OCNOS Revista de Estudios sobre Lectura
Journal of Reading Research
https://www.revistaocnos.com

Ocnos, 25(1) (2026). ISSN-e: 1885-446X
https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

Promoting resistant reading in university classrooms: Teaching resources and methodologies

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Received: 11-October-2024 Accepted: 19-June-2025

Abstract

This study evaluates the impact of *Literature and Male Violence: A Guide for Academic Research* (Iribarren et al., 2023) on university students' self-perceived access to relevant resources, knowledge of key gender studies concepts and forms of violence, and ability to identify male violence in literature. The study employed a longitudinal design with pre- and post-test surveys administered to students enrolled on a contemporary literature course. A secondary aim was to assess students' perceptions of the innovativeness and usefulness of selected teaching exercises described in the *Guide*. The findings revealed a significant increase in access to resources on male violence, particularly among male-identifying students. Students also reported improved understanding of gender-related concepts and greater confidence in identifying violence in literary texts. Collaborative exercises were perceived as more innovative, while individual tasks were considered more useful for recognising violence. These results suggest that targeted educational resources can effectively promote resistant reading and enhance students' gender awareness and analytical skill in literature courses. However, the limited sample size constrains the generalisability of the findings and underscores the need for further research across broader educational contexts.

Keywords: Reading materials; educational innovation; gender violence; gender perspective; literary criticism; Higher Education.

How to cite: Serrano-Muñoz, J., & Iribarren, T. (2026). El fomento de la lectura resistente en el aula universitaria: materiales didácticos y metodologías. *Ocnos*, *25*(1). https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

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El fomento de la lectura resistente en el aula universitaria: materiales didácticos y metodologías

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Recibido: 11-Octubre-2024 Aceptado: 19-Junio-2025

Resumen

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de un estudio diseñado con el fin de evaluar el impacto de materiales didácticos sobre la identificación de violencias machistas en la literatura y la efectividad de ejercicios de innovación docente en asignaturas de estudios literarios. Se implementó un diseño longitudinal con encuestas pre y post-*testing* a estudiantes universitarios que utilizaron *Literatura y violencias machistas. Guía para trabajos académicos* (Iribarren et al., 2023) en una asignatura de literatura contemporánea. Los resultados mostraron un aumento significativo en el acceso a recursos sobre violencias machistas, especialmente entre los hombres. Se observó una mejora en el conocimiento de conceptos específicos de estudios de género y en la percepción de capacidades para identificar violencias en textos literarios. Respecto a los ejercicios docentes, las actividades grupales fueron percibidas como más innovadoras, mientras que las individuales se consideraron más útiles para detectar violencias en la literatura. El estudio sugiere que la incorporación de estos materiales puede ser efectiva para promover la lectura resistente y aumentar la conciencia y competencias analíticas de los estudiantes en temas de género y literatura, aunque se reconocen limitaciones en el tamaño de la muestra.

Palabras clave: Materiales de lectura; innovación pedagógica; violencia de género; perspectiva de género; análisis literario; Educación Superior.

Cómo citar: Serrano-Muñoz, J., & Iribarren, T. (2026). El fomento de la lectura resistente en el aula universitaria: materiales didácticos y metodologías. *Ocnos*, *25*(1). https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the gender perspective has become an increasingly prominent feature of academic curricula. At the same time, feminist movements such as #MeToo have generated substantial social and cultural momentum. Together, these trends have encouraged a growing body of research into the literary depiction of male violence (Brewster & Kossew, 2019; Alù & Hill, 2021; Holland & Hewett, 2021; López & Hart, 2022). Several of these studies provide valuable guidance for critically engaging with canonical texts (Tamas, 2023), including works such as Nabokov's *Lolita* (Rakhimova-Sommers, 2021).

