



Gender Representation in Alice Munro's *Boys and Girls*: A Transitivity-Based Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the gender representation in the short story *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro using Halliday's (1985) Transitivity system. The purpose of the study was to examine how gender stereotypes and expectations were portrayed in *Boys and Girls* through major transitivity processes, including material, mental and verbal processes. The study intended to investigate how these transitivity processes challenged or reinforced traditional roles of men and women in a patriarchal setting. A mixed-method research approach was employed combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. For quantitative analysis, UAM corpus tool was employed to measure the frequency of participants, processes and circumstances. The qualitative analysis aimed to study gender representations through familial relationships, power dynamics, and societal expectations. On quantitative analysis, the frequencies were 28.1%, 24.3%, and 19.7% for participants, processes, and circumstances, respectively. Apart from this the frequencies of transitivity processes were also measured. Material processes represented 12.1%, mental processes accounted for 2.6%, verbal processes were 1.4%, relational processes made up 3.7%, and existential processes comprised 0.4%. The qualitative analysis explored and endorsed that men were typically characterized by authority, dominance, confidence, resilience, and strength; whereas, women were portrayed as more dependent, less dominant, delicate, and submissive. These distinctions about men and women were defined through the major transitivity processes found in the actions of both genders. Despite challenging the expected social gender roles through the protagonist of the story, Alice Munro had to conform to the stereotypical gender roles of the patriarchal society due to social constraints.

Key Words: *Boys and Girls*, Transitivity System, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender Representation

1. Introduction

Gender is a socially constructed term as opposed to its counterpart, sex which is determined biologically. One is born carrying a sex, either man or woman; whereas, gender is acquired later on culturally to behave as either masculine or feminine. Gender representation is concerned with the ways in which males and females are seen in a given culture through language. In our society, the typical stereotyped roles associated with men are "rational, strong, protective, and decisive"; on the other hand, women are portrayed as "emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson, 2006). Literature being a reflection of attitudes of a society towards gender, plays an essential part in shaping our understanding of masculinity and femininity (Showalter, 1985). According to Gilbert and Gubar (1979), literature has often been criticized for perpetuating patriarchal norm and limiting the possibilities of gender expression. Gender stereotyping is a pervasive issue in which women are often depicted as passive and

submissive, opposite to men, who are projected as strong and dominant figures. This paper aims to explore gender representation in Alice Munro's short story *Boys and Girls* with a primary focus on investigating how this work contributes to challenge or reinforce these gender stereotypes.

The Transitivity system, a grammatical framework developed by Halliday (1985), examines a clause in terms of participants, processes, and circumstances. Based on the types of process represented, clauses are categorized into six types: Material, Mental, Verbal, Relational, Behavioural, and Existential. The transitivity system allows researchers to investigate how characters are portrayed in terms of their actions, thoughts, and relationship, making it a valuable tool for analysing any narrative (Threadgold, 1997). Likewise, it can be applied to explore gender representation in literature. When the Transitivity System is applied to any text, patterns and trends in male and female characters' representation can be identified, thus revealing potential gender biases and stereotypes (Fowler, 1991). For example, gendered division of labour and reinforcement of traditional gender roles can be deduced if material processes, such as actions involving physical labour, are assigned to male characters; and mental processes are assigned to female characters, such as thoughts and emotions. This study uses Transitivity system as a framework to analyse *Boys and Girls* in order to explore different types of processes overall in the narrative, types of processes that have been used for male and female characters, and how they can contribute to reinforcing or challenging stereotyped gender roles.

A theoretical approach to examine relationship between "language, power, and social structure" (Fairclough, 1995) is called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The development of CDA owes much to Dijk (1995), Fairclough (1995), and Wodak (1997). Language can be used to create and maintain social inequalities such as race, ethnicity, political and ideological biases, medial representation and manipulation, power relations and dynamics, and sexuality, including gender hierarchies and stereotyped gendered roles. In CDA, gender representation explores how gender roles, stereotypes, and power dynamics are constructed and reinforced through language (Wodak, 1997). Fairclough (1995) claims language not to be neutral, rather a site of struggle and resistance, where linguistic practices are used to maintain power and privilege by dominant groups, especially men in a patriarchal society in the context of this study. This study aims to reveal how language contributes to the construction and reinforcement of gender-based stereotyped roles and how gender is discursively constructed and contested; thus, making the study critical in nature.

