

Fictional Representation of Female Youth in the 21st Century Philippine Short Stories

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the characteristics of female Filipino youths in selected 21st-century Philippine short stories. This study used the constructivist research paradigm and the feminism theory of Simone de Beauvoir. It limits categorizing the female characters in the stories as narcissists, women in love, and mystics. It employs the descriptive Qualitative Research Method through Content Analysis. The study results showed that female characters are narcissistic and women in love but differ in the major theme of each unique characteristic. Unfortunately, the researcher did not uncover a mystic character in the eight selected short stories. Based on the result, the researcher recommends incorporating the feminist perspective in teaching to improve students' understanding of gender issues and the role played by women in society. Furthermore, a focus on female characters and their experiences could be included in future research. These can help them assess other Filipino female characteristics.

1. Introduction

Female youths are perceived in many ways, resulting in distinct models, norms, and values. It is the critical time for their transition, socialization, and struggle for social position. Female youths are also important for national progress since focusing on their health and development benefits society (Yadav and Srivastava, 2020).

A female's passage from childhood to maturity is captured by the Filipino term "pagdadalaga." Republic Act 8044 (1995) declared that "youth" refers to the critical period of a person's growth and development from the start of adolescence to the peak of mature, self-reliant, and responsible adulthood, which spans the age range of fifteen (15) to thirty (30) years. Pubertal changes encompass physical, biochemical, and behavioral changes that impact young people's growth into adults. They develop love feelings, peer pressure, and a desire to try new things during puberty. However, different models, standards, and values might be adapted to females (Raymundo 2004). However, the role of female youth expected to behave in their family and community may restrict them from developing these skills to their fullest potential (Harper, Jones, Ghimire, Marcus, & Bantebya, 2018).

In the Philippines, Tarrayo (2015) found that Filipino females projected a wide range of images, including martyrs, social victims, homemakers, mothers, fighters, and others. Her looks, attitude, and social roles are all influenced by her period and environment. A female's change can be influenced by several factors, including societal, political, and personal ambition. Maria Clara, the classic Filipino lady, has evolved into the modern Filipina who is courageous and dedicated to her ambitions or desires.

However, female youth nowadays in the 21st century is far different from the previous generations of young women. All females have the same chances as males. It is important for the future that girls or females grow up to be leaders in their homes and communities, as well as in the workplace and society. Youth organizations can play a key role in the formation of independent, supportive, accountable, and dedicated young people in a fully equitable society (Nightingale, et al., 1999). In the same vein, according to Joglekar (2013), female youths in the 21st century have

evolved since they are no longer restricted to household duties and family care. Undoubtedly, female youths have risen to prominence in all areas of society.

Moreover, based on the 21st Century Literature MELC from the Philippines, the youth would be able to comprehend the components and circumstances of Philippine literature through literature. The students or youth would be able to appreciate Philippine literature from the regions. Also, understand the context or meaning of a literary piece and relate it to one's own life experiences. It's also possible for them to see how Filipino writers have helped the development of national literature. They may find literature to express themselves and better understand others.

Through an extensive literature review, the researcher believes an updated study on these concerns is necessary as these situations continue to rise. This paper will discuss the characteristics of today's Filipino female youths in the selected Philippine short stories.

Being fascinated with short stories, the researcher believes that the social realities surrounding Filipino females would be uncovered by conducting this study. The researcher also wanted to know the characteristics of these female Filipino youths incorporating Simone de Beauvoir's feminist approach. Also, investigating the female youth from eight short stories in Philippine literature would give the readers an insight into how female Filipino youth function in the community. By being enlightened about the future outcomes of this study, the researcher hoped that teachers and students would understand more and drop the stereotypical thinking they had for the female Filipino youth.

2. Literature Review

Female youths' characteristics are described in numerous ways. Characteristics represent what people believe and value and how they think and conduct themselves. Aspirations, ideals, ethical implications, and behavioral patterns indicate what people think and value and how they act and feel. According to Bialik, Bogan, Fadel, & Ho (2015), when we say someone has "character," we mean that they have commendable qualities in both their intellectual and behavioral dimensions of public and private life and that they act with integrity in that their actions are compatible with their morals and ideals.

