

Roles of Selected Characters in Rizal's Noli Me Tangere in Shaping College Students' Views on Class Dynamics and Social Justice

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ABSTRACT

Literature continues to shape how students view society, and José Rizal's novels remain relevant in addressing issues of injustice. This study examined the influence of selected characters from *Noli Me Tangere* on the perceptions of 44 Accelerated Pathway for Medicine (APMed) students from Saint Louis University-Philippines. Results showed that Sisa had the strongest impact, symbolizing maternal sacrifice, poverty, and suffering, while Crisostomo Ibarra, Elias, and Padre Damaso reflected reformist ideals and abuse of authority. Quantitative findings revealed strong agreement among respondents, with mean scores ranging from 3.35 to 3.65, indicating that Rizal's characters inspired empathy, social awareness, and critical thinking. Qualitative responses emphasized emotionally charged scenes, particularly those involving Sisa and the Sextons, which allowed students to connect historical injustices with present realities. Overall, the study suggests the enduring relevance of Rizal's works in shaping moral consciousness and civic responsibility. It recommends continued inclusion of Rizal's life and writings in the curriculum to encourage reflection on social issues and inspire students to stand for justice.

Keywords: Dr. Jose Rizal, Character in Rizal's works, El Filibusterismo, Noli Me Tangere, Class Dynamics, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

Literature serves as a powerful portrayal of society. It mirrors the ills of the community, allowing it to see its mistakes and make amends (Shalini, 2017). Literature has been a crucial aspect of the Philippine revolution during the 1890s. The writings of the country's national hero, Dr. José Rizal, were dedicated to the pursuit of equality and reform. They sparked a historic revolution by making the Filipino people aware of the corruption and oppression of Spanish colonial power. *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere* were pivotal works that exposed the injustices and suffering of the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era. He inspired Filipinos to strive for freedom and develop a sense of national consciousness through his stories and characters. Poems, essays, novels, correspondence, and historical annotations are among the genres represented in his literary works. They share views that are influential and remain essential to the reconstruction of the Philippine past as a means to forge a national identity (Ocampo, 1998).

Rizal's literary corpus remains relevant in the modern social context as the issues that he condemned decades ago are still prevalent in the Philippines today (Fabillar, 2022). A lack of awareness of the nationalistic essence of his creations led to the passage of Republic Act No. 1425 (1956), also known as the Rizal Law, throughout the nation. The implementation of RA 1425 obliges the study of his life, works, and writings, particularly his novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, in the curricula of all Philippine schools, colleges, and universities to build students' values, promoting national consciousness, and civic responsibility (Salise, 2022).

The law requires students to engage in Rizal's works and his life to develop moral character, personal discipline, and civic conscience, and to teach the duties of citizenship. Aguilar et al. (2022) demonstrated that *Noli Me Tangere* provides a human representation that enables students to understand patriotism and

the concept of nationalism better. Schumacher (1978) argues that as long as Filipinos read his compositions, they will fight for a society that embraces righteousness and freedom. This educational policy aims to make a socially conscious generation aware of the Philippines' present social conditions.

Despite efforts to preserve Rizal's relevance through education, existing literature reveals certain limitations. Many learners express admiration for his courage and social vision, linking these qualities to their own sense of ethics and empathy for marginalized sectors, yet this does not often translate into real civic engagement. For instance, characters like Ibarra's struggle with reform versus revolution and Sisa's tragic representation of a suffering people are rich narratives that, as Altez-Albela (2020) notes, are often reduced to mere historical allegories rather than being activated as frameworks for analyzing modern injustice.

Research on Rizal's literature, however, typically stops at the symbolism of the characters. Scholarly discussions generally focus on his life, nationalism, and the historical significance of the characters (Aguilar et al., 2022; Java, 2024). While studies like Gomez (2022) found that students can discuss the historical context of Rizal's novels, they often struggle to articulate the contemporary relevance of these characters' social struggles. This gap underlines the need to investigate how the hero's character influences their ethical thinking, political perspectives, and commitment to civic duty in contemporary society.