The current study is mainly motivated by the desire to trace out the different transitivity processes in the artistic masterpiece *Boys and Girls* by a prolific Canadian short story writer, Alice Munro. The selected text *Boys and Girls* is a classic short story that also revolves around the themes of gender-based roles, personal identity, and social expectations. The current study aims to explore how stereotyped gender roles can be represented through transitivity processes i.e. material, mental, verbal, behavioural, relational, and existential.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Exploration of gender representation is immensely significant because of its insights into social norms, power dynamics, and the lived experiences of individuals. In the Pakistani context, gender roles and expectations are enrooted in social, cultural, and religious frameworks. In a context like this, the study on gender representation across cultures becomes even more pertinent. When a literary work is explored from diverse cultural backgrounds, broader perspective on human experiences can be obtained, and empathy and understanding across borders can be fostered. Although the plot of *Boys and Girls* is set in a Canadian farmhouse, its relevance is not bound to a certain geographical location because it talks about universal themes and issues with whom readers resonate globally, including those in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To analyse the frequencies of participants, processes, circumstances, and different types of processes in Alice Munro's *Boys and Girls* using Transitivity analysis.
2. To identify linguistic patterns and features that reflect gender roles, expectations, and power dynamics within the narrative.
3. To examine how the characters in *Boys and Girls* are portrayed in terms of their adherence to or deviation from traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

1.3 Research Questions

- a) What are the frequencies of participants, processes, circumstances, and different types of processes in Alice Munro's *Boys and Girls*?
- b) What linguistic patterns and features in the text contribute to the representation of gender in *Boys and Girls*?
- c) To what extent do the traditional gender roles and stereotypes are enforced or challenged in *Boys and Girls*?

2. Literature Review

For decades, gender representation has captivated the attention of many researchers. There are numerous previous research studies that paid significant attention to unveil the transitivity processes behind the actions of the characters focusing on gender-based disparities in the particular works of literature. Here are a few research studies already done in the field.

Anwar et al. (2024) analysed reversed gender roles and linguistic choices in the work of a renowned Pakistani-British writer, Tariq Ali. The researchers thoroughly examined gender disparities in a literary text, "The Stone Woman" noting the gender roles and representation in the novel employing transitivity analysis. The research study followed mixed methodology as it involved both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study focused on two central characters of the story, Nilofer, a woman, and Selim, a man. To conduct the comprehensive analysis of the data, 50 clauses in total were selected with 30 clauses representing the female character and 20 male characters. The transitivity analysis was done with the purpose to examine the patterns of material, behavioural, mental, and verbal processes in the purposively selected clauses. The researchers noted the frequency of the processes, participants and their roles and presented them in tables and figures. The transitivity analysis highlighted that Nilofer, the female character, was portrayed more active and assertive having more material, behavioural, verbal, and mental processes than Selim, the male character selected for the analysis. The study's findings revealed an unexpected departure from the traditional gender stereotypes as the female figure was presented more bold, authoritative, challenging and vigilant participant, with a greater proportion of actor roles (58%), while Selim, the male figure, had more goal roles (59%), depicted as more diffident, passive, reserved and hesitant. The study summed up that the literary masterpiece of Tariq Ali defied traditional gender roles depicting the female character more strong, fearless and authoritative figure in the plot.

Another contribution was made by Fatima & Ashee, (2023) in which they applied transitivity model on Shahla Abdullah's short story "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust". Transitivity analysis was done using Burton's (1982) three steps model. Following Burton's (1982) framework, firstly the researchers categorized the types of processes; secondly, they explored the various roles of the participants, and lastly, they determined the influence participants had on each other. The findings demonstrated a variety of processes that highlighted several facets of Dhool's experiences and challenges of life. Material processes, encompassing 42.4% of the total, clearly showed her constant struggle to perpetuate the marital companionship with her husband despite of the continuous violence from her husband that she had to endure. The research study also quantified the other process i.e. mental (17%), verbal (12.3%), relational (14%), behavioural (10%), and existential (4.7%). The findings of the study portrayed women as oppressed and marginalized because Dhool encountered myriad challenges during her life due to male dominance in a patriarchal society. This study highlighted the need for more research in gender studies to understand the gender roles and their contribution in the formation of particular social structure.

Sarwat et al. (2023) made a comparison of two iconic novels, "Beloved" by Toni Morrison and "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte, thereby offering a unique perspective to the art of literary analysis. Sarwat et al. (2023) explored and described the various processes used in the selected literary works, employing transitivity system of SFL as a theoretical framework. Data was collected from the both novels through non-participant observation and detailed study along with a documentation technique. The findings revealed different transitivity processes in the collected samples. The material process was the most dominant process in "Jane Eyre" clearly indicating that Jane, the protagonist of the novel, was primarily indulged in active roles constructing the plot throughout the novel. Conversely, in "Beloved" the frequent use of mental process was more evident indicating a significant focus on inner thoughts, feelings, and emotions linked with fear. The findings highlighted the difference in transitivity processes that was the clear reflection of the feminist representation and the positions of women in male-dominated societies. Charlotte Bronte portrayed females as bold figures who used their femininity to assert power; whereas, Toni Morrison highlighted the hardships and oppression women endure throughout their lives. This study also paved the way for the current research to further explore and analyse the gender roles.

Syed et al. (2021) carried out a study in which the researchers analysed the depiction of female characters in James Joyce's short story "The Boarding House". The entire text of the story was used to conduct analysis. Transitivity analysis was done to explore the actions and behaviours through which the female characters were portrayed. The study employed mixed methodology to conduct a deeper analysis. The qualitative aspect explored the personalities of female characters to interpret the deeper meaning through their roles and actions contributed to the progression of the plot, while the quantitative analysis involved the measurement of the frequency of each specific process that appeared in the text. The study identified the predominance of the material processes that were found in 40 clauses. This higher prevalence of material processes highlighted the significance of physical activities and events to represent the power of women in the story.