Females who are self-described as displaying leadership skills, a competitive mindset, and a willingness to take risks are so-called women with masculine personal characteristics. On the other hand, females who described themselves as kind, friendly, and affectionate corresponded to the so-called women with feminine characteristics (Drydak, Sidiropoulou, Patnaik, Selmanovic, & Bozani, 2017).

Other cultures viewed females as reproductive laborers. They have fewer political and economic rights than males, yet they undertake important unpaid labor and are unrecognized. As long as the public sector is dominated by men, it will remain private. However, females in industrialized cultures have access to the economy, the state, formal education, organized religion, and mass media means of communication and enjoyment (Helve, 2003).

In connection with this, an analysis by Chloe Brooke (2016) about the literary evolution of Postmodern Qualities of the Feminism of Nancy Drew is remarkable. A cultural transition hasn't changed her character. Postmodernism's paradoxical traits arise from outmoded qualities. In the first instance, Nancy suggested a female "other" possibility that the writers of literature created her character. She asserts that both women and men can evolve and that women's voices can inspire future attempts.

Female life can be described or recreated in literature, and the 21st literature plays an important role in shaping the mind and values of adolescents here in the Philippines. Gassman (2006) asserted that literature has the power to reimagine and redefine the roles of females. Besides that, one has to consider if youth literature appropriately represents females and if it supports social historians' new beliefs on how women have influenced historical events. Furthermore, literature assists in establishing the parameters for the decisions that youths make regarding their characteristics, their recognition of others, as well as the nature of their relationships.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative method was used by the researcher in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical data, such as language. It assisted in analyzing how and why the research difficulties became evident and provided us with a more in-depth knowledge of the text. The researcher analyzed the characteristic types of female youths in the short story. To have a further meaningful analysis, the researcher incorporated content analysis.

The content analysis method connected facts to context (Krippendorff, 1980). Weber (1990) defined it as a strategy for interpreting the text. Information about the sender(s), communication, or recipient(s). The content analysis aimed to comprehend the content's attributes and draw inferences about its causes and effects.

3.2 Sources of Data

The researcher selected these eight Philippine short stories since it has relevance to the experiences of today's female youths. As shown in the tables, this study used the code S1 – S8 for the selected stories. Also, these stories are known in the field of literature, and some of them have won the Palanca Awards in the 21st Century. These short stories were chosen based on these criteria; A. These are written by famous Filipino writers. B. All the characters are female Filipino youths aged 15-30, which is suitable for this study. C. These are 21st-century short stories appropriate for today's generation of females. D. These will give significance to the female youths today, especially the students. E. These short stories awaken the realities of every female youth. They will have a better understanding of female Filipino youth and will be less prone to hold misconceptions about them as a result of this experience.

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher began by generating potential thesis issues or difficulties to be addressed in the study. She gathered similar studies or related material that matched her research. She also determined who would be involved in the study and how the research would be carried out.

The researcher gathered various books and short stories containing works by well-known Filipino authors. The eight selected short stories were chosen for their significance and focus on Filipino female youths.

The researcher compiled a list of significant points concerning the study issues. The researcher read the stories a third time to verify that she thoroughly understood the characters and their characteristics in the literary works. She then incorporated the theory of Simone de Beauvoir about the type of characteristics of females, whether these females' characteristics are narcissist, a woman in love, and mystic.

The researcher used a datasheet to analyze the characteristics of the females. Lastly, the researcher compiled all the data analysis or findings, then gathered data information and listed them using the datasheet.

