

POSTMODERN FEMINISM: CONCEPT OF SELECTED FILIPINO WOMEN'S SELF-WORTH

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ABSTRACT

This study had two intentions. First, it aimed to explore the context of Filipino women's self-worth by concentrating on how they view themselves as a woman. Second, this study was conducted to justify the idea of the "woman of worth" through a postmodern feminist perspective. Essentially, this study supported Covington's Self-worth Theory (2001). Its premise states that the worthiness of an individual is scaled in relation to the achievements he/she gets. This achievement however, does not only pertain to academic status, but also to the fulfilment one gets whenever she contributes for the purpose of success. It was significant that among the respondents, being able to contribute is the ultimate basis of their worth. Apart from their awareness on their own characteristics and on the roles that they play, affirmation from others also enables them to feel empowered as a woman.

Keywords: Postmodern feminism, Filipino women, self-worth

INTRODUCTION

Society today is bounded by stereotypes. These stereotypes create less contradiction as people engage in roles that are labeled as ideal. These imposed beliefs can also influence one's idea towards one's self-concept and self-worth.

Self-worth is a subjective concept of a person regarding his or her importance. It is patterned on the individual's achievements. In contrast, worthlessness is associated to failures (Covington and Müller, 2001; Crocker, 2002). Since society has changed the notion that people are as worthy as their accomplishments, people tend to be more and more competitive in order to attain worthiness.

Although self-worth is accounted through one's successes, William James (1890) as cited by (Crocker, 2002 and Geng & Jiang, 2013) said that people base their self-worth in different domains. This partly asserts the diversity of priorities and goals of people and their differences in values as well. Domains of self-worth have also been studied (Crocker, 2002; Crocker and Nuer 2003; DeWall, Altermatt, and Thompson, 2005; Crocker, 2006 and Park and Crocker, 2008; Hakim, 2006; VanDallen, Hoy, and Hoyle, 2009; Erchull, 2010; and Retamero, Müller, and Zafra, 2011). Crocker and his constituents categorized self-worth in seven domains: 1) other's approval or regard, 2) physical appearance, 3) competencies, 4) love from family, 5) competitions, 6) virtue and 7) faith. Self-worth therefore is noted as a subjective concept of a person regarding his or her status on the following domains. A person's idea towards his or her worth is a powerful tool in bringing out what is best in every individual. The thought of being worthy or unworthy does not only influence the stance of a person about himself but also his family, relationships, career, attitude and outlook in life.

Although men and women have equal sense of self-worth (Foels and Tomcho, 2005), culturally, women are considered to be the minority sex. These are evident in various cultures like the dowry system

in India, foot binding in China, women's circumcision in Africa, domestic abuse, objectification of women and double standards are just some proofs of these. Because of these, woman's identification towards herself is being based on what the society demands. Though it may seem that women oppression has already been lifted, and that women empowerment has already reached its high peak in our generation today, there are still subtle acts of oppressions being done to women that escape our awareness. Woman's concept of herself is related to how she conforms on social standards (Prentice and Carranza, 2002; Oswald, 2008; and Vartanian, 2009) and this notion represents the roles that she portrays as part of the society. These roles influences the sense of self-worth of an individual and therefore essential to see through the context of worthiness.

Filipino women are born with roles they must live up to. Based on Filipino standards, a woman must be maalaga sa mga anak and naninilbihan sa asawa (Katigbak, and Reyes, 2008). This is relative to the conception that women are support providers. Apparently, they expect and actually do these roles more than they would have wanted (Obligacion, 1996; Imperio, Church, Katigbak, and Reyes, 2008; and Askari, 2010). Undeniably, women attain positive reputation towards themselves by fostering others. But not only roles are deemed to be established by the society as standard but also their physical characteristics.

