

Walang Sa'yo Nicole: A Look at Feminism in Female TV Lead Roles

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is the social, economic, and political belief that all genders and sexes deserve equal treatment. In Philippine TV, the cases of how feminism is represented in a different light is an issue that needs to be scrutinized nowadays. The main objective of this study is to investigate how false feminist representations on Philippine TV radically affected how the public perceived the true essence of feminism. Moreover, through creative works, the researchers produced a documentary film. The proponents investigated why this is prevalent in the industry and how these representations influence the viewers' perception. The study encompassed the residents of Davao City. To further understand this research, the researchers gathered information from different sources from local media practitioners, filmmakers, and feminism advocates, all from other gender sectors, to ensure that there is no gender bias. This explains the factors that cause these representations to be relevant in today's teleseryes. In addition, the implication of this creative research highlights one of the most prevalent societal issues that must be addressed, particularly in the Media, which affects gender equality and societal norms. Upon thorough investigation and insights gathered from related literature and conducting interviews, the researchers discovered several reasons why these false feminist portrayals continue to thrive. One factor is people's general fascination with pop culture and media references, in which these tropes are used as examples. Another factor preventing these stories from being produced is a need for more options on free television. This relates to another factor that contributes to the airing of these shows, which is the ratings of these teleseryes. Companies that create this content assume that this is what the audience wants, but there are few options for the viewers.

Keywords: *feminism, feminist, teleserye, Davao City, creative works*

INTRODUCTION

Forms of media evolved throughout the years, and communication came in a multifaceted way. Television is one of the mediums people use in communicating; it is still relevant even in the age of new media. Television serves as a tool in keeping people entertained and informed. It is a powerful medium that either civilizes or limits. It has become essential for people to perceive the world (Robinson and Davis 16). Because of this, television showcases programs that are relatable to the viewer so people can be immersed in a new reality that they can enjoy or affect them personally.

It is undeniable that women are still marginalized in the media industry despite the rise of gender and development in today's society. There are lots of gender representations on television. However, women are underrepresented in the media, and when they appear, they are frequently shown as stereotypical characters (Daalmans et al. 2; Ross 371). Female characters are often stereotyped as dumb/intelligent or merely there for their attractiveness. They function only to help the male protagonist, like Black Widow in *The Avengers* (Grady 5).

Such interpretations reflect how society dictates women's values and how they should be treated, a significant contribution to how women are viewed as second-class citizens (National Women's History Museum 3; Ross 370). Women, on and off-screen, experience pay disparity and are left out of complex and influential roles. In a 2016 study by the San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film, 91% of the shows across streaming platforms had no female directors, 76% had no female creators, and 71% had no female writers (National Women's History Museum 3, 5).

In Philippine television, women protagonists in shows are not new. However, they are often pitted against women antagonists over a man's love interest. It shows a trope where womanhood is validated through a sense of winning over a man (Jeriah 4; Jani 5). Hence, the show would revolve around envy, competitiveness, and confrontations (Pascual 1). Although women protagonists are portrayed as strong women, their roles are portrayed as submissive, inferior, and intellectually and physically dependent on men. Just like the character of Carmela Fernandes in a teleserye in 2014, where she was deemed an empowering woman yet portrayed as an object of male sexual fulfillment (Anarcon 9; Castro 45). Outrageous catfights and stereotypes of wife and mistress in Philippine drama always had a place in the headlines. Those performances are praised just like the iconic line, "Walang sa'yo Nicole, akin lang ang asawa ko" in *The Legal Wife* (Kalaw 1; Bardinas 4; Musni-Tagaytay, 171). As entertaining as it shows, this trope can distort the audience's meaning of feminism (Choo and Woo, 3). This discriminatory behavior toward themselves and other women revolves around the male gaze, which is rooted in our world's ever-dominating patriarchal structure (Jani 1; Mulvey 7). It is what people interpret as feminism.

Numerous studies, in which telenovelas were involved, focused on material analysis and identification of the underlying subtext of the story. However, one study in Davao City explored the women's psyche using the television series, *The Legal Wife*. It provided a view of a Filipino woman in marriage, marital infidelity, and views on the stereotypical wife and mistress (Musni- Tagaytay 173). However, this needs to have an input on women behind the scenes and women actively participating in their advocacy. According to the *Handbook of Gender, Sex, and Media* by Ross (15), media research from a feminist perspective has yet to be explored as much as essays on representation and the like. One of which is the longstanding struggles of women to change mainstream media companies or content. There is a need to seek how feminism served to imbed itself and had its impact over time on media content, policies, and other aspects of media industries.

Media has a revolutionary potential that it can use to foster gender equality in society (International Media Support 5). With all these mentioned, feminism can be studied from the viewpoints of the actual movements fighting against the inequalities that women experience or from the writings of observers, commentators, and participants discussing the fundamental reasons for women being mistreated and not viewed equally (Bite 5). The longstanding struggles of women to change mainstream media and media content are an under-investigated phenomenon (Ross 15). Having this said, the researchers aimed to provide a voice for the women in this field by discussing the female TV leads stereotypes of feminism in media in Davao City. At the end of the study, the researchers identified the answers to the following questions: (1) How are women in TV media portrayed? (2) How are these representations reflected on media feminism?

The study dramatically benefits the people working in the industry, especially women. Shining light on topics such as feminism in their field would allow them to further understand the underlying issues in the portrayals of female protagonists in Philippine television. It would enable them to resolve those by creating more developed and layered characters. Aside from that, its significance would also be necessary for female television audiences, that they may be able to relate to these characters, internalize and unlearn the ideas and cultures that may harm their gender, and feel empowered by breaking the stereotypes that exist. This study is also relevant to organizations that advocate for feminism. They can use this research to gain and provide knowledge and understanding of feminism portrayals in media for their future awareness projects. Lastly, future researchers can acquire, adopt information, and gain knowledge in analyzing feminism in media which would serve as their supporting detail towards the study's success.