According to Ballard et al. (2020), political awareness among the learning population is also for personal well-being and civic engagement. On a global scale, the United Nations (2020) stresses that youth participation is essential for resilient democracies and inclusive governance. It encourages young people to exercise their rights, express their concerns, and participate in evaluating the systems that affect their lives. In the same way, encouraging political reflection through literature, such as Rizal's, becomes a meaningful way to cross education with sociopolitical responsibility.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to examine the roles of selected characters from José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* in relation to the views of 1st-year APMed students (AY 2025-2026) on class dynamics and social justice. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine which characters most influence students' understanding of class dynamics and thematic themes;
2. To identify the specific scenes and characters most frequently associated with class dynamics and social justice; and
3. To examine how students perceive Rizal's characters as either reflecting or overlooking present-day national power dynamics and authority abuses.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore the role of Rizal's characters, specifically to benefit the following:

Students. This research study will encourage students to critically examine social issues, civic rights, and duties in the light of Rizal's characters. Channeling their feedback is particularly helpful, as they can scrutinize the hidden implications of each character and provide new insights about these specific issues.

Teachers and Educators. The findings of this study will provide teachers and educators with significant knowledge and insights into how the present generation interprets Rizal's literary contributions. The student responses may help educators incorporate these results into their teaching strategies and develop more relevant and relatable learning.

Community. The results of this study will provide insight into how national heroes and their texts remain relevant for assessing governance, democracy, and social equity in today's context.

Future Researchers. This study will serve as a reference for future researchers, contributing to the existing knowledge and understanding of ideas related to this topic. The outcome of this study offers an overview of how Rizal's characters might help youth better understand their relevance and how they represent current sociopolitical themes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the historical prominence of José Rizal's works, some undergraduate students demonstrate limited engagement with the socio-political implications of his writings. This study examines how *Noli Me Tangere* and its character characterizations inform first-year APMed students' views on social class and systemic justice.

Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. Which three (3) characters in *Noli Me Tangere* most strongly influence students' understanding of class disparities and social injustice?
2. To what extent do students agree with the following statements?
 - 2.1. I can relate the characters' struggles to contemporary socio-political issues in the Philippines.
 - 2.2. The characters inspired me to develop greater social consciousness and empathy toward marginalized sectors.
 - 2.3. The characters prompted critical reflection on the legitimacy and fairness of institutional authority and power structures.
3. What key scenes most effectively highlight socio-political issues for students, and why are these scenes impactful?
4. In what ways do students perceive Rizal's characters as either mirroring or failing to capture modern class injustices in the Philippines?

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve its objectives. It utilized a descriptive design to present an accurate account of the characteristics, perceptions, and context of the selected participants without manipulating any variables.

Participants and Locale of the Study

The study followed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on the relevance of their insights to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). This study comprises 44 respondents, all of whom are Accelerated Pathway for Medicine 1 (APMed 1) students enrolled in the "Life and Works of Rizal" (GRizal) course at Saint Louis University during the 2025–2026 school year. Their participation in this 3-unit course equips them with informed perspectives on the characters' backgrounds and tones.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire consists of one multiple-choice question, one Likert-scale question, and two open-ended questions. The first question identifies the most influential characters, while the second measures agreement with statements on social awareness. The third focuses on scenes rather than characters to prompt responses that naturally arise from the narrative, rather than from a bias toward specific figures. The fourth examines how students relate Rizal's portrayals of inequality to current Philippine issues. This format established balanced and clear recognition of the students' perceptions.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted via Google Forms during the scheduled GRizal class period. The researchers selected this period to ensure that the class could provide fresh reflective responses, as the discussions on the significant characters of Noli Me Tangere had recently concluded. Coordination with the course instructor verified the proper administration of the questionnaire. The respondents answered the survey within the allotted time, and the researchers organized the gathered data digitally. To guide the respondents, short descriptions of each character, as discussed in class, was provided in the questionnaire as a reference when selecting their answers.

Data Analysis

For the first question, the researchers interpreted the responses, identifying three (3) characters from Noli Me Tangere using frequency counts to determine which characters were most frequently chosen by the respondents. After identifying these top three characters, the researchers reviewed the common themes and symbolic roles that they shared.

For the second question, they interpreted the data using the mean of the responses for each statement. They calculated the means using the formula:

Mean =	Sum of all values
_____	Number of values

The computed means follow this Likert scale and corresponding descriptive interpretation:

Likert-scale interpretation	Likert scale	Likert scale interval
Strongly Agree	4	3.25 - 4.00
Agree	3	3.24 - 2.50
Disagree	2	1.75 - 2.49
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 - 1.74

Table 1. Likert scale interpretation.