It is said that good feedback regarding one's appearance is related to self-worth (Ntoumani, 2011; Vartanian, 2009 and Dunn, 2011). Since women are acknowledged for their appearance culturally (Vartanian, 2009 and Ntoumani, 2011), they try hard to be able to conform on the physical standards that the society establishes (Dunn, 2011 and Gordjin, 2010). As TV programs give premium to slender bodies and porcelain-like skin, women tend to be more conscious towards their body image because of what the media distinguish as beautiful women (Dunn, 2011; Gordjin, 2010 and Ntoumani, 2011); however, because of conforming to these social standards, their individuality is compromised. Their self-worth sways easily according to what the society distinguishes to be beautiful and not.

Indeed, society has already manifested stereotypical roles and characteristics to which a woman must conform. This premise would give foundation to the main purpose of this study, Filipino woman's concept of self-worth through a postmodern feminist attitude. In such case, adapting this attitude enables this study to expound the concept of self-worth beyond the "usual" and pre-conceived notions about women. Since postmodern feminism is the ultimate acceptor of diversity, it allows for the investigation of the perspectives of women from different walks of life.

This study aims to:

1. Explore the context of Filipino women's self-worth by concentrating on how they view themselves as women.
2. Describe and understand the idea of a "woman of worth" through a postmodern feminist perspective.

Theoretical Framework

Self-worth Theory

The context of Self-worth Theory is merely on the notion that people tend to base their importance on the level of their achievements. This theory's basic premise is the belief that self-worth is highly dependent on accomplishments (Covington and Muller, 2001).

In this study, self-worth is viewed as a subjective concept of a person regarding his or her importance and value. It is relatively inclined on the affective side of a person. It is noted that self-worth is contingent and thus can be accounted in several domains that depends on the person's principles of success. Since society has established the notion that people are as worthy as their accomplishments, roles, or characteristics; individuals would also look for factors wherein they may assert themselves as worthy.

Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminists are highly indulged in seeking multiple perspectives in order to identify situated meanings and experiences. In this study, self-worth is viewed as a subjective concept of a person regarding his or her importance. It is relatively inclined on the affective side of a woman's perception of her importance and value. It is noted that self-worth is contingent and thus can be accounted in several domains that depends on the person's principles of success. Since the society has supported the notion that people are as worthy as their accomplishments, roles, or characteristics; individuals would look for factors wherein they may assert themselves worthy. This partly explains the diversity of priorities and goals of people and their differences in values as well. Through self-worth theory, this study would have a relatively stable ground on where to focus the aim of research. Consequently, having respondents who came from different walks of life allowed postmodern feminist to acknowledge their diverse experiences and personal stance without adhering to political agendas.

In such case, adapting this attitude enabled this study to expound the concept of self-worth beyond stereotypes and pre-conceived notions about women because postmodern feminism is the ultimate acceptor of variety.

METHOD

Research Design

The researcher utilized a Descriptive Single Case Study with Embedded Units in conducting the study. Since the study's objective is to explore the Filipino women's concept of self-worth, a descriptive case study is best suited (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Consequently, because the respondents came from different walks of life, a single case with embedded units is appropriate to address the diversity of respondent's experiences (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Participants were chosen based on 1) age (20-30 years old); 2) nationality (Filipino women) and 3) location (Metro Manila). Participants' profile revealed that they have diverse occupation and educational attainment.

In this study, the participants were purposively selected. This was used to document the variations on the respondents' context regarding the study's aim (Patton and Cochran, 2002).

Research Instruments

1) Semi-structured interviews were utilized for this study. Since the subjective views of the respondents are the main basis of this research, this method is appropriate to enable the researcher and respondent to engage on a more focused gathering of data. This also leads to a flexibility in highlighting the participant's perspective.

2) The Contingencies of Self-worth Scale was used as a validation. It is a standardized (Crocker, 2003), 35-item test scaled from 1-7 (1- strongly disagree & 7-strongly agree). It contains the following domains: 1) family support, 2) competition, 3) appearance, 4) God's love, 5) academic competence, 6) virtue & 7) approval from others.

3) Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument is a 93-item personality test that served as a profiling among the participants. It measures the extraversion-introversion dichotomy, sensing-intuition dichotomy, thinking-feeling dichotomy and judging-perceiving dichotomy of an individual (Myers, P. and Myers, K. 1998).

Data Analysis

Pattern Matching Analysis was used in this study in order to see through the patterns of commonalities on the present phenomenon (Hak and Dul, 2009). This strategy allows the incorporation of diverse data on the constructs presented in the study.

Table 1: Demographic

Participant's Profile

Respondents	Age	Civil Status	Occupation	Educational Attainment	Basis of Self-worth
Cornelia	21	Single	Student	High School	Being virtuous and moral
Luna	22	Single	Editor	M.A.	Academic competence
Simone	23	Single	Student	College	Academic competence and outdoing others in competitions
Hilda	27	Married	Housewife	High School	Being virtuous and moral
Wayname	29	Single	Sales Lady	College	God's Love

Cornelia

Cornelia is a 21 years old woman who has experienced two major health operations already. Results of the interview showed that she confirms her worthiness in terms of being a virtuous and moral person.

Results further showed that she has a personality type of Introvert-Sensing-Thinking-Judging. She focuses her attention on contexts that generate ideas and impressions. Consequently, she makes these impressions through her senses. She said: "*the way I see it, often times, women are being opinionated.*" And as a woman, she is also aware of how things should be, and thus values it, saying: "*I know that it should not be that way.*"

Cornelia's way of making decisions even validates the way she described her perception about worthiness. She said: "*acknowledgements on contributions you make. For instance, there is something...it's about how that thing affects you*". She also attests on the cause and effect of situations by saying "*it's like others don't mind how they present themselves to others that's why they are mistreated sometimes.*"

On the other hand, she admitted that she tends to judge other women. She confessed "*it's like, just because they are wearing short-shorts, I am thinking that they shouldn't be like that. I'm like that, that in a way, I am placing them on a box that a woman must be a Maria Clara.*" Furthermore, because she values tradition, she also considered it to be a weakness. She claimed: "*weakness? There's a tendency that as a woman, you also judge other women.*"

She claimed that people have the capability to influence, and women have the responsibility on to show how worthy they are; to themselves and others. She gave an example how she reacts whenever her worth is threatened saying: "*say for example the green jokes about women. I mean I don't like hearing them, even the simple rudeness on the street. It feels bad and at the same time, I feel like you have the responsibility to re-evaluate yourself. When someone objectifies you say for example, I usually ask myself, am I wearing inappropriate clothes?*" She concluded: "*the fact that those things happen, it means you're vulnerable. You're more vulnerable.*"

At the same time, she claimed the importance of assuring one's worthiness. "*It's needed because when you think that you're not important, you tend to slack off. You'll think that you can't do anything about it that's why you'll just go with the flow.*" Consequently, she acts carefully on what should be done and work toward it steadily regardless of the distraction.

Luna

Luna, aged 22, has cerebral palsy. She was also diagnosed as neurotic and suicidal. She recently graduated from her Masteral degree. She currently works as a writer and as an editor in a university.

Results showed that she confirms her worth through her academic competence. Based from her personality, results further show that she has an Introvert- Sensing- Feeling- Perceiving type. She contests that her worthiness is based on her inner world of ideas and impressions by saying "*I myself feel like I want to- you know, affect it (society) in a positive way. Even if I am negatively afflicted.*" Furthermore, Luna makes decisions based primarily on values and on her subjective evaluation of things. She described how she perceived the worthiness of a woman in accordance to her values. She said: "*uniqueness, and confidence and, she shouldn't conform to a norm and she has to exude intelligence. I think intelligence is the higher... the highest form of beauty for a woman.*"

She is flexible, spontaneous and prefers to keep her options open by saying "*without women, there is no man. Right? She is the reproductive vessel that creates life. okay? So... whatever you say, she is the maker of humankind. That's why she is important.*"