Another study conducted by Tanusy et al. (2021) also examined the representation of the female character, Dayang Sumbi, in the West Java legend "Legenda Tangkuban Perahu." The corpus-based techniques were followed i.e. AntConc. The researchers employed a mixed-methodology, combining both qualitative and quantitative approach to conduct comprehensive analysis of the characters' roles in the text. The analysis was done segregating different processes appeared in the text. There were total 176 clauses in the data and the findings revealed 65 clauses involving Dayang Sumbi. This occurrence represented 36.93% of the total clauses that was the clear indication of least significance of the female character in the text. It was noticed that the primary focus of the story was on the main male character, and other minor characters. Out of the 65 clauses, 31 involve material processes in which Dayang Sumbi was engaged in different physical activities, indicating her as an active character. Besides the material processes, 13 cases of mental processes and verbal processes along with 1 existential, 2 behavioural, and 5 relational processes were also identified. Additionally, within the mental processes, 7 affective, 2 cognitive, and 4 perceptive processes were also highlighted. The study suggested that the female character of the story was passive and largely traditional. She was presented somewhat active but in a very limited context. Whereas the male characters of the story performed broader roles and played central part in the text. Thus, Tanusy et al. (2021) shaped the direction of the current research to understand the gender dynamics.

Another study selected two short stories out of the eight from the book "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" (2009) by Daniyal Mueenuddin to explore the processes of transitivity in, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders" and "About a Burning Girl". In the transitivity analysis conducted by Butt et al. (2021), a total of 109 clauses were extracted from the selected stories to carry out both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The relative frequency of each process was calculated and presented in percentage. The most prevalent were the material processes encompassing 37.6% of the text, followed by mental processes 26.6%, verbal processes constituted 12.8%, behavioural processes 11%, relational processes 8.25%, and existential processes 4.58%. The qualitative analysis revealed Marxist themes like socio-economic issues i.e. class disparities, exploitation and corruption, and commodification as the rich and poor characters plotted against one another throughout the stories. It also pointed out the gender inequalities prevailing in social hierarchies. This study also recommended the future researchers to expand the analysis of class and social issues using different theoretical approaches in literature for the understanding of social dynamics.

The distinct patterns of transitivity processes observed in precedent analyses raised the interest of the researchers to conduct analysis of a story that has not been examined through the lens of the Transitivity system. Although Alice Munro's *Boys and Girls* has been a significant masterpiece in the field of literature, yet to date, a few researchers with other theoretical approaches have explored this story, but no one has employed transitivity analysis to it. So, the researchers aimed to explore the different transitivity processes that construct the plot of the story *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Transitivity System was proposed by Halliday (1985) within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which provides a strong theoretical framework that can be put into use for analysing the structure and function of language in discourse. The core focus of Transitivity lies in representing the ways in which language represents participants, processes, and circumstances in any given text.

Transitivity System offers a valuable framework for examining how language constructs and represents actions, relationships, and themes within a text while conducting analysis of literature. It can be applied to uncover patterns of meaning, power dynamics, and social ideologies embedded within the narrative discourse. It can be concluded that Transitivity System is a framework that can be used to conduct Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Transitivity System helps researchers reveal how gender roles, identities, and power dynamics are constructed and negated through language. When participants, processes, and circumstances related to gender within a text are analysed;

linguistic patterns and discursive strategies that shape the portrayal of gender and contribute to the reproduction or subversion of gender norms and stereotypes, can be identified.

2.2 Key Concepts in Transitivity

2.2.1 Participants

The entities that are involved in the processes described in the text are called participants, whether human or non-human, animate or inanimate.

2.2.2 Circumstances

Contextual information that surrounds the processes and participants in a text is known as circumstance. They provide information about time, place, manner, cause, and purpose, helping to contextualize and situate the actions and events described in the narrative.

2.2.3 Processes

Actions and events represented in language are called processes. Actions performed by characters, events that unfold within the narrative, and states of being experienced by individuals are included in processes. The processes can include a wide range of actions from physical activities to relational dynamics and mental states.

