limited to Indonesia; it still occurs in all aspects of life in various countries and regions, even as times have progressed rapidly. Gender equality remains a cause worth fighting for because, in this case, women are the ones at a disadvantage. Women continue to encounter limitations in playing active roles in various important positions across various fields of life, despite both men and women deserving equal treatment (kemenpppa.go.id, 2017).

2.3. The Existence of a Patriarchal Culture That Is Still Inherent

Patriarchal culture positions men as the dominant party and gives them the power to exert control over women. This culture also perpetuates stigma, and the belief that masculine men are superior, while it disregards and perceives a woman's femininity as weak (Sakina & Siti A, 2017).

According to the narrative of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA), I Gusti Ayu Bintang Puspayoga, Indonesia still has a low level of gender equality awareness. Data obtained from the Gender Equality Index released by the United Nations Development Program Agency (UNDP) in 2018 ranked Indonesia 103rd out of 162 countries worldwide. Other data indicates that in the same year, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) stood at 90.00 and 72.1, respectively (Winahyu, 2022). This suggests that gender equality awareness in Indonesia is relatively low, and patriarchal culture plays a significant role in this situation.

2.4. The Role of The Young Generation in Gender Equality

The low level of gender equality in Indonesia compels the younger generation to strive for improvement. They must understand that gender differences should not be a basis for differentiation in various aspects, including perspectives and opportunities for work. Men and women deserve equal respect.

The first step the younger generation can take to promote gender equality is to eliminate old stigmas about women. They should then collaborate with relevant stakeholders to create programs highlighting the importance of gender equality. Additionally, women should have the con-

fidence to play an active role and stand on equal footing with men. The role of the younger generation is crucial in ensuring that women are not diminished, and the discriminatory stigma against them fades away. This way, men and women can contribute equally, regardless of their gender (Zega, 2022). The younger generation must recognize that gender differences should not be a basis for differentiation in various aspects, such as perspectives and opportunities for work. Men and women deserve equal respect.

2.5. Informal Education

Informal education is acquired and learned outside of formal and non-formal education. Typically, children receive informal education from their parents or families. Furthermore, the environment can also play a role in shaping children's understanding of gender equality (Abdhal, 2021).

The community environment is where everyone interacts within the system. Therefore, the community environment plays a central role in instilling ethical and aesthetic values in character formation (Zahroh & Na'imah, 2020).

2.6. Webtoons as an Education Medium

Webtoon is often referred to as web-comics, a platform that distributes color comics online in a long strip format on a single webpage. The vertical strip format used in webtoons is designed to provide a reading experience similar to watching a short film (Jang & Song, 2017).

There are various forms of digital comics available as applications, and one popular option is LINE Webtoon. LINE Webtoon is a digital comic platform originating from South Korea and launched by technology companies, namely LINE Corporation and NAVER Corporation (Lestari & Irwansyah, 2020). Webtoon is well-known both in its home country and glob-

ally, offering a wide range of comic genres.

Webtoon can serve as an interactive learning medium. The vertically arranged panels enhance the reading experience, making it enjoyable, comfortable, and easier to navigate compared to printed comics. Furthermore, the content presented in Webtoons can remain accurate and highly feasible (Eriyanto et al., 2022).

2.7. The Personality Function of The Character in a Story

Personality, according to Koentjaraningrat, comprises several traits that individuals consistently exhibit from birth. Every person undergoes a socialization process that continues throughout their lives. An individual's personality can be shaped by their behavior, resulting in each person having a distinct identity that sets them apart from others (Manis, 2021).

Characters in stories often serve as practical tools for character development, which readers can grasp through the presented storyline. Authors imbue story characters with traits to connect with various aspects of life, including issues, behaviors, attitudes, and social ethics. The hope is that through the characters' actions, attitudes, and experiences, readers can draw lessons and emulate the positive

values depicted in the story (Indiarti, 2017).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method employed was qualitative, which is a method used for exploring and understanding the perspectives of a group of people regarding social issues (Creswell, 2016). Data were collected through a questionnaire survey that included both open and closed questions. The questions covered topics related to knowledge about gender equality, various gender-related issues in society, and the perceived importance of gender equality. Additionally, respondents were asked to share their opinions on what they liked about the *Pupus Dropout of School* webtoon. The collected data were analyzed using discourse analysis, specifically following the Sara Mills discourse analysis model.

Discourse analysis focuses on the study of language as it is naturally used in both spoken and written forms. Sara Mills' analysis model examines how actors are positioned within the text, addressing questions about who the subject of the story is and to whom the narrative is directed. Sara Mills' approach also highlights how the reader's position is depicted within the text (Novitasari, 2018). **Table 1** shows Sara Mills analysis framework.