She also affirmed her ideas based on how she perceived them. She noted her worth saying: “*as a woman who is bound in quotation marks, by her physical disability, although I don't consider myself bound, no? in societal terms, I am bound... I do not let myself be defined by disability... I am not the normal woman. I walk in a funny way, but it's unique, it is who I am, it is how I thread the path of my journey, okay? And make my mark.*” She also shows optimism in dealing with her disability. She admitted: ‘*Back then, I used to be a dark person... but now, I was like... it's enough... stop inflicting hurt on yourself.*”

And at the same time, she asserted her worthiness as a woman and as a person. Luna said that ‘*Because I am given so little in terms of physical; that when I see something, or when I do something, it's always special. So that's the kind of life that I want to impart. That we're not defined by our body. It is what you do with your body that defines you...*”

In addition, she explained how influence affects one's view regarding her own sense of worth. She claimed that “*it re-assures you that that you are making difference, but also... In my mind also feel like your own importance should also be affirmed by yourself. Right?*” She also stated how she felt worthy: “*it's just the fact that people go through great lengths to make me feel wanted and special. So important. I mean, siguro naman, I wouldn't be alive today diba? For 22 years na... if I didn't feel important. To this world.*”

Simone

Simone, a 23 years old. Single woman, is an achiever. She is a *magna cum laude* graduate. She is currently finishing her Masteral degree. At present, she is attending different language classes. She plans to work after her graduation and take up her doctorate as soon as she is financially stable. Results showed that she based her self-worth through academic competence. This is seen on how she values competition. She has Introvert- Intuitive-Thinking-Perceiving personality type.

Simone made an impression of how a woman should be. She said ‘*I guess the traits a woman should have for me is at least to be strong, not physically but when it comes to her will.*” She also added that one of the major things she values is the competence of a person. She said: “*women has a concept before that they have to be family oriented and must stay at home. And there's no... career and academic knowledge is not that significant.*”

Simone's personality is somewhat skeptical, sometimes critical, and always analytical. It transpired on how some societal standards affect her: “*Of course, when it comes to guy's standards, I feel like when a guy thinks that a woman should be just physically attractive and not intellectual, no action.. I am proud because I know that a woman should have a stand in the world.*”

According to her, Achievements can add up on the idea of worthiness saying: “*I feel like that's also important, but it of course, some additional factors are educational attainment, your contributions to the society and the talents that you nurture whatever it is.*”

Hilda

Hilda is a 27 years old. She gave birth to her daughter at the age of 17, and is currently living together with her partner. She finished high school and was unable to continue her studies because of her obligation to her daughter. She has an Extrovert-Intuitive-Feeling-Judging personality type. In addition, it was transpired that she based her worth on her virtues and morality.

Being a mother, she transpires warmth, empathy, responsiveness, and responsibility. She said: “well, I’m proud that I can decide for myself. And somehow, I’m independent not just for myself but also for my child. And of course, I’m a proud mom because I can raise my child well.” Hilda also values her independence as a woman and affirms her worth through it. According to her, even though she experienced hardships, she can succeed by confirming her own capabilities. She said: “that even though there are times that you’ll think it’s hard and impossible, you’ll still be the one to push yourself. That I don’t need to depend on others.”

She is highly attuned to the emotions, needs, and motivations of others; especially to her daughter. She claimed: “Of course, I am proud mom because I know that I can provide for my kid well, I am also proud because of the things I have like my family. Right? That’s what’s important and our relationship is secured even if there are times that we get tired of each other, it’s still worth it.” Consequently, she finds potential in everyone, “Of course, they (women) are as important as men. But of course, some tasks that women do can’t be done by men and some tasks that men do can’t be done by women. It’s relatively fair”.

She wants to help others fulfil their potential. She said that she is worthy by means of contributing goodness to others. “I have worth because I have done good things for others’ sake. That’s it.”

Wayname

Wayname, a 29 year old. Single woman and the breadwinner of her family. She was left by her boyfriend and got married to someone else instead. Currently, she provides money for her younger brother’s education. She has an Extrovert-Sensing-Feeling-Judging personality type. In addition, it was transpired that she bases her worth on God’s love. Wayname claimed “I have a strong faith in God, and of course on what I am capable of.”