The following theories served as the basis for this study. First is the Cultivation Theory by George Gerbner (Perera 2), which states that exposure to media enables a person to interpret social realities according to how they are portrayed. Its hypothesis revolved around the notion that the higher television consumption a person has, the more their perceptions of the world are partial and distorted. Philippine television protagonists and how they portray themselves on

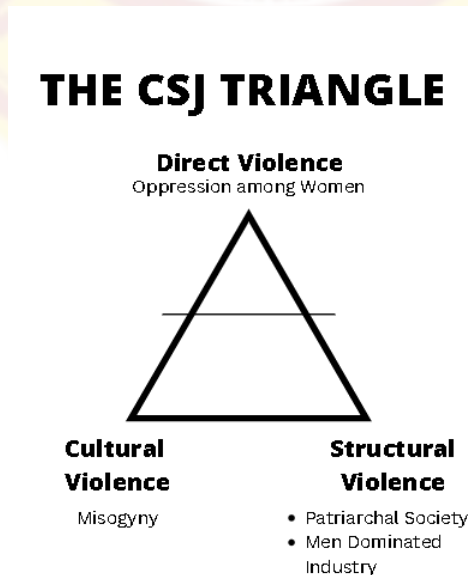
screen provide an inevitable "reality" of how women should revolve around the male narrative by being perceived as weaker and less intelligent.

Second is the Feminist Film Theory with the main argument that comes down to how paramount gender is in creating meaning in film (Smelik 1). It criticizes stereotypical representations of women. It is not limited to on- screen but includes women producers, directors, writers, and many more. In this study, providing a space for women in media opens an opportunity to critique these issues in Philippine television and find resolutions that would help combat gender inequality in the field.

The Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) Triangle served as the study's CSJ framework. CSJ Triangle is a tool that aids journalists in filling in the blanks and finding a dispute's underlying structural and cultural roots (Rama 40). Since the study aimed to discuss the female TV leads to stereotypes of feminism in media in Davao City, the researchers determined the causes why women are taught this understanding of feminism with the help of this tool. Using the CSJ Triangle, the researchers deliberated the information they received from the participants by focusing on an angle where they wanted to highlight a resolution to a particular discourse.

The identified direct violence is the oppression among women in the form of stereotyping. This is due to the structural violence rooted in patriarchal society, which believes that men are superior to women, especially in a male-dominated industry (Lindell 1). Lastly, the cultural violence identified is the misogyny that prevails over this prejudice or stereotypes that exist in society (Mastari 5).

Figure 1
The CSJ Triangle



The following paragraphs contain visual references related to the present study: Walang Sa'Yo Nicole: A Look at Feminism in Female TV Lead Roles. The purpose of looking for visual references for the documentary is to ensure that the documentary is aesthetically pleasing and professional-looking.

The Big Sex Talk. The Big Sex Talk is a documentary series by Noble Television Production that shows Canadians' ideas about gender and sexuality. It is explained through new vernacular and debunks all sex myths. Shan Boodram, a certified sex educator, provides narration (The Big Sex Talk 1). This series is where the researchers took inspiration from the TV-like clips used in the documentary film.

Figure 2

Screenshot of the TV series "The Big Sex Talk (2021)



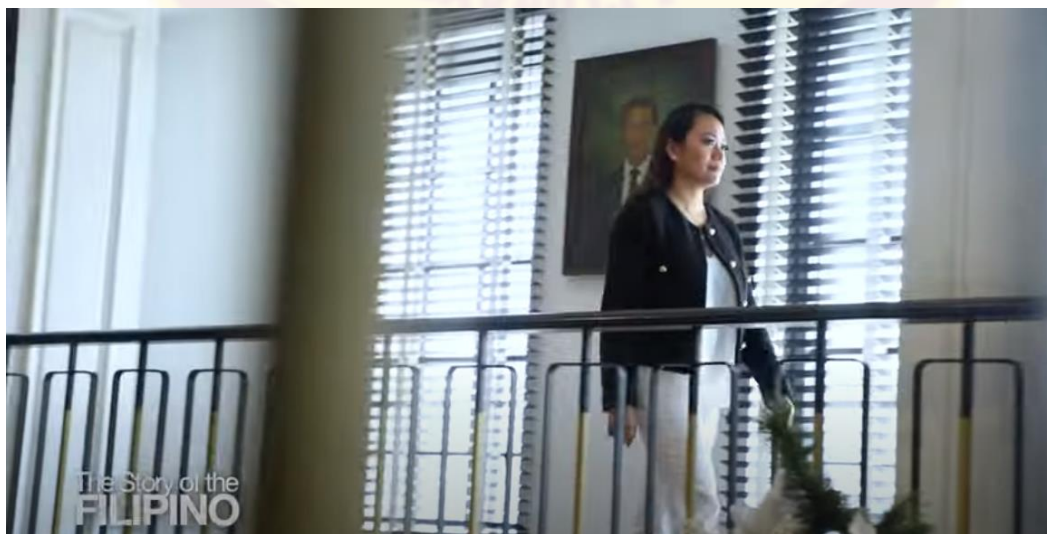
Fleabag. Fleabag is a hilarious and touching look into the mind of a dry-witted, sexual, angry, and bereaved woman as she mocks modern life in London. The researchers used Fleabag as an inspiration in storytelling. The audience is Fleabag's best friend in the critically acclaimed television series Fleabag. The lead character, Fleabag, almost constantly breaks the fourth wall by making eye contact with the camera and speaking directly to the viewer, which depicts self-awareness (Pastoor 1).

Figure 3
Screenshot of Fleabag (2016)



The Story of the Filipino: Women Leaders. The Story of the Filipino: Women Leaders is an award-winning documentary by CNN Philippines that bagged a Best Documentary Special Award and the 33rd PMPC Star Awards for Television Award in 2022. This reference was made an inspiration for the reenactment of a woman's life.

Figure 4
Screenshot of The Story of the Filipino: Women Leaders



METHOD

Research Design

The researchers used creative works, a non-traditional method primarily used in the arts field and done through composing, designing, creating, performing, or curating. The invention of new knowledge or the creative application of preexisting knowledge is both components of creative work research. One of the outputs of creative works is documentaries, which were used to present the gathered information about the female television leads stereotypes on feminism in media (Avondale University 13).