This phenomenon has made its way into our classrooms, where students are more eager than ever to pursue work in this area. However, many lack the foundational knowledge and skills required to analyse literary texts depicting male violence. Due to their underdeveloped critical awareness, they often find it difficult to identify and interpret such depictions. This is reflected in their limited familiarity with feminist theoretical frameworks, their imprecise use of key concepts and their lack of practice with close reading from a gender perspective. Without these tools, their analyses tend to be superficial and fall short of academic standards.

This article outlines our approach to addressing this challenge. On one front, we argue for the importance of integrating literary studies into the broader effort to eradicate violence against women and girls, focusing particularly on the practice of resistant reading (Fetterley, 1978). On another, we describe four actions undertaken in support of this aim, promoting the use of feminist pedagogies in writing to help turn the classroom into a space of care and liberation (Wilkinson, 2025). These actions have been carried out from the 2020/2021 academic year to the present, as part of our teaching in the virtual classrooms of Themes in Contemporary Literature, an optional course within the Bachelor's Degree in Humanities at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC).

Our approach is grounded in the conviction that literature offers a powerful medium for promoting equality and respect for women and girls. In the regard, we draw particular inspiration from seven actions set out by the United Nations in *16 ways you can stand against rape culture* (ONU, n.d.): (1) speak out against the root causes; (2) know the history of rape culture; (3) take an intersectional approach; (4) listen to survivors; (5) get involved; (6) educate the next generation; and (7) start —or join— the conversation. We argue that critical reflection on the literary depiction of male violence (in all its forms) is a core competency of humanities education. This process involves the oral and written exchange of diverse interpretations, as well as the construction of meaning around narratives of violence and the emotions they evoke. We believe that this practice fosters self-awareness, attentive and empathetic listening, and an engaged, rigorous approach to a complex phenomenon shaped by ideological tensions and intense emotional responses.

We contend that adopting an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1991) to resistant reading can transform literary texts into meaningful spaces for life learning around gender equality. Resistant reading challenges us to let go of preconceived notions and uncritically reproduced androcentric reading patterns. As Noelia Pena (2019) notes, it seeks to ensure that "the will and agency of women readers are taken into account, leading us to consider a form of reader empowerment that arises from the realisation that we have been educated to think like men and to identify with the male point of view" (pp. 115–116). This approach is deepened by an intersectional perspective, which considers how gender intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as background, economic and social status, and cultural and linguistic capital. Through vicarious experience, literary texts can convey forms of knowledge imbued with ethical values such as recognition and respect (Assmann, 2013).

We also recognise that the nature of literary texts can help us to better understand real-world accounts of violence. This can be achieved by exploring aspects such as narrative structure, point of view, symbolism, stereotypes and discursive ambiguity. Literature shows that identities are constructions shaped by ideology, and that language and narrative strategies influence our perceptions of violence, victims, survivors and perpetrators. Furthermore, literary texts can provide innovative visions and methods of resisting violent structures by depicting subversive female characters who foreshadow more equitable and

just post-patriarchal futures. This kind of critical reading enables us to imagine new forms of reparative coexistence.

In line with these principles, we carried out the following four actions:

1. In *Narratives of Violence* (Iribarren et al., 2021), we provided models for the literary analysis of texts by female authors that address male violence.

2. We equipped the academic community with *Literature and Male Violence: A Guide for Academic Research* (Iribarren et al., 2023) (hereafter the *Guide*), which offers a theoretical framework, a methodology for carrying out hermeneutic analysis, proposals for teaching innovation, a glossary, and a corpus of texts for study.

3. We created the website *Lectures resistents* [Resistant readings] (https://lecturesresistents.cat), which provides a range of content, tools and educational resources for the critical reading of works that depict male violence.

4. We implemented an innovative practicum that equipped students with the *Guide*, while also adopting a methodology designed to foster resistant reading.