She is the kind of person who notices what others need in their day-to-day lives and try to prove it. At the same time, she finds her worthiness by doing such. As a breadwinner, she claimed that providing to her family makes her feel important. She said: “I felt that even though I’m a woman, I was able to provide financial help for my brother’s studies throughout college; and as of the moment, I’m helping my parents as well. Through that, I feel like I am important.”

She is warmhearted, contentious and cooperative. She described herself saying: “I have a strong fighting spirit. My understanding is wider as compared to other women.” Also, she wants harmony in their environment, and thus works with determination in order to establish it. She is not the pessimistic type and explained “I am not thinking about the negative things”.

Consequently, she wants to be appreciated for who she is and for what she contributes. Also, she described how she feels when she is given importance by saying “it feels great of course, you can’t understand the happiness because it really comes from the heart. It’s a different kind of happiness that you rarely feel.”

RESULTS

There are three major segments discussed. The first segment mentioned how women define themselves. The second defined the women’s worth. The third focused on their own concept and manner of empowerment.

Defining oneself

This portion focuses on the physical, mental, and emotional descriptions of the participants to themselves and their fellow women. This section aims to give a steady and first-hand descriptions in order to fully understand the ground where women are rooting from. When it comes to physical characteristics, there is no doubt that women are different from men. This does not only involve biological differences but also their capacity to do certain tasks. Luna, one of the informants, said that a woman "*exudes a sense of self that is different from a man... biologically, physiologically*". This means that for the participants, acknowledging differences does not mean that they have to be bounded by limitations.

Wayname also claimed that "*of course, I'm proud that I can also do what guys can do.*" Hilda supported this by mentioning that women have a special capability: "*there are things that only women are capable of doing.*"

But amidst all these comparison and contrast, the participants on the study made it a point that differences do not make a man nor a woman ahead of each other instead, they are *basically* the same. Hilda explained it by saying "*but of course, some tasks that women do can't be done by men and some tasks that men do can't be done by women. It's relatively fair*".

In addition, appearance is relatively taken into account but was not considered to be the sole essence of being a woman. What the participants are trying to point out is that the mentality of a woman is the most important thing. Simone said "*you know what other people say, that "she's just saying she's proud to be like that because she can't be physically attractive". To an extent, I feel like if ever I'd be physically attractive and be Barbie-like as well, people will recognize my intelligence and capabilities.*"

Luna supports this by mentioning that she values the same thing when she said "*As a woman, I am proud that I am not defined by my body... I think intelligence is the highest form of beauty for a woman.*" This notion is relative to how others perceive one's physicalities which is congruent to the study of Ntoumani., (2011) and Gordjin (2010). Given that physical appearance contributes to their sense of worth, it is also a factor on how the society imposes it.

Secondly, when it comes to mind-set, women are known to have a comprehensive way of thinking. Wayname said "*women has wide understanding*". Hilda stated "*when it comes to decision making, you know that they put their heart into it*". Luna also claimed the same: "*I am proud of the fact that I am passionate and I understand things, I think a little deeper*".

The participants generalized women as someone who has an innate care for others. As this was evident in the descriptions that they labelled as "natural" for women. Wayname explained this by saying "*it's natural for women to be concerned*". Hilda also said that women are known to be "*caring*" and Luna described women as "*the bringer of the emotive factor of this world*". Congruent to the study of Erchull, (2010), domestication is something that was formed within the society, culture and upbringing of the individual; In addition, women tend to desire to care for others and contribute in any way (Park and Crocker, 2008).

Viewing one's worth

By viewing one's worth, it is appropriate to see both internal and external influences that may trigger the person in perceiving her worth. The following discussion focuses on how the participants see their worth and the worth of women in general as well.