4. Results and Discussion

The fictional representations of female youths that can be gleaned from the 21st century Philippine short stories are narcissist and woman in love characteristics. None of the female youth characters can be gleaned as mystic. Out of the eleven female youth characters, there are four of them who can be described as a woman in love, and there are seven of them who can be described as narcissists based on Simone de Beauvoir's idea of feminism. However, these female youth characters also possess a unique or major theme based on their characteristics. The themes that we can represent the female youths are unconsummated, submissive, possessive, fearless, manipulative, outspoken, distrustful, pretentious, strong-minded, strong-willed, and benevolent. These characteristics are based on the experiences and other characters that impacted them in their lives.

Minda is a female character in the story *The Summer of My 17th* by H.O. Santos. She has always been told what to do and what not to do. In the summer of 2002, her cousin John invited her to meet a long-lost friend named Tim in Masbate. Tim welcomed John and talked for a long till he noticed Minda and greeted her. After a while, she enjoyed every moment of Tim. She chose a lovely party dress and put some make-up to impress Tim. Minda wanted to get to the venue early to talk to Tim. She asked Tim if he had a girlfriend. But Minda was too young for him.

The characteristic of Minda shows she is a young woman in love and has an unconsummated characteristic. It can also be understood when Minda expresses her feeling but hides it in herself. Minda's line shows how she doesn't care about people's opinions because love blinded her. In Simone de Beauvoir's view, when a woman is in love, many women find self-worth only in a man's love. Women's understanding of love is straightforward. She doesn't care about the individuality of one man or another; she is in love with a man in general. She wants to be loved by one of them (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

Women are expected to be more expressive than men, especially in romantic love (Harrison, 2011). It is the human desire to connect with someone, idealize them, shift one's life priorities, care about their well-being, and feel emptiness and misery in their absence (Gottschall & Nordlund, 2006). It was too late when Minda was about to tell Tim everything. Her love gave her courage, but this love also led to her first broken heart, which she hid this feeling. Thus, the attitude of love has an impact on one's well-being. On the other hand, while females long for commitment to their men and partners, they also desire men to recognize their efforts and help open the world to them (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

Lindoln's wife is a female character in the story *The Steel Brassiere* by Iris Sheila G. Crisostomo. The story is about a married woman and her Tiya Anding steel brassiere, her lifelong friend that died. She had rushed to that run-down house, hoping to save some old memories. An antique brassiere was one of the oddest items she made amid the pile of old clothes.

Based on the role and the characteristic of Lindoln's wife displays that she is a woman in love. However, the love did not turn out to become her best. She became a submissive wife who was willing to follow his husband's

superiority. The superiority of his husband makes her imprisoned in sadness and emptiness, but she does nothing about it. According to Simone de Beauvoir, women's traditional fate is marriage. Even now, most women are, were, or plan to be married. The single woman is defined by her marriage, whether disappointed, disgusted, or apathetic to it. Marrying a man gives her a piece of the universe, but she becomes his vassal. He is the economic leader of the village and thus its image in society. She adopts his name, religion, class, and world; she joins his family; she becomes his "half." She gives him her person: she owes him her virginity and strict fidelity (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

Aenid Blanco is introduced in the story *Meditations of a Piss Artist* by Menchu Aquino Sarmiento. Aenid Blanco, who had previously won the Miss Photogenic title in one of the previous year's beauty pageants, made no secret that she admired Jojo. She was under the impression that it was she who was attracted to Jojo. She was under the impression that all heterosexual men desired her above all other females. She was also under the impression that Jojo had a thing for her. She had already told Jojo her feelings for him, but he liked another girl. As Aenid and Makati Girl walked through the mall to see a movie, Aenid pretended to like something amazing had happened between them. After the movie, Jojo contacted Aenid and offered to drive her home. And in bed, Aenid screamed as they had intercourse that she truly loved Jojo no matter what. The lines reveal the characteristic of Aenid Blanco.

Aenid Blanco reveals a woman in love characteristic and a unique characteristic of a possessive female youth. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) explains that men want to integrate the lady they love into their lives, not submerge themselves in her. In contrast, love for a woman is absolute surrender to another. She has less to prove than to refrain from grossly disavowing their value. This explains many frequently regrettable mistakes. The naïve young woman is taken in by virility (Borde and Chevallier, 2010). Aenid seduced Jojo because she did not want him to be with another girl. She gave up herself, became possessive of the man, and was willing to do everything for him.