The researchers thematically analyzed the qualitative responses based on the framework of Naeem et al. (2023), which begins with data familiarization, identification of keywords, and coding, and culminates in the formulation of a conceptual model to illustrate the connections among recurring ideas. For the third question, the researchers categorized the answers according to characters and themes, such as empathy, oppression, corruption, or resistance. At the same time, the researchers sorted the responses according to patterns, such as relevance to modern inequality, timeless moral lessons, or the limitations of the characters' portrayals. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools—such as ChatGPT and Perplexity AI—were consulted for the organization of theme formulations. The findings highlighted how college students connect Rizal's 19th-century social commentaries to present-day realities of class and justice.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focused solely on characters from Noli Me Tangere, because it was the novel covered through detailed class discussions. The emphasis is on the relevance of the characters themselves, rather than on the novel's storyline or plot. This consideration provided a concentrated examination of how Rizal portrays timeless class and moral conflict.

The selection of twelve characters was deliberately limited to those who represent distinct social classes and moral intuitions, allowing a balanced yet focused exploration of class dynamics. Excluding minor or peripheral characters ensures that the study focuses on figures most relevant to understanding the societal

inequalities portrayed in the text.

AI extensions, such as Grammarly, were initially designed for grammar checking, cross-referencing concepts, and refining ideas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation and discussion of the findings follow the data gathered from the questions asked from the respondents' accomplished questionnaire.

Quantitative results

Results of Research Question 1:

“Which three (3) characters in Noli Me Tangere most strongly influence understanding of class disparities and social injustice?”

Characters	Frequency counts
Sisa	30
Crisostomo Ibarra	18
Elias	17
Padre Damaso	15
Donya Victorina	10
The Sextons	7
Maria Clara	7
Pilosopo Tasio	7
Kapitan Tiago	6
Don Rafael Ibarra	5
Padre Salvi	3
The Ensign	0

Table 2. Frequency distribution of responses to Question 1

Table 2 presents the characters that had the strongest impact on students' views. The results show that Sisa had the most substantial impact on students' views, with 30 responses. Crisostomo Ibarra followed with 18, Elias with 17, Padre Damaso with 15, and Donya Victorina with 10. Maria Clara, Pilosopo Tasio, and The Sextons each received 7, Kapitan Tiago had 6, Don Rafael Ibarra had 5, and Padre Salvi had 3. The Ensign, on the other hand, received no responses.

These suggest that students are more influenced by characters who reflect emotional depth and social values. Sisa's pain and parental devotion resonate deeply because her character embodies sacrifice and empathy, which are crucial to Rizal's critique of colonial injustices (Balmeo et al., 2024). On the other hand, Ibarra and Elias embody reformist principles and opposition to injustice, traits that foster contemplation of civic duty and leadership. In contrast, characters like The Ensign, with their limited narrative presence and lack of

emotional engagement, are likely the cause of their lack of influence. Characters that do not exceed expectations or arouse powerful emotions are less likely to stick in the minds of individuals or be seen as influential. Appreciation of Rizal's characters frequently relies on their relational and moral relevance in the story, which explains why emotionally charged personalities like Sisa dominate student responses (Aguilar et al., 2022)

Results of Research Questions 2:

“To what extent do students agree with the following statements?

- 2.1. I can relate the characters' struggles to contemporary socio-political issues in the Philippines.
- 2.2. The characters inspired me to develop greater social consciousness and empathy toward marginalized sectors.
- 2.3. The characters prompted critical reflection on the legitimacy and fairness of institutional authority and power structures.”

Statement	Mean	Likert-scale interpretation
I can relate the characters' struggles to contemporary socio-political issues in the Philippines.	3.35	Strongly agree
The characters inspired me to develop greater social consciousness and empathy toward marginalized sectors.	3.56	Strongly agree
The characters prompted critical reflection on the legitimacy and fairness of institutional authority and power structures.	3.65	Strongly agree

Table 3. Mean distribution of responses on Question 2

The findings show that most respondents agree on the influence of Rizal's characters on class and social injustice. All three statements have the interpretation of "Strongly Agree," with a mean averaging from 3.35 to 3.65. The first statement, "I can relate the characters' struggles to contemporary socio-political issues in the Philippines," proves that Rizal remains relevant even in modern society, as the social issues he condemned years ago are still prevalent in the country today. Rizal's novels have a socioemotional impact on Filipinos, as most people can relate to the stories based on their own experiences in society (Gondong, 2021).