Also, we explore the relation of their worth to the roles they play in the society. These are also explored in terms of their perceptions of their loved ones (external) and their motivations for engaging in such role (internal). By examining the worth of women in the society, it is also appropriate to give the contrasting ideas they have on how they view themselves and how they think others view them.

What Woman is told to do and what they can really do

The participants mentioned that being a woman, there are obligations that are expected from them automatically. These includes the preparation to be someone's wife and mother. Cornelia claimed "*it's like you were raised to be a good wife and that you must know how to do household chores*". Simone also said the same thing "*women has a concept before that they have to be family oriented and must stay at home*". Oswald (2008), Park and Crocker (2008) and Hakim (2006) concluded that women already grew up with these conceptualizations and thus tries to impart such practice to their lives. Consequently, it provides a dichotomous idea in to worthiness. Although these roles seem to box a woman, the participants also considered that by portraying the roles, they become aware of their sense of worth. These roles are done for their loved ones too. Hilda explained: "*as a woman, I know I'm important because of my children. I know they needed me, that I can be selfless. Is it not? And of course, I want to make sure that whatever I share to my children are good things.*" Wayname also stated the same reason of feeling worthy. "*I felt that even though I'm a woman, I was able to provide financial help for my brother's studies throughout college; and as of the moment, I'm helping my parents as well.*"

Through these statements, they defined a portion of their worth not by the roles they portray but by the fulfilment they get in doing it. They also claimed that whenever they do something for the betterment of others, they can feel a sense of worthiness.

Being able to contribute and impart something for the improvement of things can actually result to one's concept of worth (DeWall, Altermatt, and Thompson, 2005). One's capacity to contribute, according to Park and Crocker (2008), Geng and Jiang (2013) has something to do with their awareness of competence; and thus may lead to the feeling of worthiness, fulfillment and encouragement. Luna described her feeling by saying: "*when somebody let's say tells me that I've touched their lives by what I do as a writer, let's say, or as a person.. then, my worth is affirmed. Then, I know that I'm doing what I am supposed to be doing in this life. So.. I am not perfect. In many many ways. It's just when they tell me that I have touched them, that is what makes me feel that life is worth living despite all the hardship, you know?*" Simone on the other hand regarded her sense of worthiness in relation to how society treats her. She specifically pointed out that when she is given responsibilities because of her capabilities, she feels worthy. She said, "*when they delegate a task to me not because I am a woman... If I don't feel discrimination*".

There's More in Being a Woman

Even though a portion of their worthiness comes from their contributions, the participants also considered certain instances wherein the situations becomes "disadvantageous" and thus threatens their

sense of self-worth. Simone said that society labels women in such a way that they are deemed dependent: “*It's like they are the ones that must be supported by guys.*” Cornelia on the other hand referred to the objectification of women by saying “*there's a notion that women can only be either for the kitchen or for bed.*” Moreover, by being aware of the following consequences of the role of women in the society, the participants defined their worth as a woman through their capabilities and not by specific characteristics that are expected from them. Furthermore, these negative perceptions were countered by their belief that women are not just bounded within these roles. They are also assured that as a woman, there is more than being a wife, or a mother.

Luna also pointed out that women does not have to be what she is asked to be by saying “*it doesn't always mean that she has to conform to the norms of the society.*”

In addition, Cornelia stated that women's roles are not dependent on the roles of men. She said “*It's not distinct to the roles that are for men. It's similar.*” Hilda also viewed other possibilities for women by saying “*aside from the typical roles like being a mother or wife, for me, they are the ones who balances things. Just like in making decisions.*” Simone also mentioned that they have wider capabilities than what society perceives them to have. She said, “*yes, there are also mothers, but I think they have a lot of other contributions in the society that the entire world misses out.*”

Studies (DeWall, Altermatt, and Thompson, 2005; VanDallen, Hoy, and Hoyle, 2009; Retamero, Müller, and Zafra, 2011) attest on the notion that women's capabilities are not bounded by what is distinctively imposed. They have a sense of competence with regard to what they value to be important. They make contributions not just to improve things but also to affirm their idea of their personal worthiness.