Maria Isabella is the female character in the story *The Kite of Stars* by Dean Francis. Maria Isabella was a young female who attempted to create a gigantic and beautiful kite to attract the attention of a young male from a family of stargazers. The plot revolves around Maria Isabella's efforts to become a star and her subsequent encounter with him. The young lady then sought the assistance of a kite-maker to create a kite that would allow her to soar to the heavens and become a star in her own right. It would take her sixty years to collect the materials for the kite, and she would solicit help from a young butcher's boy to assist her in her quest to obtain the rare materials she needed. Maria Isabella searched for love all her life, sacrificing her time and herself for the man she adored.

Based on her effort to get a man's attention, Maria is a woman in love. Additionally, she has also a unique characteristic of being fearless. She was fearless to the point that she was willing to risk her life and journey to different islands to complete the materials of the kite. This relates to the statement of Simone de Beauvoir about a woman in love. According to Beauvoir, if she gives herself completely to the idol, she expects him to offer her both herself and the world within him. The woman believes she has finally discovered herself in the man's eyes. One of the greatest sources of happiness for a woman in love is to be acknowledged by the man as part of him, to be associated and identified with him, to share his prestige, and to reign with him over all of the rest of the world (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

Ms. Farrin is another female character introduced in the story *Meditations of a Piss Artist* by Menchu Aquino Sarmiento. Ms. Farrin is a provincial English instructor. She asked Jojo, his student, to bring her home one afternoon after class because she had all five sections' final examinations and reports to carry. He couldn't go home since it was raining, so he waited in the small room his English teacher rented near the regional bus station. Jojo, the high school student, made a move on Miss Farrin. He pressed her against her army surplus cot and cupped her rump with his enormous hands, a "successful" gesture that made him proud. A woman eight years older than him who had earned a bachelor's degree from a Manila institution and had passed the government licensure examination was his pride and joy. This line shows that Jojo perceives Ms. Farrin as a city girl of better rank.

Miss Farrin did not love Jojo, but he used him for her pleasure or her desire as a woman. She manipulated his student with her interest and bought him some stuff in exchange for her desires. According to Simone de Beauvoir (1949), the bed has always been considered a "service" for a woman, for which the male expresses gratitude; nonetheless, to serve is to give oneself up to a master; there is no mutuality in this connection. This manifests that Miss Farrin is a narcissist because she doesn't think about Jojo's image as a student but is selfish because of her power to manipulate. Furthermore, aside from her narcissism, she also has manipulative characteristics. In line with this, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) mentions that because sexuality is not an isolated domain, it extends the dreams and joys of sensuality; in her narcissism, in her diffuse or precise homosexual experiences, she posited herself as a subject and sought the possession of a female body. When she faces the man, she wants to caress prey with her palms and lips actively. She gives herself to a man who is virile yet young and alluring enough to be a desirable object. Foster, Shrira, and Campbell (2006) also asserted that narcissism is associated with an agentic conception of sex, which can be used to explain unrestricted socio-sexuality in several different ways.

Makati Girl is another female character introduced in the story *Meditations of a Piss Artist* by Menchu Aquino Sarmiento. The interaction with Ms. Farrin reminds Jojo of his encounter with the “Makati Girl,” the girl he liked in his Art Theory class. Her sophistication and style match his perception of a “Makati Girl,” so he called her “Makati Girl” privately. When they had an activity in the Art Theory Class, Makati Girl had high confidence to show her work as if she was showing her whole body through art. As part of the Figure Drawing class, students were required to produce life-size nude self-portraits, and she was the only one who did so with complete frontal nudity. Everybody in the room, including the males, carefully concealed their genitalia with well-positioned hands or bowed legs. To demonstrate her confidence, her drawing depicted her as having a single breast that was somewhat smaller and higher than the other, and the lotus labia of her sensitive female genitalia could be seen clearly through the fine fronds of her pubic hair.