Research Participants

This study gathered information to understand the female TV leads to stereotypes of feminism in media in Davao City. This study delimits at least one active media-related employee in existing TV stations in Davao City, at least two experts from women's organizations, and one film director of legal age and all genders. Meanwhile, people outside the chosen limitation were excluded. The participants selected were Vina Araneta-Pilapil, a Producer in PTV; Edwin Priete, a filmmaker and director of Duwende Films; Arjoe Marie Cabudlan from Gabriela Davao; and Venus Aves of UP Babaylan. This study focused on discussing the female TV leads stereotypes of feminism in media in Davao City. Purposeful sampling was used, where the researchers interviewed chosen individuals with a crucial role in the project (Robinson 8). The people mentioned are the ideal participants because they could provide a unique perspective as both experts in women's studies and as media practitioners. Hence, the participants had an experience in their position.

Research Instrument

To fully maximize the output quality and achieve the goals of providing a voice for these women regarding their understanding of feminism from Philippine television portrayals, the researchers used an approved interview guide questionnaire during the in-depth interview. Quality tools and equipment were also utilized as the researchers used the following instruments to collect data for the documentary: Microsoft Teams for a video interview and recording, Calendly for scheduling, social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn for interview sourcing, an IOS smartphone camera, a tripod, and a Zoom H1N handy recorder for documentation; a laptop for editing and sound design; and the internet for communication among the participants and for searching content material such as articles, books, audio, and video clips that helped enhance and support the output.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers used LinkedIn, the largest professional network on the internet (Marshall 3), to look for prospects at this stage. These were experts from women's organizations of all

genders or active media-related employees in TV stations in Davao City as the participants. Once potential participants were found, the researchers wrote a formal letter to each person, decided to interview the participants for the documentary, and sent an email and LinkedIn chat. The researchers had an in-depth interview with one active media-related employee in TV stations in Davao City, two experts from women's organizations, and one film director of legal age and of all genders for the researchers to receive their points of view from different angles. According to Boyce and Neale (3), this research tool deals with a small number of participants to intensively explore perspectives regarding issues in their field. It is well suited for them to serve as the participants since they aimed to know their views about television stereotypes and how it reflects feminism in media. It also provided detailed information about the topic promptly.

Production Methods

The researchers split the production methods into three stages to ensure the success of the documentary film. The said methods are the pre-production, production, and post-production stages (Spicer 1).

Pre-Production. Preproduction is the stage of a film's planning where the people behind the project finalize all of the details of their project before producing content (MasterClass 1). Planning was essential to this project's success (Cartwright 2). The researchers created a documentary output entitled: *Her, Screen, and Beyond*. The researchers then conceptualized the documentary by identifying the key elements of the production, such as the subject, purpose, form, and audience experience. The researchers also looked for visual references and finalized the logline and the outline flow as soon as they finished conceptualizing the documentary and received a reply from the participant. One of the researchers sent the participants the content and potential interview questions. Additionally, the researchers constructed the documentary's flow, came up with a title and completed the screenplay and casting. For the participants, the researchers' cast consisted of 14 characters, including the researchers, and used clips from the recorded interview.

The participants were interviewed online via MS Teams. The researchers shot in their homes and the University of Mindanao Matina Campus for their convenience and compliance with COVID protocols. Since the researchers created a documentary output, there was no need for a production studio. The equipment used in this documentary includes an IOS smartphone camera for documentation, a handy recorder, and a laptop for editing. Part of the logistics was an internet connection with high connectivity to reach the study's participants and search for audio and video materials. Each of four participants were granted 300-peso worth of Starbucks e-gift checks.

Production. The production stage is where all the actual filming and recording took place, with cameras, actors, and location permits. The researchers carried out the plans they devised during the pre-production stage. The methods the researchers came up with at this stage via

Messenger call are listed below. The researchers worked on reaching out to participants, sending virtual invitations, organizing our event calendar, and writing the 20-minute documentary film script. In addition, the researchers brainstormed on the documentary's digital materials, such as stock footage, movie clips, and background music. Post-production is the phase where the researchers and the casts shot the reenactments needed and recorded the voice- over clips.

Post-Production. Post-production includes the duties that entail cutting raw film, combining footage, adding music, and more (MasterClass 8). In this stage, the researchers compiled the files for the documentary film and poster. In creating the poster, the researchers used Adobe Photoshop. The idea of the poster came from the documentary film's gist, which is why the confrontation scene watched from an audience's point of view was highlighted. In addition, Adobe Premiere Pro was the software used in editing the documentary film. The researchers applied their acquired knowledge from previous major courses that helped them with the shots' composition, color grading, and editing. To enhance the documentary's audio, the researchers used Adobe Audition to improve the quality of the standuppers' voices and used non- copyrighted audio by removing the background noise and sound balancing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