Table 1. Sara Mills Analysis Framework

Level	What You Want To See
Position: Subject-Object	How did it happen, and from whose perspective? Who is positioned as the narrator (subject), and who is portrayed as the object being described? Do each actor and social group have the opportunity to present themselves and their ideas, or are their presence and images depicted by other groups or individuals?
Reader Position	How does the author convey the reader's position in the text? How does the reader position themselves within the text? Which group within the text does the reader identify with?

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Pupus Dropout of School Webtoon: The Moral of Each Character

"Pupus Putus Sekolah," in English, can be called "Pupus Dropout of School." It is a webtoon created by Kurnia Harta Winata. This webtoon tells the story of Pupus as the main character with a background that finds school annoying but still wants to be innovative. Since she was little, Pupus has lived only with her grandmother without the presence of her parents. One day, her grandmother passed away, resulting in her meeting with the Professor, who becomes Pupus' educator and opens the door for Pupus to meet other characters, such as Madam Lie and Oky, who have a message in their life stories. With unique character depictions and a compelling storyline, anyone can read this webtoon because it is easy to understand and contains elements of humor that can entertain readers.

Based on the data, 61.1% of respondents are familiar with the webtoon 'Pupus Dropped Out of School' (Figure 1). Among them, 55.6% expressed their liking for the storyline of the webtoon. Other reasons readers appreciate the 'Pupus Dropout of School' webtoon include the message of the story (50%), the slice-of-life genre (27.8%), and the style and characters (22.2%) (Figure 2). Therefore, it can be concluded that many readers appreciate the light and enjoyable storyline due to the presence of Pupus, an innocent character with a high sense of curiosity, and other characters in the story who keep them entertained.