- i. **Material Processes:** Actions that involve physical or concrete activities are represented by material processes. Movement, manipulation, or creation may be involved in such processes. Examples include: “run”, “hit”, “drive”, etc. In CDA, it can be revealed through these processes that how power is exercised, maintained, or resisted through physical actions. It can also shed light on who has agency and control over certain actions and how social identities and hierarchies can be constructed through these actions.
- ii. **Mental Processes:** Actions related to cognitive or psychological activities are represented by mental processes. Thoughts, feelings, and perceptions may be included, focusing on internal experience and mental states expressed through language. Examples include: “think”, “believe”, “feel”, “imagine”, etc. In CDA, they can reveal how individuals perceive, interpret, and internalize ideologies, power relations, and social norms.
- iii. **Relational Processes:** States of being, existence, or identity are represented by relational processes. Relationships, attributes, or classifications between entities are established through these processes. Examples include: “become”, “be”, “belong”, “resemble”, “appear”, “remain”, etc. In CDA, how individuals and groups are positioned and represented in relation to one another can be illuminated by relational processes.
- iv. **Behavioural Processes:** Observable actions and behaviours are represented by behavioural processes, especially those that involve social interactions and conduct. Examples include: “look”, “watch”, “stare”, “laugh”, “breathe”, etc. In CDA, behavioural processes reveal information about behaviour and interaction by individuals and groups within a specific social context, uncovering discursive constructions of social behaviour and norms.
- v. **Verbal Processes:** Actions related to speech, communication, and language use are represented by verbal processes. Examples include: “say”, “ask”, “tell”, “inquire”, “command”, “persuade”, etc. In CDA, verbal processes can reveal how language can be employed to negotiate and convey meanings and relationships and exercise power within discourse.
- vi. **Existential Processes:** States of existence or occurrence are represented by existential processes. Existential clauses usually start from “there...” construction. Existential processes shed light on how entities are represented, conceptualized, and positioned within discourse.

All these types of processes contribute to overall progression of a narrative. Halliday (1994) classified three of them- material, mental, and verbal- as major processes; and rest three- behavioural, existential, and relational- as minor processes. For this study, the focus was confined to major types of processes, material, mental, and verbal.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological Approach

A mixed-method research approach was employed to explore gender representation in Alice Munro's short story *Boys and Girls*. In order to provide multifaceted analysis of the text, both qualitative and quantitative methods were

combined. When both quantitative and qualitative research methods are combined, findings can be “triangulated” (Denzin, 1978), thus validity and reliability of the results are increased, and a “more complete picture” (Cresswell, 2017) of the research topic can be captured. In the present study, firstly, frequencies of participants, processes, circumstances were measured; also, different types of processes were quantified, thus making the study quantitative. Secondly, instances of different types of processes were studied qualitatively which helped to find out overall trends and patterns of gender representation, thus making the study qualitative.

3.2 Text Selection

A shorty *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro was selected as a primary text for analysis. It was first published in her collection *Dance of the Happy Shades* in 1968. The primary reason for choosing this text was its thematic exploration of gender and its richness in content, which ultimately supplied sufficient content for linguistic analysis. Although the story of the primary text is set in a Canadian farmhouse, the study’s exploration of gender roles and constraints placed on women’s choice resonate with many Pakistani women’s experience, adding to reasons for the text selection.

3.3 Analysis Procedure

The analysis of the text was conducted using UAM corpus tool. This tool is a “state-of-the-art environment” (O’Donnell 2008) for corpora annotation. The UAM corpus tool was chosen to get statistically significant results for frequencies of participants, processes, and circumstances. Also, it helped in studying instances of different processes in their relevant context.

For the analysis, the corpus of the text was prepared carefully and uploaded to the UAM corpus tool for analysis. The transitivity analysis was conducted on the text, and frequencies of participants, processes, and circumstances were noted down. Then a close focus was paid to different process types. Different processes were studied in their context to find out global patterns and trends regarding gender representation.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Firstly, the frequencies of participants, processes and circumstances used in the story *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro were identified using UAM, and arranged following the classification proposed by Halliday (1985).

Table 1: Frequencies of Grammatical Ranks

Grammatical Rank	N	Percentage
Participants	1201	28.1 %
Processes	1037	24.3 %
Circumstances	840	19.7 %

The distribution of frequency across these three categories revealed the structural composition of the plot. A complex network of characters or elements were indicated through a greatest proportion of participants that constituted 28.1% of the total data. This category involved the entities, such as characters, groups, or things that participated in the story. The number of processes constituted 24.3% of the total pointed the action-oriented nature of the story. The smallest segment of circumstances comprising 19.7% of the data showed that circumstances also played a part in providing contextual background to the participants and processes in the story.

In the current study, besides the quantitative categorization of the participants, processes and circumstances, the researchers also qualitatively explored what the above-mentioned frequencies portray. The high frequency of participants (1208 or 28.1%) suggested that the plot of the story encompassed a significant number of characters that took part in the progression of different events. In the story, participants were the key figures such as the narrator, her mother, her father, her brother Laird, and Henry Bailey, as well as other elements i.e. horses, foxes, and other farm animals. This high frequency could be the indication of the emphasis on the roles of the participants as well as the complex network of interactions in driving the plot towards the themes, particularly the ones related to gender representation and societal expectations.

In the story *Boys and Girls*, the prevalence of different processes throughout the story could be the indication of various physical actions and tasks performed on the farm, including, cleaning the farm, working and dealing with

the horses and foxes, and carrying out all indoor chores i.e. cooking, ironing, preserving food, and other household activities as well as outdoor activities performed by different participants of the story. In this way, the processes represented the lives of the characters on the farm as well as at home determining the gender-based division of labor among them. Apart from this, the processes also indicated the moods, thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideas, opinions, and desires of the characters.