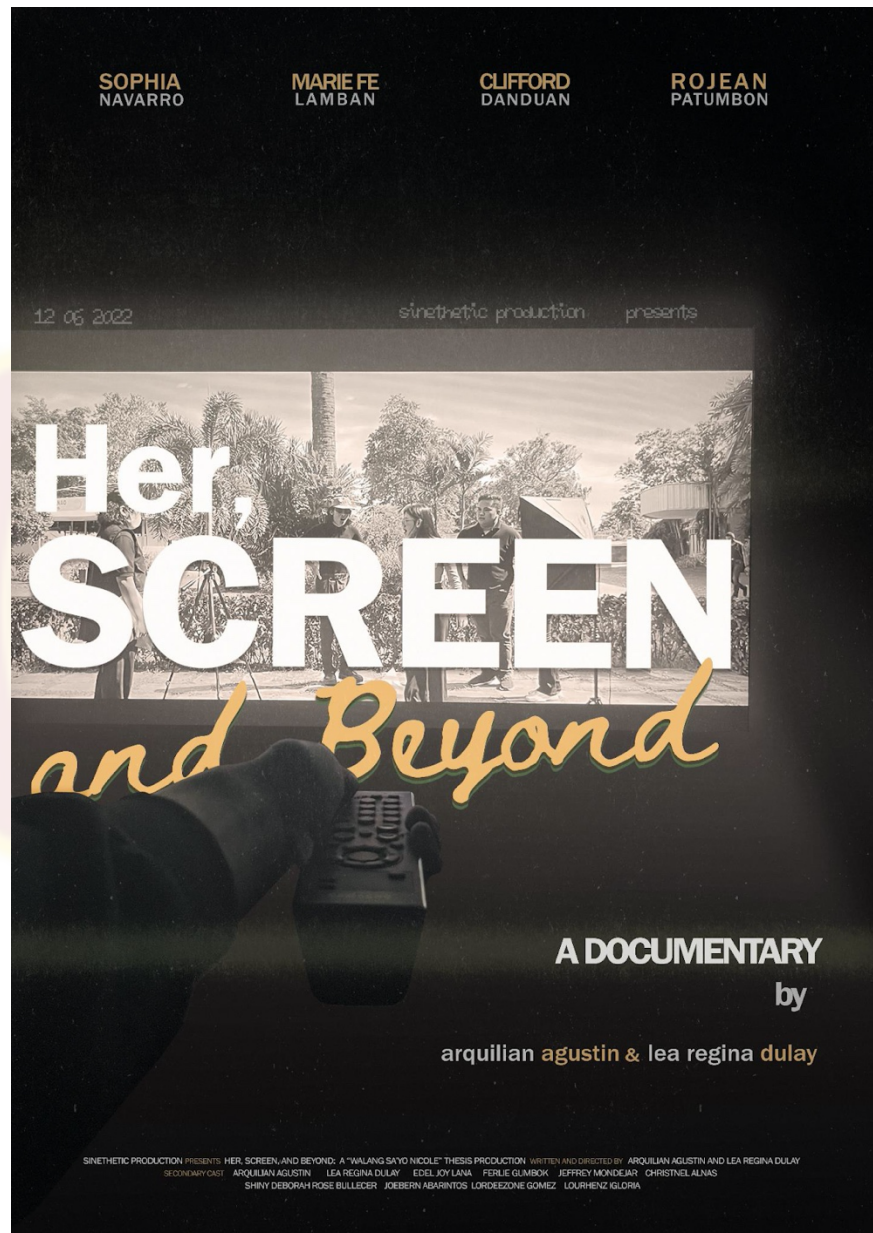
Documentary Output

Figure 5 presents the official poster of this study's *Her, Screen, and Beyond* documentary. It includes the names of the leading and supporting casts and the documentary's creators. Inspired by the old film and indie aesthetic, the poster gives a peek at the documentary's context and sets the material's tone, look, and feel. Its composition highlights the struggles of a woman in the film industry through the eyes of the general audience found from the focal point, which is a projected confrontation scene in the documentary and is obstructed by the hand of a man holding a remote about to turn off the screen. It also presents self-awareness, which plays a considerable part in explaining the concepts of feminism in the media.

Her, Screen, and Beyond is a 20-minute film documentary of the segment: *Walang Sa'yo Nicole: A Look At Feminism In Female Tv Lead Roles*. The researchers used the creative output format through a documentary film, which brought to light certain injustices and issues that exist in society, particularly patriarchal.

The video opened with a spiel introducing the concept and gist of the documentary. It intercuts with the first act of the reenactment storyline, followed by the show's OBB. Then, an informative discussion of the media's importance to the audience leads to the interview part. As the scene progresses, the participants from media professionals and feminist advocates provided different perspectives from the given questions in the interview. Along with that are the visuals that would aid and support their information.

Figure 5
Her, Screen, and Beyond Documentary Poster



Documentary Title: Her, Screen, and Beyond
Segment: Walang Sa'yo Nicole: A Look At Feminism In Female Tv Lead Roles
Final Medium: Adobe Premiere Pro

The interviews were conducted with transparency and with no trace of personal bias regarding the topic. With the standuppers' closing spiels, wrapping everything up with a

conclusion, the documentary closed with its CBB and credits roll. The poster highlights the struggles of a woman in the film industry through the eyes of the general audience found from the focal point, which is the confrontation scene in the documentary and is obstructed by the hand holding a remote.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The researchers carefully reviewed the participants' responses to determine the answers to the research questions. The researchers came up with two research questions, and identifying and probing questions were provided for each of those questions.

The first research question focused on the portrayal of women in TV media. The participants share mixed but almost identical sentiments. It all boiled down to the existing misrepresentations of women through the portrayals of stereotypes.

Figure 6

Screenshot of Interview with Arjoe Marie Cabudlan



“Ang daming movie series and TV portrayed in Philippine TV as you know, kabit, fine with their husbands having mistresses. And it feels like it is a very big misconception. Philippine TV has normalized mistresses and being okay with your husbands having mistresses” (There are many movie series and Television [Teleserye] portrayed in Philippine TV, as you know, mistresses, [and wives being] fine with their husbands having mistresses. It feels like it is a very big misconception. [The] Philippine TV has normalized mistresses and being okay with your husbands having mistresses.)

Arjoe Marie Cabudlan, a feminist advocate from Gabriela Davao, observed that the Philippine television industry shows tropes that create stereotypes among women. The protagonists are usually represented as feisty women who are pitted against mistresses (Musni-Tagaytay 171).

“..*Nauso yung mistresses*, and there were a bunch of movies about mistresses... *Yung nagsulputan*, the movies about mistresses. And then it is as if you are glorifying it *diba?* they are being glorified..” (Mistresses became a trend, and there were a bunch of movies about mistresses. Movies about mistresses became prevalent. And as if you are glorifying it, right? they are being glorified.)

Vina Araneta, a producer from PTV, added that this trope became a trend as if the mistress was being glorified (Gilbas, 102). They also shared that women are often objectified differently, such as by showing scenes that cater to the male gaze, which is related to Mendoza’s stand on Philippine cultural myths about women that is related to Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze where camera shots are utilized in ways that sexualize a woman’s body (Mulvey 11; Mendoza 18).