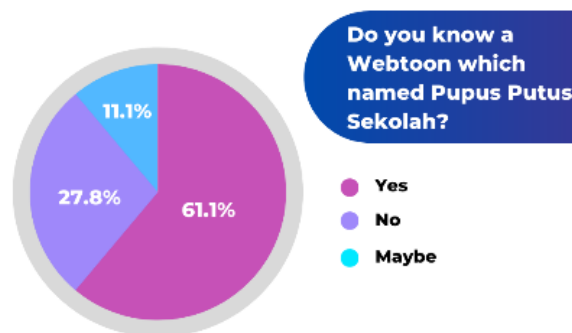


Figure 1. The percentage of respondents who know the Pupus Dropout of School

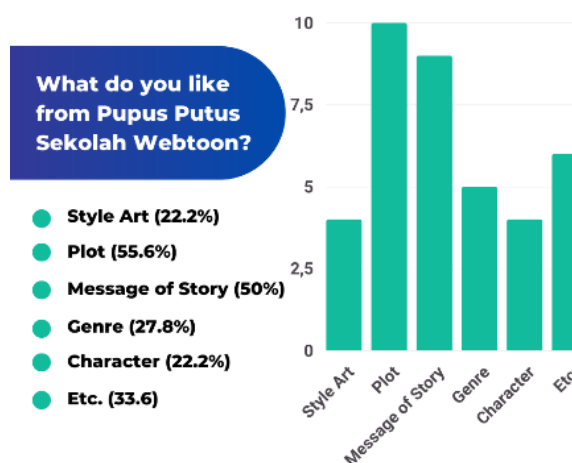


Figure 2. Reasons why respondents liked the webtoon Pupus Dropout of School

4.2. Webtoons as an Educational Media

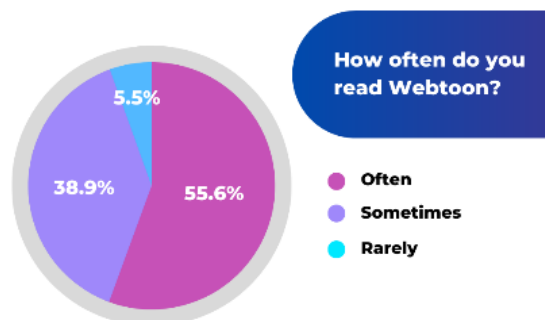


Figure 3. The percentage of respondents who read webtoons often

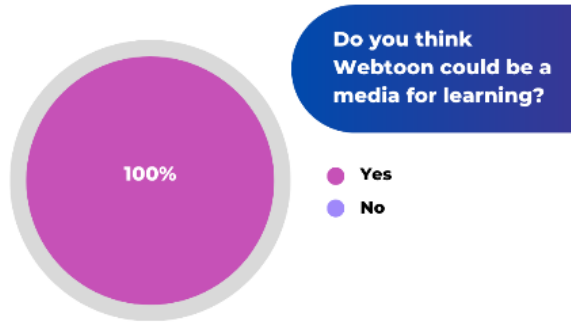


Figure 4. Respondents agree that webtoons can be used as an educational medium

Based on the survey data, 55.6% of respondents often read webtoons, and 38.9% read them occasionally (Figure 3). This result indicates that webtoons are engaging as reading material and entertainment. Furthermore, 100% of respondents agreed that webtoons can serve as educational media (Figure 4).

4.3. The Message of Gender Equality in The Pupus Dropout of School Webtoon

According to the data, 38.9% of respondents recognized the message of gender equality in the Pupus Dropout of

School Webtoon. They mentioned that the webtoon indirectly educates them about how awareness of gender equality can impact one's personality and the surrounding environment. Another 33.3% of respondents didn't directly see the message of gender equality but had a similar understanding. In contrast, 16.7% were unaware of the gender equality message in the webtoon. The remaining respondents mentioned that they hadn't read the Pupus Dropout of School webtoon.

4.4. Discourse Analysis on The Character of the Webtoon Pupus Dropout of School as a Form of Knowing Awareness of Gender Equality

The characters selected for this analysis are based on the highest percentage results from the questionnaire regarding those that have examples of gender equality. As many as 27.8% of respondents chose Madam Lie as a character with an example of gender equality, and 16.7% chose the Professor. The remaining 11.8% voted for Oky.



Figure 5. Visual representation of Scene 1 Season 2 Episode 27



Figure 6. Visual representation of Scene 2 Season 2 Episode 32



Figure 7. Visual representation of Scene 3, Episode 25, and Scene 4, season 2, episode 3

The depiction of dialogue and scenes on **Figure 5** can be interpreted as in that scene after meeting Madam Lie, the Professor introduces her to Pupus as a woman who has a successful career and owns restaurants in various cities, such as Jakarta and Surabaya. In **Figure 6** the dialogue and scenes show Oky, who is grateful because he gets to study as a chef under Madam Lie's guidance. Oky is proud to be mentored by a more experienced woman.

Figure 7 consists of the third scene from season 1 episode 25 and the fourth scene from season 2 episode 3. In Episode 25, the scene features the Professor advising Pupus about the purpose of human life, which is to grow in the direction one desires, much like how a plant grows toward the sun. It becomes a waste of time and energy when individuals lack direction. Meanwhile, in Season 2, Episode 3, the Professor simplified calculus theory for Pupus, making it as straightforward as playing a computer game and acquiring advanced abilities through calculus.

4.5. Sara Mills Discourse Analysis on Pupus Dropout of School Webtoon

4.5.1. Subject Position

The subject's position refers to how the roles of characters are portrayed in a text medium. The situation pertains to which character serves as the narrator within the text medium. The subject's position can be discerned through the characters' dialogue, which helps determine how the meaning is conveyed in a discourse (Novitasari, 2018).

Figures 5 to 7 shows some of the visuals of character scenes and their interpretations. In this Webtoon by Kurnia Harta Winata, the first character to be the subject is Pupus. This is because the author establishes Pupus as the main focus at the beginning of the story, illustrating

the sad and humorous stories of Pupus living with her grandmother. Pupus wants to be intelligent but despises going to school. The situation takes a tragic turn when her grandmother passes away shortly after the story begins. Subsequently, she meets the Professor while assisting one of her relatives, who works as a janitor on a campus.

Then, the subject changes to the Professor when Pupus encounters him in front of the campus. Through the Professor, Pupus is introduced to other characters such as Mak Luwe, the owner of a food stall near the Professor's house, Madam Lie, a successful restaurant owner, and Oky, the chef at Madam Lie's restaurant. On the other side, Pupus also receives instruction in new sciences in an enjoyable manner and is readily accepted by children her age. The subject shifts once again, this time to Oky, as Oky asserts herself as the only chef who can be mentored by Madam Lie, a figure who has successfully established restaurants in various cities.

4.5.2. Object Position

Characters in object positions are representations of their presence shown or told by other figures (Novitasari, 2018). In the Pupus Putus Sekolah webtoon, the object character is Madam Lie. Madam Lie is a character who has successfully set up restaurants in various cities. Her presence in this webtoon is introduced through the Professor character, who is Madam Lie's friend.