After several years of promoting resistant reading, it is imperative that we analyse the educational potential of the actions set out in points 2 and 4. First, we will evaluate the impact of an educational resource designed to support the interpretation of literary texts depicting male violence (i.e. the *Guide*). Second, we will measure the innovativeness and usefulness of the teaching exercises included in the *Guide*, which primarily involve collaborative group activities within the context of literary studies. Access to new resources and concepts has been essential to this pedagogical work. In this regard, we have drawn on previous research emphasising the importance of combining methodological innovation with enhanced knowledge acquisition (Sevillano-Monje et al., 2022). These two aims form part of a broader effort to strengthen the transformative potential of literature to help build a safe and equitable society for all.

METHOD

Objectives and hypotheses

This study aims to explore and measure one primary objective and one secondary objective:

— Primary objective: To evaluate the impact of an educational resource addressing gender-based violence —specifically, the *Guide*— on bachelor's degree students' self-perceived knowledge and ability to identify forms of male violence in literary texts.

— Secondary objective: To measure the innovativeness and usefulness of the teaching exercises included in the *Guide*, which primarily involve collaborative group activities within the context of literary studies.

In order to investigate these objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

— Primary hypothesis: The *Guide* significantly impacts students' self-perceived knowledge of violence against women and ability to conduct literary analysis.

— Secondary hypothesis: Including innovative teaching exercises that foster social and collaborative group learning is useful for students on literary and/or gender studies courses.

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Study design

Drawing on Ato et al. (2013), this research is defined as a selective study based on survey sampling, aimed at collecting empirical data through self-report techniques. As it follows the same cohort at two points in time to observe and measure changes, the design is selective, non-probabilistic and longitudinal in nature (Ato et al., 2013). To minimise the limitations inherent in self-report studies (Chasteen & Chattergoon, 2020) and in line with Brutus et al.'s (2013) recommendations, a pre- and post-test design was chosen over a post-test-only model. This decision was made to reduce the risk of distortion in accurately measuring change, which is particularly important when dealing with a topic as ethically and politically charged as male violence.

One limitation of the study is the absence of a control group. This was not a viable option, as university regulations prohibit the creation of differentiated pedagogical conditions that could result in students being treated unequally. To mitigate this, reference was made to the findings of an earlier study (Iribarren et al., 2024), conducted with students from the same course prior to the introduction of the educational resource under investigation. That study assessed the capacity of the proposed teaching interventions to improve academic performance and yielded positive results. Insights from this initial research informed the design of the present study.

The macrostructure of the study was adapted from Meza and González's (2020) model and organised into four stages:

1. Proposal: The objectives of the study were defined, the necessary tools were identified, and the resource to be tested (i.e. the *Guide*) was selected.

2. Preparation of the theoretical-methodological justification: This stage built upon work carried out for the teaching innovation project "INDOVIG 2021. Violencias contra las mujeres en la literatura. Debates teóricos, lecturas y propuestas de trabajos de investigación" [INDOVIG 2021. Violence against women in literature: Theoretical debates, readings and research proposals], which forms the conceptual foundation of this research. The resource at the core of this study originated from that project.

3. Design and implementation of the final instrument: The first survey was conducted during the first week of the course, before the resource was made available to students in the sample. The second took place during the final two weeks, after the teaching programme had concluded. The initial survey, comprising seven questions, was administered between 28 February and 7 March 2024. The second, carried out between 19 and 30 June 2024, included eight questions —six repeated from the first survey and two additional items designed to gather feedback on students' experience of the course. (For further details on survey design, see the section "Units of analysis and parameters".) The surveys were created using Google Forms and distributed to all participants via the virtual classroom and their university email accounts.

4. Data analysis: Once the data collection period had ended, the responses were organised and structured for comparative analysis. As this was a pre- and post-test study involving post-intervention data collection, the analysis focused on comparing baseline and final scores. Particular attention was paid to the potential for regression to the mean, as this can make it difficult to measure the resources' impact (Madersen & Torgerson, 2012; Bonate, 2000).