The second statement, "The characters inspired me to develop greater social consciousness and empathy toward marginalized sectors," highlights how Rizal's works allow students to ponder the struggles of marginalized communities in the Philippines through Rizal's novels. His novels instill empathy and raise social awareness among Filipinos. Lastly, the statement "The characters prompted critical reflection on the legitimacy and fairness of institutional authority and power structures." demonstrates that students can effectively discern injustice within the government. It reflects a high ability for critical thinking and questioning of the system. The results show that the characters in Rizal's novels continue to shape the views and influence the awareness of individuals toward social issues.

Qualitative results

Results of Research Question 3:

“What specific scene in the novel stood out to you the most for its portrayal of social or political issues, and why?”

Characters	Frequency of mentions from scenes	Themes associated	Quotes from respondents
Dona Victorina	2	Colonial mentality, racism	“This is why we have people like Donya Victorina, and honestly, I don’t blame her for choosing that kind of life if pretending and losing her sense of identity is what makes it more bearable and survivable in an unfair society.”
Sisa	23	Neglect of the poor, mental health stigma, domestic violence, maternal suffering	Instead of giving them access to mental health facilities, they are turned into laughing stocks until they break and turn exactly into the version that people have always feared.” “The scene involving Sisa going mad ... I always saw Sisa as the symbol of the voiceless and the poor” ...”
The Sextons	20	Abuse of authority, unresolved injustices, oppression	“One scene that stood out to me was when Sisa ... lost her sons, Crispin and Basilio, because of false accusations and abuse from those in power. ... It made me reflect on how, even today, many Filipinos still experience inequality—where the poor struggle to get justice and the rich often use their power to escape accountability.” “This scene starkly illustrates how the powerful, both Church and State, collide to crush ... This tragedy directly mirrors the modern grievance of a ‘two-tiered’ justice system.”
Kapitan Tiago	4	Corruption, oppression, class privilege	“The Spaniards sit in power while the Filipino host, Capitan Tiago, is left out of his own party. His absence from the kabisera shows how Filipinos were pushed aside in their own country, even though it was their effort that kept everything going.”
Crisostomo Ibarra	11	Unresolved injustices, desire for reform	“The scene where Padre Damaso humiliates Crisostomo Ibarra and causes his excommunication stands out because it shows the abuse of power by the church and how it harms innocent people.”

			“That it shows how true change, ACTUAL CHANGE, can only happen when those at the top away from their glamour of life truly opened their eyes to the struggles of those below.”
Padre Damaso	5	Abuse of authority, corruption, oppression	“The guests show respect and fear toward the friars, not because of genuine respect, but because of their power and influence during that time.”
Elias	3	Neglect of the poor, unresolved injustices	“... Elias tells Basilio where to find treasure, and [tells] him to get a proper education. Sadly, today's situation is not much different. Often a 'median income' child has to rely on loans or scholarships to afford college. Indeed, treasures are a must to even finish school, treasures that few are lucky to have.”
Maria Clara	3	Oppression	“One specific scene ...that stood out to me the most was when it was revealed that Padre Damaso was in fact the father of Maria Clara, the fiancée of Ibarra. This scene reflects how grave the abuse of power and moral corruption was among friars during the time of the Spanish colonization.”
Padre Salvi	3	Abuse of authority, corruption, oppression	“The scene where Padre Salvi, secretly infatuated with Maria Clara Social injustice is portrayed since those who speak up for what is right or fight for what is right are silenced. At the same time, those in power use their authority to indulge in their own pleasures or for their own benefit.”
The Ensign	2	Abuse of authority	“The last scenes really stood out to me, because of all the events that occurred; 'wala, tuloy parin ang buhay' ... Just like here in the Philippines, with all the trials and investigations that the government has done, nothing big happened to change the nature of our corrupt system.”

Pilosopo Tasio	0	—	—
Don Rafael Ibarra	0	—	—

Table 4. Character mentions from responses on Question 3

Based on the tallied results, the students' responses vary regarding the scenes that stood out the most for their portrayal of social or political issues. Among the characters, Sisa was the most frequently mentioned (30%), suggesting that her scenes resonated with the students, while associating her with neglect of the poor, mental health stigma, domestic violence, and maternal suffering. Additionally, participant reflections such as "I always saw Sisa as the symbol of the voiceless and the poor..." highlight that her experiences serve as a powerful lens through which the respondents perceive social injustice, which also aligns with David et al. (2017), who argue that women still struggle to have a strong voice in public life.