4.5.3. Reader Position

Readers are not only part of the recipients of the text but are also involved in transactions that will be seen in a text. The reader's position is usually associated with how the greeting or mention is made in a text (Novitasari, 2018). The author tells Webtoon Pupus from a third-person

point of view, who knows the whole story. Thus, readers will identify themselves with the main character, namely Pupus.

The dialogue results from readers in the webtoon where Pupus meets figures such as the Professor, Madam Lie, and Oky, listed in **Figures 5 to 7**. The reader will feel what Pupus is feeling about the characters of the characters he has met and recognized.

Then, there were also comments from webtoon readers who felt what Pupus was experiencing in his story. One of the readers, Na Hye Ra, said, "The Webtoon Pupus is a storm for people who have lost motivation and direction over all dreams that need to be reclaimed." Another reader, Yola Raphita Philadelphia, said, "I just started reading this comic to the end. I like the characters in the comic. The story is fascinating and builds enthusiasm and interest in learning"

4.6. Gender Equality in the Character of Pupus Putus Sekolah

Every storytelling in webtoon requires a character or characters who help liven up the atmosphere and describe the story through their personality or behavior. Characters in a story are usually intended as a suggestion related to practical character teachings, which readers can take from the account in question (Nurgiyantoro, 2002). Therefore, the characters in a story are clues the author deliberately gives regarding various matters related to life's problems, such as attitudes, behavior, and social ethics. Through the levels, attitudes, and behavior of the characters, readers are expected to be able to take lessons and imitate the positive feelings in the story.

Through the discourse analysis of the Sara Mills model that has been carried out, the webtoon characters in the position of the object and the subject greatly

influence the reader's feelings. The awareness they think after reading the webtoon is various moral messages, including gender equality, even though they get it indirectly, the comments on the webtoon evidence it, and the survey conducted.

One of the respondents, Nikita, chose the answer "maybe" in the closed question and was aware of the message of gender equality in the webtoon. Nikita also wrote a response to why she chose that answer, "...if anything, maybe what I remember is when Oky and Pupus learned to cook together with Madam Lie. It can be seen that not only men or women can and learn to cook, but not only adults who can and want to learn to cook. If there is a will and intention/determination, then one can learn whatever he likes and, of course, with persistence and consistency during the study."

The respondent Muhammad Naufal chose the answer "Yes". Muhammad Naufal wrote the reason, "Season 2, in the episode "Smooth Girl", Pupus said he wanted to be a gentleman whose indications were equal to a gentleman."

From the various data and analyses that have been carried out, the characters in the Pupus Dropout of School Webtoon can represent gender equality. Although in the story's plot, you can see the story's meaning in terms of morality as well, in the characterization, you can see the meaning of gender equality. The figure of a great woman can be seen in the character of Madam Lie, who is a successful restaurant owner. The stereotype in the middle that only women deserve to be in the kitchen is refuted in this webtoon because of Oky's character as a chef who trains and works as a cook at Madam Lie's restaurant. Then, the great figure of the Professor accompanies the main character in this story, namely Pupus, where the

Professor character, unrelated to Pupus, wants to attend and teach Pupus through informal education at home. Pupus can learn many things and become competent by learning from anywhere and anyone. Thanks to the guidance from the Professor, he proves that every child has the right to education. It follows the discussion on gender equality, which fulfills the requests of each gender.

Gathering the results from the questionnaire, conducting an analysis, and engaging in discussions regarding character suitability has had an impact on readers, leading them to learn about morals, life motivation, and gender equality. In line with Abdhul's perspective (2021), informal education is acquired from sources outside of formal education, with the environment playing a crucial role. The environment encompasses all the conditions that influence an individual's behavior, growth, development, and life processes (Zahroh & Na'imah, 2020).

4.7. Comparison of Foreign and Local Webtoons in Conveying Gender Equality Messages

An external webtoon that also conveys a message about gender equality is 'The Secret of Angel' (True Beauty). 'The Secret of Angel' (True Beauty) is a romance webtoon created by Yaongyi, a webtoon author from South Korea. Yaongyi's work has gained immense popularity in the webtoon community and has even been adapted into a K-drama. 'The Secret of Angel' webtoon tells the story of a woman named Ju-Kyung, who lacks confidence due to her less attractive appearance compared to her older sister. In her junior high school days, Ju-Kyung experienced bullying and social rejection from her classmates. Determined to transform her appearance, she dedicated herself to learning makeup skills, ultimately turning her previously ordinary face into that of

an angel. With her newfound beauty, Ju-Kyung easily makes friends and becomes beloved by everyone (Fahira Amru & Setiansah, 2021). **Figure 8** shows an illustration of Sujin experiencing physical violence.