Figure 7
Screenshot of Interview with Edwin Priete



“If you delve deeper into mainstream media, it is hard to come by proper representation of women in a way that not oppress them even in subconsciously oppress them because that’s one problem there, the male gaze. There is the, mainly, the sexualization of the female body. From camera angles, to lightings. Like these things are tailored to make women satiable for male viewers. So you had that, the slow motions, focus on the eyes, the hair, the chest, the butt, the legs, arms, all that.”

Edwin Priete, a film maker/director indicated that one of the standard tropes that are evident is the sexualization of the female body.

“The male gaze is how women is how perceived in media, in characters, scenes. In terms of writing, merong fascination in seeing women fight in certain cases, it turns them on. it is also, I think, for them, it is enjoyable because it is entertaining for them. If you are a heterosexual men, it is really people, women beneath your status fighting for something insignificant so it entertains you. But it enforces the idea that they are beneath you that you are preoccupied with something not important so usually yung object that’s part or the fight starts with a man.” (The male gaze is how women are how perceived in media, in characters, and in scenes. In terms of writing, there is a fascination with seeing women fight in certain cases; it turns them on. [it is also] I think, for them, it is enjoyable because it is entertaining for them. If you are a heterosexual man, it is real people, women beneath your status, fighting for something insignificant, so it entertains you. But it enforces the idea that they are beneath you and that you are preoccupied with something not important, so usually object that's part of the fight starts with a man”

Venus Aves stressed that this is seen in Philippine TV because heterosexual men enjoy them because they feel superior to women since they fight because of insignificant things (Mulvey 13; Castro 41; Ross 372).

The participants express different ideas on why these tropes exist in the Philippine TV industry. One factor is how producers want to show the reflection of society. Another one is the general fascination of people, especially the LGBT community, with women. Given that most people in the Philippines only rely on free TV, they had no choice but to watch whatever is available.

“When you understand the psychology of the audience. Gusto ng audience yung hindi niya nakikita or hindi niya ginagawa, na parang the feeling, parang magkakaroon ng- they would be aroused. So, curiosity. So they would really tune in or they would really watch your show. Kasi mayroong curious, they are curious so they want to know more about that. So that is one of the strategies of the producers, of the business people, kasi it is the reflection of the society, it happens kahit siguro sa kapitbahay mo you know there are stories like that. it is the reflection of reality, kaya yung mga writers, they are able to write about that because it happened, it happens, and it would happen..” (When you understand the psychology of the audience. The audience like what they don't see or what they don't do [in real life] that would lead them to be aroused. So, curiosity. So they would really tune in, or they would really watch your show. Because there are curious [people], they are curious so they want to know more about that. So that is one of the strategies of the producers, of the business people because it is the reflection of the society, it happens even maybe to your neighbors, you know there are stories like that. it is the reflection of reality, so the writers are able to write about that because it happened, it happens, and it would happen..)

Vina Araneta, asserts that it is because the producers want to show the reflection of society (Ross 367; Mulvey 6).

Figure 8
Screenshot of Interview with Venus Aves



“..in the Philippine LGBT community para maging specific, I think it has much to do on general fascination with women especially empowering.. they are fierce, competitive and yun, fits with our general fascination of women of that kind. I think it speaks a lot about our psychology, where do these come from? Why are we fascinated by women like that?” (..In the Philippine LGBT community, to be specific, I think it has much to do with the general fascination with women especially empowering [characters]. they are fierce and competitive and so fit with our general fascination of women of that kind. I think it speaks a lot about our psychology; where do these come from? Why are we fascinated by women like that?)

Venus Aves boils down to the general fascination of people, especially the LGBT community, with women (Lipton, 163).

“Largely there are no other options available I feel like it is not true that people are holding into that tropes. In lower classes, there's no existence of streaming platforms like netflix like modern television na naa na'y cable, it causes no uses of television lang, free TV, they don't had an access to streaming to streaming platforms. Other than its already been normalized its already been established its already been numerous decades na kadto lang ang option na makita sa TV kato nga mga tropes, problematic tropes so because the audience who watches those shows had no access to other options like progressive series and movies.” (Largely there are no other options available I feel like it is not true that people are holding into that trope. In lower classes, there is no existence of streaming platform like Netflix, like modern television, that has cable, which causes no use of television, only free TV; they don't had access to streaming platforms. Other than its already been normalized, it is already been established. it is already been numerous decades that it is the only option available on TV, those tropes, problematic tropes so, because the audience who watches those shows had no access to other options like progressive series and movies.)

However, Arjoe depicted a different angle on why these tropes still exist today. She highlighted the lack of options in the Philippine TV industry in terms of stories, which is why viewers resort to the available shows in free tv (Ramos and Estember 1852).

“You had people who do not know any better because these shows admitted that they had target audience, and the target are usually housewives or katulong, mga nasa bahay who do not had the social awareness of feminist problems and they had somehow absorbed the mindset na nainstill sa kanila ng partiarchal social norms. So if you look at it on this point of view, they are what made these media outputs, these shows, films, they are what allows these things to continue..” (You had people who do not know any better because these shows admitted that they had a target audience. The target is usually housewives or helpers, who are always in their homes and do not had a social awareness of feminist problems. They had somehow absorbed the mindset that was instilled in them of the patriarchal social norms. So if you look at it from this point of view, they are what made these media outputs, these shows, films, which allow these things to continue...)

Ed’s answer supported the claim of Arjoe and gave a more profound answer on why these tropes still exist today.

The second research question revolved around the reflection of these representations on media feminism. The line of questions started with how they define feminism. Though it was delivered in different ways where they tapped into various branches (Ross 373) of the scope of feminism, the inquiry revealed that the definition of feminism is oblivious just like how Edwin defined it. However, it still boils down to gender equality.