This characteristic shows that she’s a narcissist for being proud of herself and what is normal to a body. She didn’t care if she would be judged about her body. Instead, she was very outspoken about what was real. Having a person love and like themselves, believing themselves to be significant and worthwhile, and being pleased with themselves is narcissism (Gungor, Eksi, Aricak, 2012). It is undeniable that women are breaking free from their long-held historical cocoon. They are now able to control their own emotions and way of life. Women are no longer limited to traditional duties. Practically in every aspect of their lives, they have declared themselves equal. They confirmed that a person's competence or capacity to stand on their own does not depend on their sexual orientation (Dials, 2017). Simone de Beauvoir (1949) also agrees that a woman, more than any other, is capable of allowing the image to get incorporated into the self.

Liza is the female character in *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran. The story revolves around Liza. She dealt with the issue of her father having an affair with another woman and how this caused her to become emotionally estranged from her father. The story begins when Liza and Tita Loleng begin cooking on Sinigang for the first time; she’s not having an interest in cooking.

Because of his father, Liza tried to stand and be an independent young woman. She was in denial about the truth, and the hatred in her heart remained. She might forgive her father but not forget the experience. Liza has shown a narcissistic characteristic because of her behavior to stand the loneliness and enduring the lesser attention of his father. She also developed a distrustful characteristic because of the circumstances she had been through with his father. Simone de Beauvoir emphasizes that a narcissistic female gives herself sovereign importance because no important object or person is accessible to her (Borde and Chevallier, 2010). Simone de Beauvoir (1949) also states that the narcissist refuses to acknowledge that she can be perceived in any way other than the way she presents herself; this explains why, although preoccupied with pondering herself, she completely fails to judge herself, and she falls so readily into nonsense. She no longer listens; instead, she speaks, and when she speaks, she recites the words. She dreamed of the future as a child; now, locked in an uncertain present, she tells herself her story, retouching it to bring an aesthetic order, changing her contingent life into a destiny well.

The woman she has become misses the human being she used to be, and she makes an effort to locate this deceased kid in her deepest self. The words "little girl" move her, but the phrase "such a funny little girl" move her much more, as they are the words that restore her lost originality (Borde and Chevallier, 2010). Liza missed the days of her childhood and the attention of her father. That was the day when her father did not cheat and had no other child outside of the family. That was the day she never felt any envy and distrust. When it comes to reacting with envy and distrust, narcissists are highly prone. In addition, there is evidence that the relationship between narcissism and envy is more complicated than previously thought. Narcissists frequently exhibit more extreme emotional responses than other people and a more intense hatred in response to negative feedback (Lange, Crusius, Hagemeyer, 2016).

These characteristics of Christina show that she is a narcissist and is pretentious about her age and what she terrifies. Beauvoir claims that narcissism is a sort of objectification in which women place a high value on their physical appearance above all else (Borde and Chevallier, 2010). According to Holtzman and Donnellan (2015), narcissism is an epiphenomenon that emerges from different underlying qualities and motivations. The core of narcissism is characterized by entitled, arrogant, self-centered, and egotistical individuals who use their substantial social power and predisposition towards exploitative behavior to push themselves into positions of authority or social prominence. Narcissism is a lifelong set of attitudes and behaviors that reflect excessive self-esteem and a great fascination with becoming the best among others, as well as an attitude to disregard the feelings of others in order to pursue selfishness, want, or power, among other things (Vaknin, 2003). The flexibility to dress up or down, apply or remove lipstick, flaunt themselves, or wear sweats—and even gain or lose weight—is now available to many women without concern about sacrificing their value as a woman or their seriousness as a person (Wolf 2002). As Simone de Beauvoir stated, the narcissist, crowned with glory, floats in the center of eternity, while on the other side of the clouds, kneeling beings prostrate themselves before her as if she were a goddess. Even if the woman is not of unimpeachable

beauty, she will see the unique treasures of her soul manifested on her face, which will be enough to drive her to intoxication (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

Kara is a female character in the story *Kara's Place* by Luis Joaquin M. Katigbak. As depicted in the story *Kara's Place*, two long-time college friends, Eric and Kara, meet one day in Kara's dormitory and discuss Kara's problem with a professor who tried to harass her. She was an intelligent girl when it came to her academics. However, she was unmotivated to do so because of her previous experience with her male professor.