The occurrence of circumstances provided the details of contextual elements in the narrative i.e. physical setting of the farm, the household environment, the seasonal variations, and the limitations of the participants that shaped the narrative's direction. Circumstances gave view of the background and the environment in which the plot of the story was constructed. They also provided the necessary details regarding setting of the plot, time frame, manner of the actions and events, and implicit reasons behind different transitivity processes that were encountered in the story. Since gender representation was the central theme of the story, the circumstances revealed how different traditional roles imposed on the characters on the basis of their gender that influenced their behaviour. It might be noticed from the context of the story why her father unintentionally perpetuated the gender-based division of labour through his actions and why the mother of the narrator pushed her toward conventional roles. Despite the considerably small segment, circumstances in the story still indicated that the contextual background and overall environment played a significant role in comprehending narrative's structure and events of the story.

Secondly, frequencies of different transitivity processes were measured. After the calculation of their percentages, the data was presented in a tabular form for clearer and comprehensive comparison and easier identification of patterns of occurrences.

Table 2: Frequencies of Different Processes

Clause Type	N	Percentage
Material	519	12.1%
Mental	111	2.6%
Verbal	59	1.4%
Relational	156	3.7%
Existential	18	0.4%

The above table represented six different categories with their corresponding occurrence and relative percentages, indicating the various types of processes in the text of the story.

It was noted that material processes were the most prevalent throughout the story, with 519 examples, constituting 12.1% of the total data. These processes encompassed physical activities, events, or other tangible actions and events. The data distribution indicated 111 instances of mental processes less frequent as compared to material processes, represented 2.6% of the total. These instances focused on abstract experiences like thoughts, feelings, emotions and perceptions. Verbal processes appeared for 59 times, comprising 1.4% of the data and signifying limited communication or verbal interactions between the characters of the story. This low frequency suggested that huge content of the story unfolded through physical actions rather than dialogues. Relational processes, were found 156 times or 3.7% of the analyzed data, determining the personal identities and interactions among characters of the narrative and indicating a slight focus on how characters were related to each other and also defining their roles within the context of the story. Additionally, 18 instances of existential processes were found, with 0.4% of the total. This suggested that the existential aspects i.e. existence or occurrences were not a major concern for the writer in this short story.

4.1 Gender representation through Transitivity Processes

The narrator is the protagonist of the story *Boys and Girls* who remained unnamed throughout the story. A few other major characters of the story have also been named anonymously, i.e., mother, father, and grandmother. Other characters of the story are Laird who is the brother of narrator and Henry who works on a fox farm. The primary focus of the story is on the power dynamics, familial relationships, and societal constraints and expectations that reflect the roles and responsibilities usually imposed on the individuals based on their gender. The

current study explore the transitivity processes encountered in the roles of different characters in the story assigned to them according to their gender. Here are some examples from the story to ascertain how gender could be represented through different transitivity processes.

4.2 Material Process

Since material processes refer to the physical activities, actions, and events, the current study identifies various examples in the story *Boys and Girls* where men and women have been assigned distinct tasks that portrayed the traditional gender-based roles. The prologue of the story begins with the line "*My father was a fox farmer*" defining the role of male that sets the context of the story. The opening lines draw the character sketch of narrator's father who works as a fox farmer, immediately portraying him as a head who is the financial asset of the household. Then, the other significant tasks he performs, emphasizing masculine duties that depict the sense of authority, decisiveness, strength, and outdoor activities. Moving ahead, there are numerous actions which are performed by the male characters of the story reinforcing the same themes i.e. responsibility, decisiveness, power, and dominance that is also the indication of presence of material processes i.e.

- "*My father carried a gun.*"
- "*He buried the naked, slippery bodies in the dump.*"
- "*My father shot Mack.*"
- "*My father and Henry came bounding up the field.*"
- "*Henry rolled cigarettes for my father.*"
- "*My father sent Laird and me to play around the house*"

The above instances show the physical activities of the males they perform throughout this short story. The act of carrying a gun conveys a sense of readiness to take control, reinforcing the concept of male dominance in circumstances that require courage. In the example, "*He buried the naked, slippery bodies in the dump*", the gloomy situation is portrayed where the father is shown dealing with a grim and physically demanding work. This arduous task emphasizes the role of a father in dealing with the more challenging situations of life. Again, this reflects a sense of authority and dominance in dealing with unpleasant but necessary jobs. Moreover, shooting of the horse is not only the indication of father's control over life-and-death decisions on the farm setting but it also associates the concept of harshness and cruelty with male dominance. It reinforces the traditional view of male dominance in making critical choices in life. The word "bounding" also implies such qualities that are typically associated with male characters i.e. a sense of urgency and physical power, energy, and readiness to act. It indicates that males are expected to be energetic and active in response to any critical situation. This trait of being energetic associated with males in the story also endorses the traditional view of males as providers and protectors. In the 5th example, the word "rolled," in terms of the material process, signifies the power dynamics of the male hierarchy. It indicates a role of support or subordination by Henry for father who is superior to him portraying the levels of authority. All these actions highlighted through the above instances imply the concept of resilience and strength, showing readiness for any situation.