Life as Constant Worth

In discovering the context of woman's worth, the participants also as stated that the importance of a person is an automatic part of his/her being. In addition, worthiness comes in different ways and is not something that can be specifically scaled.

Hilda said: “*the important things in this world are the ones that God has given life. It's important because anything that has life has importance. Right? Everyone has importance in a different way.*” Consequently, Simone felt the same way. She said “*for me, a person is important in himself or herself, by just being born, simply because he or she has life. I think that's what's important.*”

Luna on the other hand personally acknowledged same mind set. She said ‘*I have worth as a woman because the universe tells me so in so many different ways*’. The fact that having life and being a part of this world already signify a person's worth, all the other characteristics and roles are considered to be add-ons in order to further affirm their perception of their importance.

It was also considered that worth merely by means of presence in this world. The participants said that another ultimate reason for worthiness is to be able to contribute to the development and progress of the other things.

Simone, when asked about women's proof of their worth, simply answered "I guess once their contributions are felt already." Wayname mentioned same belief by saying "*a person is important because there are a lot of things he/she can do, for mother nature, in technology and even to other people as well.*" Cornelia also has the same perception, saying: "*I feel like your importance as a human being is to influence other things to happen.*" Luna verified the same ideal and said "*every person is important because their presence affects this world; and every person has a choice. Whether to affect the world in a positive way.. or in a negative way.*"

Although the worthiness of a person is automatically present, the perception of the participants somehow clarifies how a woman views the root of her worthiness so that it could be further attained, exercised and affirmed despite its constant existence. People has that sense of intrinsic motivation that drives them to affect things in a better way and fortunately, would heighten their awareness of their worth (Covington and Müller, 2001; Crocker and Nuer, 2003; and Crocker, Brook, Niiya, and Villacorta, 2006).

How does it Feel Being Worthy and Not

Happiness, Fulfilment, Confidence

As we explore their opinion on their worthiness, it is also a must that we consider its effects on them. The participants explained that feeling worthy elicits a higher level of happiness and fulfilment.

Hilda described her feelings as a different happiness as compared to the usual feelings she gets by saying "*happy, but a different kind of happiness. If you know it makes you happy, it seems normal. But when it comes to that, it's unexplainable. Mixed emotions and that you also become proud of yourself.*"

Wayname regarded her feeling on the same context as well. She said "*it feels great of course, you can't understand the happiness because it really comes from the heart. It's a different kind of happiness that you rarely feel.*" In addition, Simone said that it was "*mixed emotions of happiness and confidence.*"

Hurt, Anger, Self-doubt, Discouraged

The consequence of knowing what makes you feel worthy and not worthy does not only provide positive feelings, it also gives its opposite emotions. Whenever the participants experience a situation that threatens their worth, they tend to feel hurt that may lead to anger and self-doubt.

Wayname explained her feelings: "*It's really painful. I feel like I am not enough.*" Simone on the other hand had a different reaction saying "*I feel ranty. Just because I am a woman, those things happen. I also rant and whine regarding my circumstances as a woman. I usually ask myself, why is the society like this? I mean, it's 2014 already.*" Cornelia on the other hand gave a concrete example: "*say for example the green jokes about women. I mean I don't like hearing them, even the simple rudeness on the street.*" She felt and acted the same way as others, saying "*It feels bad and at the same time, I feel like you have the responsibility to re-evaluate yourself. When someone objectifies you say for example, I usually ask myself, am I wearing inappropriate clothes?*" She concluded: "*the fact that those things happen, it means you're vulnerable. You're more vulnerable.*"

Obligacion (1996) and Imperio (2008) stated that Filipino women deem to inculcate their perception of themselves in line with the society and cultural values. Women intend to create a constructive cognition that might explain her current situation (Obligacion, 1996).

What's at stake?

Whenever their worth becomes susceptible, they tend to feel bad, get angry, experience hurt and ends up assessing themselves. Because of this, they impart to themselves how important assurance of their worth is. They explained how these are significant in their lives.