Kara shows a narcissistic characteristic toward her goal. This shows when she has many absences from her Math 17 subject because of her confidence that she's too smart for it, and she finds it a boring subject. She didn't care about the instructor at first, but when she failed, she persevered. With this, she also possessed a strong-minded characteristic. Narcissists believe they are better than others and are high in confidence, even when they experience failure (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004). Narcissists, despite their exaggerated sense of self, typically do not perform any better or worse than their non-narcissistic counterparts, with the exception of situations in which they think opportunities for self-enhancement or personal ambition take place (Ames & Kammrath, 2004).

Karen is the female character in the story *The Martini Effect* by Doreen D.L. Jose. In the story, Roy and Karen are dating at the start of the story. Karen flew to London to pursue her goals. Roy and Karen were in a long-distance relationship and merely messaging one another. She was conducting studies in London. Their professor assigned them to research the Martini Effect. She couldn't finish her research since she didn't understand the Martini Effect, but Simon clarified it. Then she organized participatory research with her classmates. She drank a Martini with Dimitri, and they immediately fell in love. They broke up with Roy and Karen moved to another country with Dimitri to pursue her career.

Karen chose her dreams rather than staying with Roy. Their long-distance relationship did not work, and it was a one-sided choice. The characteristic of Karen based on Simone de Beauvoir's view shows that she is a narcissist. She dared to stand alone, made connections with other people, and was determined to do her goals on her own without relying on his man. In line with this, she has a strong-willed characteristic. In the book *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir (1949) mentions that it's through a career that women have been able to reduce the gap between them and men to a significant level; a career is the only thing that can provide her with concrete freedom. It doesn't take long for the system built on her reliance to crumble once she no longer serves as a parasite; there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator between her and the environment. Due to the curse placed on the lady vassal, she is not permitted to achieve anything; as a result, she doggedly pursues the impossible desire for existence through narcissism.

Dora is the character in the story *Touch* by Lakambini Sitoy. Dora, a father's daughter, was the focus of the story. Tio Tinong always beat his children so much that his children preferred him to be at work than at home and that they could do as they pleased for most of the year when he was at sea but had to obey him for a month or two when he was home. Dora worked as a nurse in an old people's home. The terror that Dora's father instilled in her remained. From time to time, Dora's brain was flooded with phrases and cries. After hearing her siblings scream while their father lashed them with a leather belt, she was still uneasy.

Dora shows a narcissistic characteristic because she wants to forget his father's brutal experience with them when they were young. Her dedication to and emphasis on her career depends on her life situation. When she becomes an adult, she has a different view of the universe than a man since she has a different past. As de Beauvoir points out, women are unable to exist as subjects. Therefore they look for transcendence in something other than their own lives. In addition to feeling misunderstood, women often have a poor grasp of reality, which causes them to become self-absorbed. Even though they have no important skills or items to offer, they want to be considered noteworthy. As a result, these women rarely create true ties with other people because they insist on being the focus of attention and do not thoroughly understand themselves or their environment. Despite their apparent power and sense of self-importance, narcissists are weak (Borde and Chevallier, 2010).

5. Conclusion

The female characters in the story possessed the characteristics of narcissism and a woman in love. Unfortunately, no female mystic character could be found in the selected eight short stories. Aside from the female characteristics of Simone de Beauvoir, these female youths possess unique themes that can relate to female youths today. Thus, the situation and environment in which the female characters lived influenced the development of their characteristics toward themselves, their families, and society.

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