The Sexton follows, which received 20 responses, where respondents related them to abuse of authority, unresolved injustices, and oppression. The scenes quoted by them indicate that the respondents were able to draw parallels between historical injustices and ongoing societal issues. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned characters such as Crisostomo Ibarra and Kapitan Tiago in scenes that depict unresolved injustices, class privilege, desire for reform, corruption, and oppression. Responses emphasize how the oppressed and innocent are vulnerable and easily abused by those in power. Similarly, although mentioned less frequently, characters such as Padre Damaso, Elias, Maria Clara, Padre Salvi, and the Ensign were mentioned as scenes involving them highlight abuse of authority, corruption, and enslavement. These values indicate that the respondents find the scenes involving the mentioned characters highly relevant, enabling them to reflect on and relate to current issues.

The few mentions of Donya Victorina suggest that a colonial mentality is also recognized; however, they are not as impactful as the highlighted scenes. Fewer responses for Pilosopo Tasio and Don Rafael Ibarra may indicate that the respondents did not find the scenes involving them as impactful on the portrayal of social or political issues.

Results of Research Question 4:

"In what ways do students perceive Rizal's characters as either mirroring or failing to capture modern class injustices in the Philippines?"

Character	Frequency of mentions	Themes associated	Rating	Respondent quote
Doña Victorina	6	Sm, colonial mimicry	Relevant	"... Donya Victorina is a social climber and it can be related to people who fake their lives on social media in our time." " ... Doña Victorina shows our obsession with status and fame."
Sisa	17	Poverty, neglect of the poor, oppression, social injustice	Relevant	"Sisa shows how people with no money or power cannot get justice or protection." "The tragedy of Sisa and Crispin is still hauntingly familiar; they are the poor and powerless caught in a justice system that crushes them, which painfully mirrors the stories of modern victims like Kian delos Santos."
The Sextons	9	Abuse of authority, neglect of the poor,	Relevant	"Characters like Sisa and Basilio show the struggles of ordinary Filipinos, mga taong nasa laylayan, working hard pero laging dehado sa

		oppression		buhay.” “Their stories reflect on how many poor Filipinos today suffer from wrongful arrests, violence, or neglect while the rich escape accountability. Take the Drug War of the administration of FPRRD, who were killed? The users, but who got away? The big bosses.”
Kapitan Tiago	2	ignorance, theocracy	Relevant	A politician that I could see is akin to Kapitan
				Tiago is Sen. Bato dela Rosa and Sen. Harry Roque. They are established, well-off, and on the brighter end of the social classes, but they are "too" conforming to the authority of the former administration. Sen. Roque once advocated for the people, but now he is ready to trade those principles in order to retain power.” “And Kapitan Tiago, symbolizing how many politicians today form alliances based on self-interest and power preservation instead of genuine public service, is clearly seen in the recent issue on the DPWH corruption scandal.”
Crisostomo Ibarra	10	Social injustices, freedom of speech, class inequality	Relevant	“As mentioned, Ibarra reflects the many modern-day reformists and activists, such as progressive senators, journalists, and even external social advocates who face criticism, red-tagging, or even death threats when they simply do what they're supposed to do; to stand for what is right, whether to challenge corruption or call out injustice.”
Padre Damaso	20	Theocracy, abuse of authority, oppression, corruption, discrimination	Relevant	“Just like the corrupt politicians we have who also care about their family. However, the fact that they care about
				their family is not something to be praised upon, as they still took the Filipino people's money and used them to fund their lavish lifestyle.” “I think Padre Damaso is similar to the current president, ..., Marcos Jr., because they both came from political dynasties who used their authority, influence, and connections to silence critics, protect ill-gotten wealth, and manipulate the judicial/electoral systems without fear of accountability.
Elias	3	erty, social injustices	Relevant	“For example, Elias represents the ordinary Filipino who fights for fairness but is ignored by those in power—just like modern activists or community leaders who speak up for the poor but are often silenced or neglected.”
Maria Clara	1	Female disempowerment	Obsolete	“I think some characters like Maria Clara, depicted as pure but passive, are outdated depictions subject to the biases of the period.”
Padre Salvi	7	Theocracy, abuse of authority, oppression, corruption	Relevant	“Characters such as padre salvi mirror corrupt politicians seated in the Philippine government. This character delves into how people with power often use their authority for personal gain, compromising

				the
				masses' well being.” “They worship their God and commit the sins they detest.”
The Ensign	0	—	Neutral	—
Pilosopo Tasio	0	—	Neutral	—
Don Rafael Ibarra	0	—	Neutral	—