“..There's no clear definition of feminism.. The definition of feminism changes with culture because it is very socioculturally charged.. you have these feminist, white feminists who say na it is the right to vote and the right to be included in the political field, and then you have more racially equal feminists that are trying to show that feminism is not just about the archetype of a white female, but it also includes women of all races creeds, countries, even social classes and then you have feminist who say that it is about being strong, showing that women should be a strong or if not, stronger than males and there are more radical feminist that they should just go away with men in general. You have all of these branches of feminism, and regardless of what strand of feminism you subscribe to, the clear denominator is really about equality [gender equality]. It is the emancipation of women from what is, unfortunately, a very highly patriarchal society..”

Edwin defined feminism as oblivious, but it all sums up to equality among all sexes.

After the researchers have determined their understanding and the idea of feminism, they transitioned to their ideal Feminist representations in Philippine TV and if their idea of feminism is evident in the Philippine TV industry. Despite differences in their ideal feminist representations in Philippine TV, the participants all share the same sentiment on how evident it is in today's industry. Although the action is starting, the industry still has a long way to go (Brillon 5, 8, 9, 17).

“How to portray or to represent feminism not just through television but media in general is to really give female character subjectivity. What is female subjectivity? not limiting your characters in a certain standard. it is not objectifying women because that’s the opposite. When you subjectify characters in TV program, you had characters that grow, dynamically changing and is not limited by social constructs around them.. Well all you had to do is to look at Darna and you can pretty much see for yourself na we had a long way to go because although Darna is, you see this character portrayed a powerful woman in a flip side she is also, Portrayed in a very sexualized manner.. There are certain scenes in Darna [I’m only using Darna as an example] there are certain scenes in Darna that are specifically tailored to male gaze. For men to enjoy the spectacle that Darna is a woman and that is just one of the few example. Media is a good way to start because media is the fourth estate of society so it is really a tool for social change, and it has been used as a tool for social change historically for as long the media started. As long as we keep doing that, creative practices, that has elements of feminism, then slowly we are doing our part in changing; not only in media landscape and the media industry but in in the society.”

For Edwin Priete, a feminist representation gave female characters subjectivity where they are not tied to a certain standard.

“They had to be objective and, based on truth, the portrayal of women protagonists. So how are the women in the status quo? Do they have a backbone? Are they able to work?.. It should be truthful to how women are living and the living conditions of women in the status quo.. Actively combat misconceptions: what is the context? What are their characteristics, for example, in general? When I say actively combat, it means there should be lines

or dialogues because we already had established in the past that women have.. internalized misogyny.. I think we are going there...These contributing factors contribute to how the Media and Philippine TV portrayed how they would be able to be feminists. We are going there, maybe in the next few years. We are going there.”

For Arjoe Cabudlan, the representations should be objective and based on truth, and they should have a backbone where these protagonist roles can combat misconceptions that instills internal misogyny.

After an insightful discussion on how the Philippine TV Media portrays and how it should portray women, they shared different thoughts on how it can affect the meaning of feminism to the audience. The participants see this as an invitation to stop these portrayals since it hinders us from progressing as a society. Hence, it presents existing problems and areas of opportunity (Brillon 2).

“The most short answer is monkey see monkey do a lot of our identity is built on the characters we see as we grow up.. Strong masyado yung impact ng media to its audiences and a feminist portrayal that shows a woman can be whatever they want to be and be okay and not get judged for it would leave an impact to the audience. So for example a child that see strong female character on screen that is not just strong but also taps into their emotions as a woman so this child is likely to grow up to embody these morals, ideas. Same thing with boys watching these characters on screen that males and females are treated equally and they had quality. So growing up these children would understand how it should be..” (The short answer is monkey see, monkey does a lot of our identity is built on the characters we see as we grow up.. The impact media has on its audiences is very strong, and a feminist portrayal that shows a woman can be whatever they want to be and be okay and not get judged for it would leave an impact on the audience. So, for example, a child that sees a strong female character on screen that is not just strong but also taps into their emotions as a woman, so this child is likely to grow up to embody these morals and ideas. Same thing with boys watching these characters on screen, that males and females are treated equally, and they had quality. So growing up these children would understand how it should be..)

For Edwin, the media has a significant impact on its audience (Celik and Hof 152). Hence, it is vital to produce content for the greater good.

“..regaining the problematic portrayal would just hinder us in the society at large. Considering how the media has a big factor in our values, norms and perceptions.. When you continuously provide especially at large the intensity of these themes [problematic tropes] although different title dramas different movies but same problematic tropes, it creates a false concept that this is normal.. Because of these misconceptions that mag manifest sa actions sa tao kay ma end up, it would result to loss catered to women being delayed because other than misconceptions actively denying the passage of those law that cater to women.. Dili lang sya passively ma hinder ang passage adto the laws that cater to women but also actively denied sya.”
(..regaining the problematic portrayal would just hinder us in society at large. Considering how the media has a big factor in our values, norms and perceptions.. When you continuously provide, especially at large, the intensity of these themes [problematic tropes] although different title dramas and different movies but the same problematic tropes, it creates a false concept that this is normal.. Because of these misconceptions that mag manifest actions to the people that would end up to; would result in loss catered to women being delayed because other than misconceptions actively denying the passage of those laws that cater to women.. It does not only passively hinders the passage of the laws that cater to women but also actively denies it.)

Arjoe also believed that media has a big impact on how it can shape society since the presentation of problematic tropes can create false concepts for the audiences that would soon be normalized once seen (Smelik 8; Ross 366; Musni-Tagaytay 184).

“Philippine TV portrayals of women significantly impact how Filipinos, in general, view women and gender relations and feminism. It presents problems and opportunities for feminist movements. I don't know if it changes the definition, but it does set challenges if these depictions are sexist... Opportunities are like that. They should be seized as a feminist movement to propel our cause forward.”

Venus stressed the impact of Philippine TV on how the mass sees women and gender relations (Sales 1665).