Participant profile

Participants were selected from the defined total population using a purposive sampling method (Etikan et al., 2015). This approach was based on the understanding that the sample was bounded, equally accessible through the same measurement instrument, had an equal hypothetical level of prior knowledge, and could be reached and quantified given its relatively small size. The potential sample consisted of 84 students, representing all students enrolled on the Themes in Contemporary Literature course during the 2023/2024 academic year. Because the UOC is an online university, its student profile is diverse in terms of

geographic origin, age and socioeconomic background. According to its transparency portal, nearly 60% of students reside in Catalonia, 34% in other parts of Spain, and 6% elsewhere in the world (UOC, n.d.).

A total of 78 students participated in the first survey, resulting in an excellent margin of error for a sample of this type (2.98%). Of these respondents, 50% identified as female, 47% as male, and 3% as non-binary. Participation in the second survey, conducted at the end of the course, dropped slightly to 67 students. Nevertheless, this still produced a relatively low margin of error (5.98%), supporting the validity of the study (Cochran, 1977; Mann & Lacke, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87 confirmed the study's internal consistency. In the second survey, 52% of participants identified as women, 46% as men, and 2% as non-binary. Responses from non-binary participants are not discussed separately in the analysis to avoid misinterpretation, as the small size of this group means that any variation would result in disproportionately high percentages that are unlikely to be representative. However, these responses are included in the overall sample count.

Units of analysis and parameters

The surveys were structured in three sections. The first asked participants to indicate their self-identified gender, the only sociodemographic variable considered relevant to the study. The second contained questions about participants' self-perceived theoretical and methodological knowledge of violence against women, designed to assess the impact of the resource. The third section —more fully developed in the second survey— aimed to evaluate participants' perceptions of the teaching exercises. The structure of both surveys is outlined below:

Table 1

Structure of Survey 1

Domain	Question	Responses
Sociodemographics	What is your gender identity?	Female / Male / Non-binary
Potential impact of educational material on violence against women	How would you rate the depth of your knowledge about violence against women?	7-point Likert scale ranging from "Superficial" to "In-depth"
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Gender identity]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Feminicide]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Patriarchy]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Intersectionality]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Resistant reading]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Mansplaining]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Smurfette principle]	Yes / No

Ocnos, 25(1) (2026). ISSN-e: 1885-446X
https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

Domain	Question	Responses
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Purplewashing]	Yes / No
	At any point in your education or personal experience, have you accessed materials that help you to identify male violence in literature?	Yes / No
	How confident are you in your ability to detect and distinguish different types of violence against women in literature?	7-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all confident" to "Very confident"
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Physical violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Psychological violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Symbolic violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Institutional violence]	Yes / No
Educational experience and exposure to innovative teaching exercises	Have you ever undertaken any of the following exercises? [Reading diary for a novel]	Yes / No
	Have you ever undertaken any of the following exercises? [Staged essay]	Yes / No
	Have you ever undertaken any of the following exercises? [Real-time debate with a peer]	Yes / No
	Have you ever undertaken any of the following exercises? [Peer review of an essay draft]	Yes / No

Table 2

Structure of Survey 2

Domain	Question	Responses
Sociodemographics	What is your gender identity?	Female / Male / Non-binary
Potential impact of educational material on violence against women	Now that you have taken the course, how would you rate the depth of your knowledge about violence against women?	7-point Likert scale ranging from "Superficial" to "In-depth"

Domain	Question	Responses
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Gender identity]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Feminicide]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Patriarchy]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Intersectionality]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Resistant reading]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Mansplaining]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Smurfette principle]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define the following concepts? [Purplewashing]	Yes / No
	At any point in your education or personal experience, have you accessed materials that help you to identify male violence in literature?	Yes / No
	How confident are you in your ability to detect and distinguish different types of violence against women in literature?	7-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all confident" to "Very confident"
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Physical violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Psychological violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Symbolic violence]	Yes / No
	Would you be able to define these types of violence? [Institutional violence]	Yes / No
Educational experience and exposure to innovative teaching exercises	Rank the following exercises according to how useful you found them for identifying violence against women in literature. [Reading diary for a novel]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how useful you found them for identifying violence against women in literature. [Staged essay]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how useful you found them for identifying violence against women in literature. [Real-time debate with a group of peers]	Rank from 1 to 4