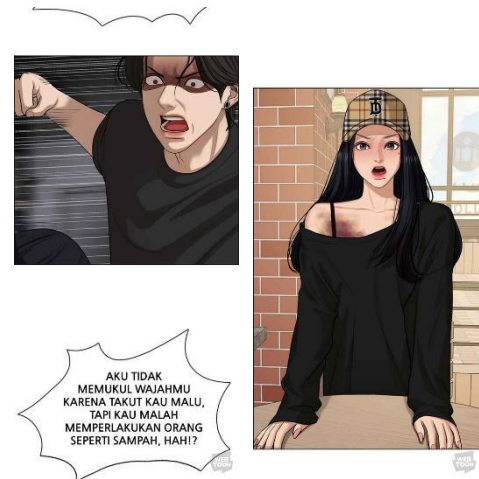


Figure 8. Sujin Experiencing Physical Violence Because of Her Boyfriend (Resource: Webtoon, 2022)

The two webtoons share similarities in that they both incorporate messages of gender equality. 'Pupus Dropout School' webtoon conveys a message of gender equality by depicting the daily lives and professions of its characters. Similarly, 'The Secret of Angel' webtoon also promotes gender equality through various stories involving characters of different age groups, ranging from teenagers to adults.

One character who embodies the concept of gender equality in 'The Secret of Angel' is Su-Jin. Su-Jin is portrayed as a social media influencer who finds herself in an unhealthy relationship with her boyfriend, experiencing physical violence from him. As depicted in one of the panels and dialogues above, Su-Jin's boyfriend appears angry and intentionally inflicts bruises on her skin. However, Ju-Kyung intervenes to help her break free from this abusive relationship.

Another character who conveys messages about gender equality is Seungho Cha. Seungho Cha is portrayed as an influencer and makeup artist who has a background of being bullied due to having a pimply face and develops an interest in makeup as a solution to conceal his acne. However, this causes him to be bullied even more, as seen in the dialogue, "Heh, Seungho Cha is disgusting, isn't he? What he does is like a girl. Disgusting", which his friend says as a mockery. His father condescended to his son through dialogue, "Child! What is a boy doing with dressing like that, huh?". In the conversation, the father's anger at his son, Seungho Cha, is depicted because of the stereotype that grooming is only appropriate for girls. Over time, Seungho Cha proved himself successful as an influencer and makeup artist through his lines, "I feel that makeup is a way to appreciate myself". **Figure 9** shows Seungho Cha's past and changes.



Figure 9. Seungho Cha's past and changes (Re-source: Webtoon, 2022).

The characters selected for this analysis were based on the highest percentage results from the questionnaire regarding those that have examples of gender equality. As many as 27.8% of respondents chose Madam Lie as a character with a sample of gender equality, and 16.7% chose Professor. The remaining 11.8% voted for Oky.

5. CONCLUSION

Webtoons can be used as educational media because the platform is practical, easily accessible via gadgets, and free to read. Its ease of access and attractive visuals make Webtoons highly sought after. As evidence, all 18 respondents (100%) agreed that webtoons can serve as educational media.

The Pupus Dropout of School webtoon, in its storyline, focuses on moral lessons with the main character, Pupus. However, it also subtly incorporates education about gender equality. Among the readers, 55.6% appreciated the webtoon because of its storyline, while 50% appreciated the message it conveyed. The significant number of readers who enjoy this webtoon indicates that the comic artist has been successful in conveying messages about morals and gender equality through the characters. Representing the message of gender equality are characters such as Madam Lie, Professor, and Oky. Madam Lie is a strong woman who has successfully pursued her dream in the field of cooking. The professor is a patient teacher who is willing to instruct anyone, and Oky is a chef who follows his ideals and career path without being limited by gender.

Furthermore, based on the research analysis of the Pupus Dropout Webtoon, we can identify the positions of the subject, object, and reader. The roles of the subject or narrators in this webtoon are

Pupus, Professor, and Oky, while the character Madam Lie occupies the position of the object. Readers are presented with the webtoon from a third-person perspective, offering insights into the entire story. Consequently, readers often feel motivated after reading this webtoon.

This study aimed to determine how readers perceive awareness of gender

equality and whether webtoons can serve as educational media for promoting gender equality awareness. It has successfully provided answers, highlighting the importance of gender awareness among adolescents. Such awareness can profoundly impact their future perspectives and enable them to actively engage in various significant roles across different life domains.

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