The participants shared penetrative ideas on how the Philippine TV can improve their representation of women. Vina, stated that it is better if the industry makes it more interesting and relevant to see quantifiable actions moving forward. Meanwhile, Venus Aves shared several points on how a Feminist representation on Philippine TV can be effective. First is to show full diversity on the injustices that women are facing in society. The second is to retire sexist tropes where their roles should match reality (Jani 2; Abbas 49). The third is to establish that women had an agency which Edwin Priete mentioned as well since, for him, it is essential for a feminist portrayal to have female characters that had depth (Abbas 48). Lastly, it is to interrogate the production, which is the people behind these shows.

Figure 9
Screenshot of Interview with Vina Araneta



“I think we should make the interesting relevant and make the relevant interesting to the audience and to the listeners. So we should really talk with the content creators on how to effectively portray women so that they can be a source of strength and wisdom, just like the Snowball effect.”

Vina stated that it is preferable if the industry makes quantifiable actions more interesting and relevant moving forward.

“I think it is important to number one, [show] 1.full diversity on the injustices and status of a woman in the society - We shouldn't only show one story or one reality of women in the Philippines. So we must ask ourselves, who exactly is being represented? What are their class

position, what are their ethnic position? Religion? Etc. So we need to show the full diversity of women experience.. Two, Retire sexist tropes of women. What do you mean by this? ..More or less to some extent, should match reality. We should aim to show either the story of women overcoming stereotypical roles and gender norms.. Number three, Women had agency...[it is still an] important debate relationship between structure and agency in a patriarchal society. To which extent the women act as empowered individuals in decision making we need to show women exercising their agency, and its implication to family and society. I think yung four, it goes beyond the question itself but it also has a lot to do with the production of these television shows. Production, behind the scenes, how feminists are in a working conditions. How just are the work conditions..”

Venus Aves discussed how a Feminist representation on Philippine television can be effective.

“.. Agency of their character, what do they want, how do they determine themselves, where is their will, their freedom, their agency. That is something a feminist portrayed female character should had. Yung meron siyang hugot, may pinanghahawakan..” (Agency of their character, what they want, how they determine themselves [self-determinism], where is their will, their freedom, their agency. That is something a feminist-portrayed female character should had. Like there's something they are fighting for beneath the surface. Something that they hold onto.)

Edwin, expressed that female characters with depth are required for a feminist portrayal.

As the researchers analyzed the participants' answers after the interview, they found out that women in Philippine Television are portrayed in a problematic light that may hinder the viewers from understanding the core essence of feminism. These tropes may alter the general public's perceptions of women, leading to a society that sees women as objects rather than functioning members of society (Ross 366; Brillon 2).

Some of the tropes mentioned are the objectification of women tied into the Male Gaze, which, according to Laura Mulvey, is a view of women from a cis-heterosexual male perspective (Mulvey 11). Another common trope is the normalization of infidelity, such as stories where the mistress's righteousness towards her actions is justified (Gilbas 102; Contreras 5,7). There are also one-dimensional portrayals of women characters. Characters had no depth as they show little to no agency toward their lives. These are just some of the

most common tropes in Philippine *teleseryes* that have been existing and are still prevalent in today's media.

Figure 10
Infographic Summarizing the Results and Discussion

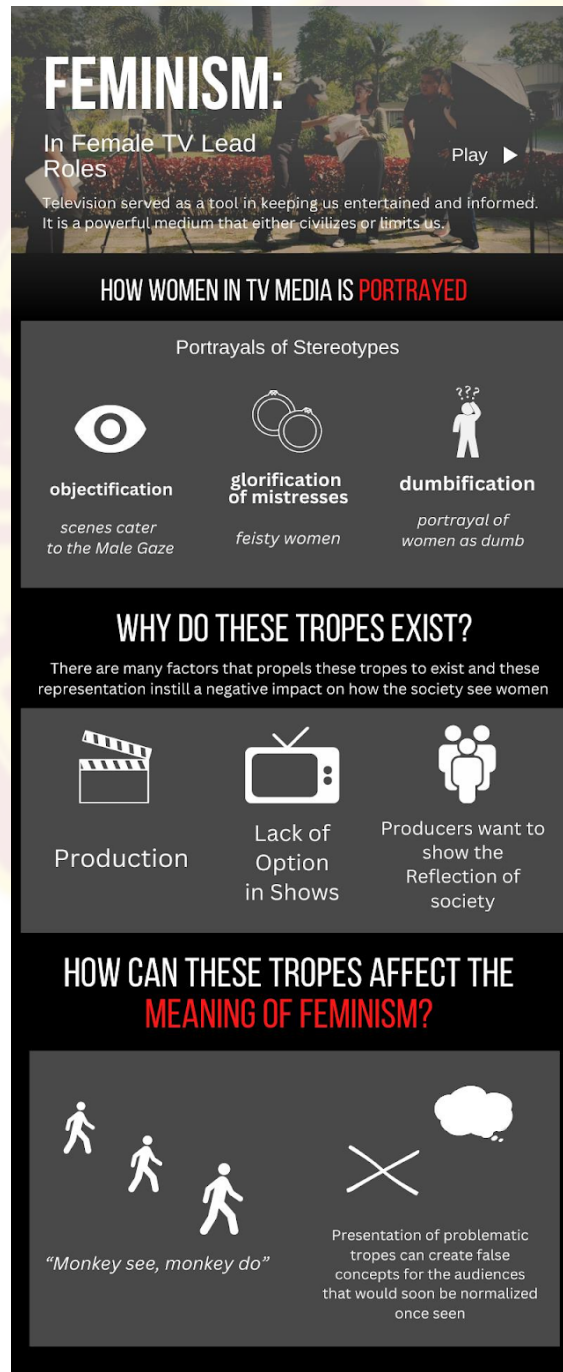
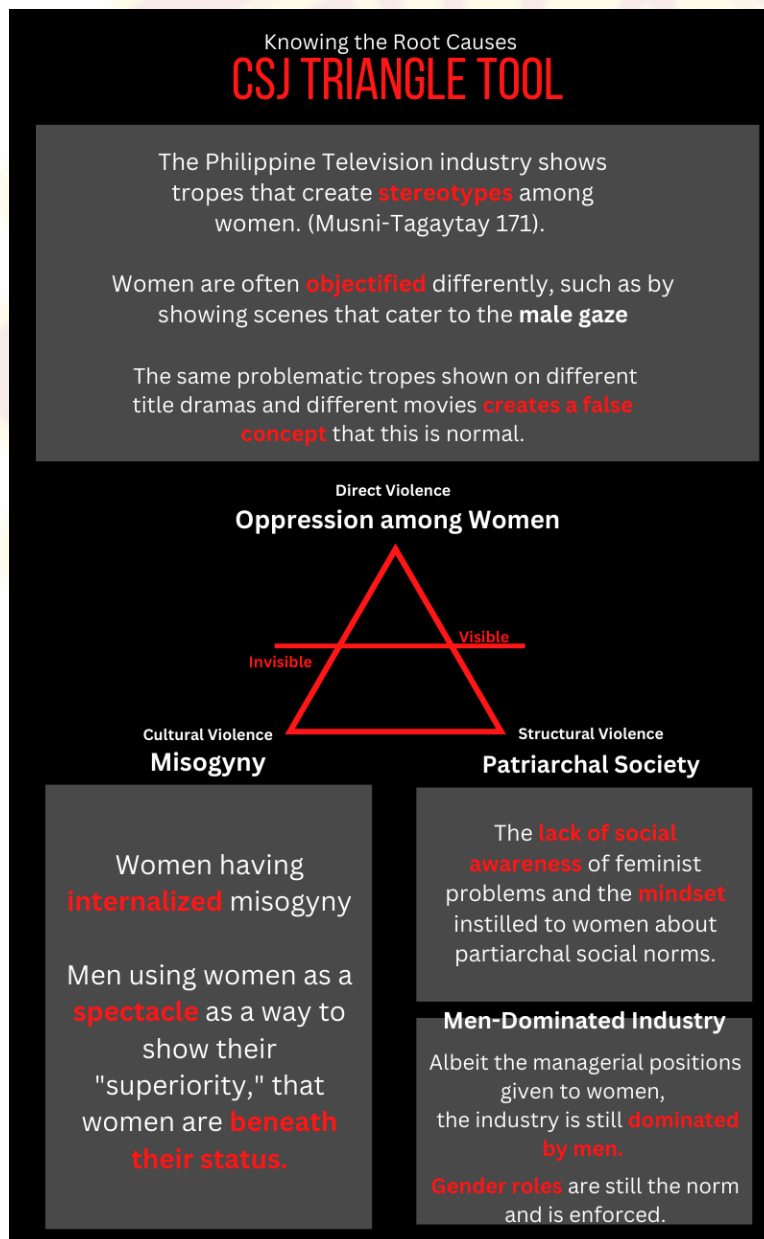