So, it may be said that all the physically demanding activities that require force, patience, strength and decisiveness are associated with males throughout the text. In terms of gender representation, the above examples associated the traits like authority, dominance, energy, superiority, resilience, egoism, and bossiness with males.

As the story progresses, there are number of actions which are carried out by the female characters of the story emphasizing the opposite themes i.e. domesticity, subservience or dependence on males, resistant to social expectations, emotional sensitivity, and limited autonomy by performing in passive or supportive roles. These themes expose the less dominant nature of women through the actions performed by them in the story. Here are a few examples from the story where their actions reflect their limitations:

- "*My grandmother came to stay with us for a few weeks.*"
- "*My mother was doing the supper dishes.*"
- "*My mother gave me jobs to do, like peeling peaches or cutting onions.*"
- "*My mother heated dinner again.*"
- "*I ran out of the house, trying to get out of earshot before my mother thought of what she wanted me to do next*"

The above-mentioned instances truly depict the traditional portrayals of women. As the story opens up, the first line of the story "*My father was a fox farmer*" emphasizes the financial dependency of women on men as the father is portrayed as the sole bread earner of the family. This opening line of the story conveys the traditional image of

females who rely on men for financial sustenance and stability. Women are usually confined to indoor activities and domestic chores which is portrayed through different actions performed by women in the story. For example, the mother of the narrator assigns her indoor works related to kitchen i.e. peeling of peaches or cutting of the onions and heating of the dinner suggest a limitation that confines her role to the kitchen and other household activities. In the examples "*My mother heated dinner again*" and "*She was doing the supper dishes*", the household actions performed by mother suggest that the mother has embraced her female traditional roles and has become accustomed to the familial as well as societal expectations. It may be said that through these actions, she seems to motivate the narrator to take part in the similar domestic responsibilities typically assigned to women and meet societal norms and expectations for females. Moreover, there comes a moment in the story when the narrator experiences a situation where she unintentionally overhears the conversation of the parents talking about how they can keep the narrator inside the house more often by engaging her in domestic tasks instead of being outside. This also portrays the underlying societal pressure for women to conform to traditional female roles. Furthermore, an instance, "*My father came down from the house, carrying a gun. 'What are you doing here?' he said. 'Go on up and play around the house'*" suggests that the father strictly instructs her daughter to stay indoors. He directs her to stay away from the activities usually considered irrelevant to a girl. In the last example, the preference of males for outdoor activities is emphasized while girls are expected to stay closer to the house.

All these actions represent the women as caretaker of the house. This portrayal of women in the story highlights the social expectations and gender-based social roles. The evident division of labour through different actions emphasizes the traditional view that women are always expected to perform the household chores, and besides the financial dependence, women are also dependent on men for outdoor activities. In this way, through material processes Munro stresses upon the delicate, less dominant, more dependent, and family-oriented social roles of women.

4.3 Mental Process

Mental processes focus on the inner working of mind indicating abstract experiences such as desires, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perceptions. They expose the way in which a person feels, thinks, believes, and perceives. Material processes describe the physical activities, but mental processes reflect internal mind-set focusing on intentions, attitudes, and perceptions. Mental processes greatly contribute to understand the characters' emotional responses to gloomy or pleasant circumstances, desires and motivations. In the short story *Boys and Girls*, mental processes involving male characters propagate different themes by shedding light on how they think, understand, and react on various situations. In this way, the emotional and cognitive aspects of males are portrayed demonstrating their social concerns, roles and responsibilities, and management. Here are some examples from the story encompassing mental processes that reflect the abstract experiences of men.

- "*My father imagined Flora was lost.*"
- "*Henry imagined Mack was gone.*"
- "*Laird wondered what would happen to Flora.*"
- "*My father imagined scenarios in which Flora could escape.*"
- "*Henry found amusement in Mack's death.*"

These examples reveal the underlying themes that spotlight the males' autonomy, dominance, practicality, eagerness, foresightedness, curiosity, humor, as well as their response to adult roles and responsibilities and how they readily manage the critical situations. In the story, the foresightedness of father is revealed when he anticipates the possible situation "*My father imagined Flora was lost.*" His role as the head of the family compels him to look ahead of the situation and consider potential risks, demonstrating his strategic mind-set. Through this the writer of the story wants to portray males as planners and managers. The line "*Henry imagined Mack was gone*" is spoken by Henry at the death of Mack when the narrator's father shoots the horse. It portrays Henry's assumption of an incident that might have happened. It reveals his pragmatic outlook as he readily accepts and faces the consequences of the grimness of the situation. This practical response to death also shows his familiarity to the harsh realities of life. The theme of curiosity and concern can be noticed in the statement "*Laird wondered what would happen to Flora*". This line shows the fear of Laird that makes him curious to know about the outcomes. The trait of being curious is linked typically with young male characters of the story because of their continuous questioning and exploring the possible consequences of actions. Additionally, the cognitive approach that requires strategic thinking and mental preparation is also highlighted when the father anticipates and manages problems of farm and home at the same time. The last example exposes Henry's dark sense of humour when he gives a