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Domain	Question	Responses
	Rank the following exercises according to how useful you found them for identifying violence against women in literature. [Peer review of an essay draft]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how innovative you found them in your experience of studying literature. [Reading diary for a novel]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how innovative you found them in your experience of studying literature. [Staged essay]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how innovative you found them in your experience of studying literature. [Real-time debate with a group of peers]	Rank from 1 to 4
	Rank the following exercises according to how innovative you found them in your experience of studying literature. [Peer review of an essay draft]	Rank from 1 to 4

RESULTS

Impact of access to material on violence against women

The primary objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of using the *Guide* as an educational resource on gender-based violence, with a particular focus on students' ability to identify forms of male violence in literature. To this end, it was first necessary to establish the sample baseline.

In response to the question about whether they had previously accessed material addressing violence against women, 70.5% of respondents answered "yes" in the first survey. There was a significant gender difference: 69% of women reported prior contact with material on male violence, compared to 37.5% of men. Asking the same question again in the second survey, after the course had been completed using the *Guide*, yielded very positive results regarding new access. Overall, 92% of respondents reported accessing such material (+22%), rising to 93% among women (+24%) and a notably high 90% among men (+53%).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare self-perceived knowledge of violence against women in literary works, comparing scores obtained before ($n = 96$, mean = 4.88, standard deviation = 1.21) and after ($n = 67$, mean = 5.82, standard deviation = 0.95) the educational intervention. The results revealed statistically significant differences, ($t(161) = 5.35$, $p < .001$), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.85$, 95% CI [0.53, 1.18]). The 0.94-point increase on a 1–7 Likert scale indicates that the intervention significantly improved students' self-perceived knowledge with regard to identifying and analysing male violence in literature.

Table 3

Changes in self-perceived knowledge of violence against women

Gender identity	Mean score in the first survey (7-point Likert scale)	Mean score in the second survey (7-point Likert scale)	Change between the first and second survey
Female	5.3	6.02	+0.74
Male	4.6	5.53	+0.91
Total	4.9	5.8	+0.91

Changes in self-perceived knowledge were also assessed by measuring variations in students' ability to define relevant concepts. These were categorised as either definitions of different types of violence (physical, psychological, symbolic and institutional) or definitions of key concepts associated with gender studies. Regarding the ability to define types of violence, no significant changes were observed in any group for the definitions of physical or psychological violence, which suggests a pre-existing familiarity with these concepts. However, knowledge levels clearly increased for the other two types —symbolic and institutional violence— which is a positive outcome given that gender studies aim to raise awareness around these forms of violence (Dowler et al., 2014; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Knowledge of symbolic violence increased from 65% to 98% among all respondents, with a particularly notable rise among male students (from 62.5% to 100%).

Eight concepts were included in the survey, selected for their varying levels of presumed familiarity among participants: "gender identity", "feminicide", "patriarchy", "intersectionality", "resistant reading", "mansplaining", the "Smurfette principle", and "purplewashing". As the *Guide* features a glossary defining all of these terms, it was hypothesised that access to this resource would result in observable improvements in students' knowledge, particularly for the more specialised concepts. The results support this hypothesis, as outlined below:

Table 4

Changes in students' knowledge of key concepts

Concept	Female students		Male students		Total		Change		
	First survey	*Second survey*	*First survey*	*Second survey*	*First survey*	*Second survey*	*Female students*	*Male students*	*Total*
Gender identity	100%	100%	97.5%	100%	98%	100%	0%	+3%	+2%
Feminicide	94.5%	100%	97.5%	100%	94.5%	100%	+5%	+3%	+5%
Patriarchy	100%	100%	97%	100%	98.5%	100%	+0%	+3%	+2%
Intersectionality	74.5%	100%	64.5%	100%	70.5%	100%	+26%	+36%	+30%
Resistant reading	21.5%	78%	11%	67%	15.5%	73%	+56%	+56%	+57%
Mansplaining	65.5%	87%	59.5%	81%	61.5%	83%	+21%	+21%	+22%
Smurfette principle	34%	59.5%	13%	43.5%	21.5%	58%	+26%	+31%	+37%

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https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

Concept	Female students		Male students		Total		Change		
	First survey	*Second survey*	*First survey*	*Second survey*	*First survey*	*Second survey*	*Female students*	*Male students*	*Total*
Purplewashing	55%	78%	37.5%	68%	47%	74%	+23%	+31%	+27%

This table shows that the resource did not significantly alter students' understanding of concepts with which they were already familiar. However, it did support a notable improvement in knowledge of more specialised terms. Particularly striking were the increases for "intersectionality" (+30%) and "resistant reading" (+57%), the latter being a key concept in feminist literary criticism. This variation was relatively consistent across gender identities, though more pronounced among male students, indicating a greater impact within this subgroup.

Finally, the study sought to assess the resource's impact on students' self-perceived ability to identify violence against women in literary texts through a feminist critical lens. The aim was to gather data on their prior familiarity with techniques and methods for reading literature critically from a feminist perspective, and to determine whether the *Guide*, as a course resource, had contributed to strengthening their competence in this area. To this end, the same question was included in both the first and second surveys, using a 7-point Likert scale.

Table 5

Changes in students' confidence in their ability to identify violence in literature

Gender identity	Mean score in the first survey (7-point Likert scale)	Mean score in the second survey (7-point Likert scale)	Change between the first and second survey
Female	5.42	6.05	+0.62
Male	4.61	5.70	+1.09
Total	4.97	5.88	+0.90

Acknowledging that this is an observed correlation rather than a direct causal link, the results indicate a significant increase in students' confidence in their ability to detect violence in literature. The most pronounced change is observed among male students, aligning with the patterns seen across other parameters.

Perceived innovativeness and usefulness of the proposed exercises

The *Guide* proposes three teaching exercises: peer review of literary interpretation essays, reading diaries, and the collaborative creation of Wikipedia entries (Iribarren et al., 2023, pp. 119–128). A secondary objective of this project was to assess students' perceptions of the innovativeness and usefulness of these exercises within the context of literary studies education.

As these exercises are independent of one another, and considering the course's workload and assessment demands, two of the three were selected for implementation: peer review and the reading diary. These were combined with two additional graded exercises not included in the *Guide*: the staged development of an interpretive essay (comprising a proposal, draft and final version) and the organisation of a real-time group debate. The chronological order of the four exercises implemented in the course was as follows:

1. Reading diary [Exercise 1]
2. Group debate [Exercise 2]
3. Preparation and presentation of the essay proposal and draft [Exercise 4]
4. Peer review of the draft essay [Exercise 3]
5. Presentation of the final version of the essay [Exercise 4]
6. Second peer review of the final essay [Exercise 3]

As shown, Exercise 4 partially overlaps with Exercise 3, as it is divided into multiple stages. Students receive feedback and assessment only after completing all parts, specifically at Step 5. Similarly, Exercise 3 includes two rounds of peer review —one for the draft essay and another for the final version— both carried out using the same student pairings. Further details on the specific methodology of this exercise can be found in the relevant chapter of the *Guide* (Iribarren et al., 2023, pp. 120-122).

The two parameters under study were innovativeness and usefulness. To assess the degree of change within the sample, the first survey asked whether students had previously completed any of the four proposed exercises. The table below shows the percentage of students who were familiar with each exercise prior to the start of the course. The two teaching exercises described in the *Guide* are marked with an asterisk.