Figure 10 shows feminism in female TV lead roles as well as its underlying reasons and effects to the audiences. There are harmful stereotypes such as objectification, glorification of mistresses, and dumbification that create misrepresentation among women and it can create false concepts that could be normalized in society once seen on television. These tropes exist due to various factors that can instill a negative impact on how society sees women.

Figure 11

CSJ Triangle Used in This Study



This figure presents the utilization of the CSJ Triangle to the study. As per the response of the participants, the Direct Violence, which is the oppression among women through stereotypes, is rooted in the Cultural Violence, which is misogyny, particularly with men using women as a spectacle to show their superiority, as well as internalized misogyny among women. The structural violence includes the lack of social awareness due to patriarchy as well as the men-dominated industry in which gender roles are still enforced.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications

Upon thorough analysis, the researchers' findings are that there are several reasons why these portrayals are still thriving. One factor is the general fascination of people to pop culture and media references, where these tropes are used as an example (Lipton 163). Another component that propelled these stories from being produced is the lack of options in free television (Ramos and Estember 1844). Hence, this relates to another aspect that results in these shows aired and the ratings of these teleseryes.

Companies that produce this content would expect that this is what the audience wants. However, there are only a few options for the viewers. Hence, they would only resort to what is available since watching teleseryes is another way to unwind and be entertained. From the responses gathered from the participants, the researchers, therefore, concluded that many factors propel these tropes to exist, and these representations negatively impact how society sees women. Although, the situation is black and white because, after all, media is still a business. However, there are ways to present women on TV in entertaining ways without putting them in a bad light, like showing more sides than the cultivated reality by patriarchal society and women having authority over themselves.

Recommendations

Since this study aimed to investigate the portrayal of women in Philippine teleseryes and how these representations reflect on media feminism, the researchers gathered enough data to provide practical recommendations through researching scholarly articles, existing research, and interviews with experts from all genders in this field. In addition, future researchers and filmmakers can create advocacy and social awareness and provide better education for the general audiences on issues such as sexism, male gaze, and misogyny by producing more media outputs that depict fair representation among all genders.

People working in the industry, especially women, should understand the underlying issues in the portrayals of female protagonists in Philippine Television. Hence, create more developed and layered characters that convey women's agency, that they are more than just caricatures of people who fight over matters such as infidelity. Women can think logically and see beyond the meaning of conflicts that revolve around men. They should be able to not only

listen to the insights of women who are represented but should not hold onto these tropes for entertainment.

Female television audiences should be able to have a firm grasp and see through the patriarchal ideas and cultures that may harm their gender, as depicted in Philippine TV. This research invites them to be responsible for the content they consume, as the creation of these characters depends on what they watch as a demographic.

The organizations that advocate for feminism should find ways to provide feminist information that is easily digestible and accessible to the audiences. And, if possible, establish a partnership with the big companies that produce these films so they can provide a thorough understanding of how female characters can subvert expectations in this medium.

Lastly, future researchers should delve into these representations as it is evident that the media greatly influences society's progress. With the help of their works, topics such as gender equality will be explored in-depth. They will address the disturbances in the community brought on by gender inequality. Future researchers, especially media-related researchers, should advocate for educating gender and sexuality. They should find ways to eradicate gender stereotypes by creating media that resonate with the new generation, eventually leading to a more balanced and equalized authority between genders.

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