completely opposite response to the gloomy situation of Mack's death, indicating that Henry can find amusement in challenging situations. A sense of detachment is a normal emotional response for him. It connotes the theme of resilience in the face of adversity that males in traditional roles might react boldly even in alarming situations to cope with the bitter realities of life. Overall, through the mental processes, the quality of being responsible is more prominent in male characters throughout the story as the traits i.e. anticipation, readiness, strategic thinking, curiosity, and rationality are reinforced through different abstract experiences of the male characters.

As the plot of the story revolves around the rural environment where a family is greatly influenced by traditional gender discrimination in social setting, roles for males and females are clearly defined. As far as the female characters of the story are concerned, the setting rigidly defines the traditional role of women as primarily responsible for indoor domestic chores. These established roles not only give rise to traditional societal expectations but also signify the specific limitations for women that shape their thoughts, emotions, and inner conflicts. Thus, the psychological state of the women is portrayed through their abstract responses to the social roles as well as the challenges they face during the course of their lives in a male dominated society. In the story, mental processes in female characters are the true depiction of their inner-world that exhibit their psychological responses i.e. passive resistance, emotional sensitivity, cautiousness in decision, fear and anxiety are the responses to social constraints imposed on them by the society. Here are some examples from the story that provide the complex depiction of gender representation:

- *"I wondered what would happen to me."*
- *"My mother began to cry."*
- *"I felt a weight in my stomach, the sadness of unexorcised guilt."*
- *"We were afraid at night in the winter."*
- *"We were delighted to make a snow slide down the drifts..."*

The very first example shows the fear, apprehension and uncertainty of the narrator about her future as she is growing up in a patriarchal society where gender roles are strictly defined. The phrase *"wondered what would happen to me"* suggests the anxiousness of women shaping and maintaining their place within traditional frame. It is also the indication of her inner conflict that demonstrates her passive resistance and reluctance to comply with the expected roles of women and she cannot challenge them openly. At the same time, she is afraid of potential repercussions of nonconformity. Moving ahead, the statement *"My mother began to cry"* has been extracted from the incident of the story when Laird was in danger and his mother screamed and cried for help. The incident reflected the delicate nature of mother. And this emotional sensitivity and vulnerability conveys the theme of motherhood. The tear of mother in the instance expresses her emotions of fear, anxiety, love, care and protection. Furthermore, *"weight in my stomach"* is a metaphorical expression that reveals the narrator's deep sense of guilt and the emotional discomfort. This sad expression of guilt suggests that she is grappling with the societal expectations and feeling the pressure to conform them. The phrase *"afraid at night"* represents the cowardice nature of women. The last example *"We were delighted to make a snow slide down the drifts..."* reveals a glimpse of the carefree environment where the narrator can enjoy a sense of autonomy while playing. It was the clear indication of narrator's craving for the moments of freedom where she could find happiness.

Mental processes reveal the distinct patterns in the psychological experiences of male and female characters. Males are portrayed as calm, resilient, emotionally strong, pragmatic, focused, and fearless; whereas, females are portrayed as delicate, coward, emotionally sensitive, resistant, and cautious.

4.4 Verbal Process

Verbal processes refer to exchange of information through spoken or written language. Here, it refers to the communication or speech that takes place between two or more participants of the story. Through verbal activities, the participants of the story interact with each other, express emotions, thoughts and ideas, and develop relationships through dialogues or communication. In the story, power dynamics within social structure, familial interactions, and societal expectations are unfolded with the help of verbal activities. For instance, when the father strictly instructs her daughter to play near the house, this verbal process reflects the dominance he holds within the family. It shows how males typically exercise their power, reinforcing the traditional hierarchy and acting as a dominant figure of the family. Here are the examples of the verbal processes where male gender was represented through the dialogues of male characters:

- *"My father shouted to me, 'Go shut the gate!'"*
- *"Henry shouted, 'She's into the field now!'"*

- “Henry started to sing in a high, trembly, mocking-sorrowful voice.”
- “Laird shouted, 'Shut it, shut it!'”
- “Henry joked about Flora.”