Table 5. Character mentions from the responses on Question 4

The results show that Sisa had the highest number of mentions from respondents, showing how her experiences of poverty and neglect still mirror the struggles of marginalized Filipinos today. Many participants noted that her helplessness in the face of injustice echoes the ongoing failures of the country's social and legal systems, a connection supported by contemporary readings of Rizal's characters as critiques of structural inequality (Leonardo, 2024). The Sextons were also frequently noted, being the second most mentioned. Their abuse of authority is comparable to modern instances of unchecked power, echoing Rizal's portrayal of systemic corruption in religious and civic institutions. As quoted by one of the respondents, "political dynasties who used their authority, influence, and connections to silence critics, protect ill-gotten wealth, and manipulate the judicial/electoral systems without fear of accountability", making Rizal's portrayal relevant to modern issues in our society. In contrast, the respondents associated Doña Victorina with elitism and colonial mimicry. They observed that her obsession with status reflects present-day anxieties over identity and social image.

Respondents likewise viewed Padre Salvi as a relevant symbol of corruption, connecting his manipulation of authority to current concerns regarding officials who exploit their positions for personal gain. Although mentioned less often, Kapitan Tiago was still considered meaningful because participants associated him with today's political figures who benefit from privilege, inherited influence, or nepotism. The respondents embodied Elias as representing the ordinary Filipino fighting for fairness, a theme reinforced by recent studies highlighting the enduring role of intellectuals and activists in confronting injustice. In distinction, Maria Clara received minimal attention and was labeled "obsolete," suggesting that her character's passivity no longer aligns with contemporary feminist perspectives on representation. Characters such as The Ensign, Pilosopo Tasio, and Don Rafael Ibarra were rated neutral, indicating that they did not significantly influence respondents' understanding of present social issues. The findings affirm that Rizal's characters continue to resonate with ongoing themes of inequality, power abuse, and social struggle, showing how the "social cancer" he described remains embedded in the modern Filipino experience.

The findings of the study show how reading José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* helps pre-med students understand real-world situations along fairness, poverty, and power in the Philippines. Rizal was a doctor who used his writing to point out the "illnesses" of society. By studying his characters, future doctors learn that being a good healthcare provider means understanding the hard realities their patients face every day. Reading the novel helps medical students build empathy and prepares them to care for people from all walks of life—not just treat their illness, but understand their background.

CONCLUSION

The research findings of the study provide significant insights on how selected characters from Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* shape the views of APMed 1 students on class dynamics and social justice. While responses are varied, certain characters of the novel stood out as powerful representations of societal conditions that persist in modern times and had strong impacts on the students in the following contexts:

Mental health. Many responses acknowledged the physical and mental effects of societal neglect that are discussed today. She was seen as a symbol for better awareness and support systems in communities.

Corruption. The corrupt friars were compared to the ongoing abuses of power today. The respondents embody the same anger as the oppressed characters in the novel.

Activism. The students agree on the significance of activism towards social change. Characters, like Elias and Ibarra, motivated them to speak against political anomalies.

Class inequality. The respondents pointed out class privileges in terms of access to healthcare, legal defense, and leisure. Many agree that, in modern society, there is still a huge disparity between economic classes and the characters have inspired them to have empathy towards the marginalized.

The study illustrates that Noli Me Tangere characters are more than just fictional characters, but are also influential symbols that shape the views and perspectives of students on class dynamics and social justice. It emphasizes that their stories gave students a framework for understanding societal issues, encouraging them to think critically and empathize with those who experience injustice. Furthermore, the lasting impact of these characters highlights how novels, particularly those deeply rooted in national history, can significantly contribute to shaping the values and consciousness of coming generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that the subject on Rizal's life and works would continue to be included in the curriculum of the SLU APMED program. It promotes critical thinking and moral concepts among students. Students are given the opportunity to engage and understand its impact on the lives of students through understanding the similarities between the social issues during Rizal's time with the present time. Classroom based activities may encourage students to further apply, integrate, and reflect on the lessons of the novels particularly those concerning class dynamics, social injustices, and corruption. Through the works of Rizal, students are encouraged and inspired to stand up for what is right for the country.

Future researchers are encouraged to explore different year levels, courses, or academic programs to assess if similar trends and results will be yielded. This allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding and comparison among the perceptions of students from other fields and departments.

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