Table 6

Students with prior experience of the proposed exercises

Gender identity	Reading diary*	Group debate	Peer review*	Staged essay
Female	58%	32%	25%	31%
Male	33%	38%	35%	22%
Total	46%	33%	28%	26%

The exercises selected for this course demonstrate a high degree of innovativeness. Only around a quarter of respondents had previously completed a staged essay or participated in a peer review. By comparison, nearly half had previously worked with a reading diary, indicating that this exercise was more familiar to those in the sample.

The second survey —administered at the end of the course— asked participants to rank the four exercises from 1 to 4 according to two criteria. These items were included on the assumption that all students were now familiar with the exercises, as they were required for assessment. First, students were asked to indicate how innovative they found each exercise within their educational experience. Second, they were asked to rate how useful each exercise was for identifying violence against women in literature —the analytical and theoretical focus of the course. For the analysis, responses were processed to calculate the mean ranking for each exercise and the percentage of responses assigned to each position, in order to identify patterns of consensus, divergence or even distribution. Table 7 presents the results for the innovativeness criterion. The highest values in each column are highlighted in bold. The final row displays the mean ranking, where a value closer to 1 indicates a higher perceived level of innovativeness.

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Table 7

Ranking of exercises according to perceived innovativeness

Ranking	Reading diary*	Group debate	Peer review*	Staged essay
1	**34%**	27%	**36%**	14%
2	15%	**38%**	21%	26%
3	24%	20%	21%	30%
4	26%	16%	23%	**32%**
Mean	2.44/4	2.77/4	2.32/4	2.29/4

No gender breakdown is provided for this table, as the variables show no significant differences and are very similar across all groups. Several observations can be drawn from the data. First, the results are relatively uniform, with a general tendency towards a mid-point consensus in the mean rankings. Nevertheless, the peer review exercise stands out as the most innovative, followed by the group debate. Both exercises encourage social interaction and, despite being less commonly encountered (as shown by the familiarity data in table 6), are associated with positive effects on participation and academic performance (Thomas & Kim, 2019; Zachariah et al., 2022). Notably, the findings also suggest that a lack of prior familiarity with an exercise does not necessarily translate into a higher perception of innovativeness. For example, only 26% of students had previously completed a staged essay, yet it was rated the least innovative of the four exercises. The results for the usefulness criterion are presented in table 8 below.

Table 8

Ranking of exercises according to perceived usefulness

Ranking	Reading diary*	Group debate	Peer review*	Staged essay
1	**61%**	12%	11%	24%
2	16%	26%	15%	**43%**
3	9%	**38%**	32%	14%
4	15%	25%	**43%**	16%
Mean	1.78/4	2.76/4	3.06/4	2.25/4

In this case, we observe greater variation in the rankings, with a clear polarisation between the first exercise (the reading diary), rated as the most useful for identifying violence against women, and the third exercise (peer review), rated as the least useful. When both criteria are compared, these two teaching exercises reveal two complex realities. The reading diary shows the strongest correlation between perceived usefulness and innovativeness, despite being the exercise with which students were most familiar at the start of the course. Peer review, by contrast, although rated the most innovative, was considered the least useful in developing the theoretical and methodological ability to identify male violence in literature—a central aim of the course. The following section explores possible reasons for this discrepancy, along with final reflections on the impact of the materials and the scope of the study.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of an educational resource designed to foster critical analysis of texts addressing violence against women among university students. Specifically, it examined how the implementation of *Literature and Male Violence: A Guide for Academic Research* (Iribarren et al., 2023) could support students in identifying forms of male violence in literary texts. The research was carried out within the Topics in Contemporary Literature course, part of the Bachelor's Degree in Humanities at the UOC, during the 2023/2024 academic year.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the results:

— Access: Exposure to the *Guide* significantly increases access to critical information on identifying and analysing forms of male violence in literature. This result is especially striking among male students. In our sample, only 37.5% reported having previously encountered materials that helped them recognise male violence in literary texts, whether in their education or personal experience. After completing the course, this figure rose to 90%. These findings have important implications for the design of educational programmes in literary and gender studies. They suggest that integrating targeted materials on male violence in literature can be highly effective in raising awareness and developing analytical skills, particularly among male-identifying students. This could inform future curricular choices and pedagogical strategies in higher education.