The father is depicted in the verbal actions as the authoritative figure who directs the actions of others throughout the story. His shouting commands indicates his position as the head of the family who expects obedience from the family members; whereas, Henry's shouting demonstrates his active role in managing the activities of farm under potential crises. The shouting of father propagates the sense of dominance and authority; on the other hand, Henry's shouting depicts the sense of urgency. The example of Henry's singing showcases his humorous approach towards challenging situation. The tone of his voice, which combines both sorrow and mockery, suggests his playful behaviour to navigate through the unpleasant experiences of life. He does this to make those around him feel that he is perfectly fine, even though he is deeply affected. The theme of humour as a coping mechanism has also been conveyed when Henry jokes about Flora to ease tension. It implies that males are usually expected to conceal their emotions to endure challenging situations. As the plot advances, there are number of verbal actions that depicts the various traits of males such as the scene where Laird shouts, “*Shut it, shut it!*” occurs when Flora, the horse, is about to run away through an open gate. Laird's urgent shouting to the narrator demonstrates an order for her to respond and act instantly to prevent Flora's escape. This shows his authoritative and commanding tone often linked with men in a patriarchal society. This verbal process also reflects the impending sense of Laird stepping into a masculine duty, creating a situation of urgency and authority. In a patriarchal context, females are typically expected to follow the instructions of males, and men are often expected to take charge and give orders to women. Despite being a young character in the story, Laird's shouting depicts the leadership roles of men even at a young age. The qualities like authority, dominance, urgency, humor, emotional resilience, empathy, and compliance to societal expectations have been portrayed through the verbal actions of males.

There are numerous instances in the story where the verbal processes of female characters are evidently seen that portray the expected roles of the females as well as the qualities generally associated with women i.e. obedience, sensitive, submissiveness, caring, and supportive. So, the verbal processes play a significant role in demonstrating traditional gender roles and expectations of women. The following examples related to transitivity process have been extracted from the text i.e.

- “My mother said, 'And then I can use her more in the house.'”
- “My mother said, 'Wait till Laird gets a little bigger, then you'll have a real help.'”
- “Henry said, 'She could have shut the gate and she didn't. She just opened it up and Flora ran out.'”

These examples showcase that how the mother of the narrator, through verbal actions and events, instructs her to be the part of domestic chores. The mother assigns her jobs like peeling peaches or cutting onions, reinforcing the traditional expectations. These verbal processes emphasize the gender-based roles that the narrator is expected to fulfill. Besides this, the mother also says to the father that “*I can use her more in the house*”, which shows the keen interest of the mother to keep her indoor. It seems that the mother is anxious about the future of the narrator where the narrator must take on more domestic responsibilities. The example “*My grandmother was giving me life advice*” indicates that grandmother is passing down societal norms and expectations to her younger generation. This reveals the compassionate and sympathetic approach of grandmother to ensure the adherence of younger members of family to their traditional roles. The last example highlights the narrator's inability to close the gate, caused Flora, the horse to escape. It could be interpreted that the deviation from the expected role leads to a problem because she has been living within the circle of her expected societal roles, and in an unexpected situation, she cannot instantly respond in a way which Laird expects from her.

One prominent aspect in the story is that the mother and grandmother adhere strictly to their traditional gender roles in patriarchal society, while the narrator is notably different from both of them. The narrator shows a strong inclination towards male-associated work i.e. working in the farm, staying outdoor with her brother, and taking care of the horse. Unlike her mother and grandmother, she feels disinterested in household chores and takes a sense of pride in all outdoor activities. As highlighted in the examples the narrator is mentally confused about her future because she is unwilling to embrace domestic responsibilities of females and instead desires to work on the farm alongside her father and brother. Through this portrayal, Munro challenges the traditional female role in a patriarchal society. However, the narrator is eventually pressured by her family to conform to these societal expectations, much like her mother and grandmother. Her father stops her from working on the farm, and her mother instructs her to focus on household chores and stay indoors, reinforced the traditional roles expected of women in that society.

This conflict between personal desires and societal expectations is a significant aspect of the story, depicting the challenges women encounter when they want to deviate from their prescribed gender roles

5. Conclusion

Taking the above analysis into consideration, it might be concluded that in *Boys and Girls*, Alice Munro used various transitivity processes such as material, mental, and verbal to portray the traditional gender-based social roles and expectations. This study also examined that how the social roles, expectations and constraints impacted on the behaviour of the character. Material processes involved physical actions that reinforced the social roles of both men and women. Material processes associated the strength, authority, and dominance with males as they performed physically demanding tasks and outdoor activities; whereas, women were portrayed delicate, submissive, and dependent as they participated in household chores and indoor activities i.e. cooking, cleaning, etc. Thus, the material processes represented gender according the division of labour and their assigned social roles and expectations. Mental processes described the abstract experiences of the characters of the story focusing on their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perceptions. The mental processes indicated that men were expected to conceal their emotions and face every situation without showing vulnerability. That is the reason, in a patriarchal setting, the portrayal of men was shown as bold regardless of the circumstances. In contrast, women were expected to stay indoors and follow the instruction of men. The passive resistance of women was also portrayed through mental actions, but it was also highlighted that they were unable to change the roles and responsibilities thrust upon them by the society. Through verbal actions, the researchers highlighted the limitations imposed on women depicting them sensitive and submissive and the males were portrayed as authoritative and dominant. It might be said that through this story, the writer reinforced a true depiction of the patriarchal society. He composed the narrative by maintaining the social norms and expectations of the patriarchal society, rather than defying or challenging traditional gender roles and expectations.

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