— Knowledge: There was a noticeable increase in students' understanding of specific concepts, particularly those linked to gender studies (e.g. intersectionality, resistant reading and purplewashing). These terms were largely unfamiliar at the beginning of the course but became more widely recognised by its conclusion. By contrast, no significant improvement was observed in the understanding of more general concepts, where the *Guide* appears to have had a lesser impact.

— Methodology: There was also an improvement in students' self-perceived ability to identify forms of male violence in literature, especially among male-identifying students.

The secondary aim of the study was to measure the innovativeness and usefulness of the teaching exercises included in the *Guide*, which primarily involve collaborative group activities within the context of literary studies. The findings offer insights into two key areas:

Innovativeness: Activities based on group or collective participation—such as debates and peer reviews— were identified by the sample as the most innovative. This highlights their potential value in literature curricula, especially when the goal is to foster a broader set of skills. Notably, these activities also align closely with the UN's guidelines for dismantling rape culture, while contributing to the transformation of the classroom into a space of care and awareness (Wilkinson, 2025).

— Usefulness: The most innovative activities were not necessarily those perceived as most useful for identifying violence against women in literature. More individual and less novel exercises —such as the reading diary and the staged essay— were rated higher in terms of perceived usefulness.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study in order to encourage further research in this area. The relatively small sample size —limited to students enrolled on a single course— may diminish the generalisability of the findings. While participation rates were relatively high and the margin of error supports the study's validity, future research would benefit from a larger and more diverse sample, including students from different academic years, institutions or even countries. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the *Guide* or other similar resources. For future analyses using self-report methods, researchers are advised to incorporate a retrospective pre-course self-assessment alongside the standard pre/post-test model as a potential control variable. This approach, proposed by Rockwell and Kohn (1989), may help to minimise biases associated with shifts in self-perception or opinion over the course of the study.

Ocnos, 25(1) (2026). ISSN-e: 1885-446X
https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2026.25.1.560

Second, the impact of educational resources designed for this purpose may vary if we assume a gradual mainstreaming of didactic materials with a gender perspective or the progressive integration of feminist discourse across different stages and levels of the educational system. Third, the usefulness criterion adopted for the secondary objective was naturally constrained by the primary aim of the study and the intrinsic purpose of the *Guide*: namely, to support students in identifying male violence in literature. A different pattern of responses might have emerged had the usefulness criterion been framed around other factors —such as the degree of social interaction encouraged, or the extent to which each exercise contributed to developing the interpretive essay. The teaching exercises taken from the *Guide* are not limited to gender-focused instruction and could be adapted more broadly to inform curriculum design in other areas of literary and humanities education.

FUNDING

This research was made possible by funding from two projects: "INDOVIG 2021. Violencias contra las mujeres en la literatura. Debates teóricos, lecturas y propuestas de trabajos de investigación" [INDOVIG 2021. Violence against women in literature: Theoretical debates, readings and research proposals], funded by the Spanish Ministry of Policy, Parliamentary Relations and Equality through the State Secretariat for Equality, and "INDOVIG 2023. Portal de recursos académicos para abordar críticamente la literatura que representa las violencias machistas" [INDOVIG 2023. Academic resource portal for the critical study of literature depicting male violence], funded by the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia.

CONTRIBUCIÓN DE LOS AUTORES

Jordi Serrano-Muñoz: Project administration; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology.

Teresa Iribarren: Project administration; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Funding acquisition.

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