Luna explained "*we feel most of the time like we don't live up to... So affirmation is very important to be told that you are special in some ways.*" Hilda also mentioned "*there are times that you're not sure of yourself, and that you also need assurance.*"

Cornelia explained it by telling what may be its effect. She said: "*it's needed because when you think that you're not important, you tend to slack off. You'll think that you can't do anything about it that's why you'll just go with the flow.*" Simone also has the same notion of feeling unworthy. She expounded it by saying: "*When you feel you're not that important, you'll just bow down. Like you can be bullied anytime and that you'll think you deserve it as well. Just like the slaves back then, they were thinking that they are inferior that's why they just accepted it.*"

The participants justified the importance of feeling worthy. And aside from having a deliberate effect on the individual's emotions; they also regarded it as something that challenges them to push harder, and even prove their worth better, not just to themselves but to others as well.

They mentioned that it is something that motivates a person. Wayname pertained to strength saying "*It's important because it gives strength to people.*" Hilda on the other hand equated it into something that gives motivation. She said "*If the person is aware, he/ she will do better. It's like a motivation for him/ her. It'll make her aware that some also recognizes it.*"

Simone also felt the same but regarded that there is pressure that she has to maintain their regard towards her. She explained: "*But at the same time, there's a little pressure as well. That just because you were able to do something, or they made you feel you're important, I feel like it's a must to be important even more. So that you won't disappoint them.*"

Being affirmed with their worth is the most important thing for them, but they also gave a leeway that it does not necessarily have to come from others at all times. Hilda mentioned: "*Assurance of others, but not in every single thing*"

Simone assured herself by saying "*perseverance to be better than what he was. I also have awareness of course. Like, hello? I'm born in this world, I also have a right.*" Hilda specified "*That's important, your trust to yourself, that even though there are times that you'll think it's hard and impossible, and you'll be the one to push yourself as well.*" Wayname said: "*I have a strong faith in God, and of course on what I am capable of.*"

Luna assertively stated: "*I think, affirmation is very important especially because we are bombarded with so much negativity and so much standard... if you believe in yourself and on the things that you do, you can make others believe you... So, self-affirmation first before anyone else.*"

Through these interviews, they just stabilized the perception that affirming your own worth is the first and most stable step in achieving it.

Feeling Empowered

Although there had been a lot of strict ideologies pertaining to women empowerment, the following statements of the participants shall give way on how they personally handle this certain attitude.

Whenever they sense that an outside force tries to put their worth at stake, they instinctively prove not just to themselves but to the ones who see them worthless what they are capable of. Hilda clarified it by saying, *"of course it feels like it's a form of injustice. It's unfair. And there are moments that you'll feel sad because of it. You want to prove yourself even more, like taking revenge. That you'll show to people especially to the ones who do not acknowledge you that they are wrong about you."*

According to Covington and Müller, (2001) & Park and Crocker (2008), an individual's sense of worth plays an important role on the way they react to situations. They claimed that people tend to prove what they can even more whenever someone questions their worth.

Simone also has the same conviction saying: *"But at the same time, there's a feeling that- hub! I will show you, I will do better next time. Like that."* These statements transpire conviction on their part. They naturally wanted to attest and assert that they are worthy whenever others make them feel otherwise. Being aware of the reasons why they feel worthy or not, and knowing its consequences to the society and to themselves allow a room for empowering not just themselves but all women as well.

What they think of Women Today

The participants regarded women today as someone who has a choice, has freedom, and a certain sense of competitiveness. Hilda said: *"women can also compete nowadays."* Simone elaborated what she felt, saying: *"I feel like there are a lot of women today that go out into the world without thinking about the society's perception of what a woman should be."*

The notion that they don't really have to conform to feel worthy was essential in order to actualize their independence and thus, may actually be a personal way of empowerment.

In depicting gender stereotypes, women and men are in a relatively different scale. Studies (Bohan, 2002; Prentice and Carranza, 2002; and Oswald, 2008) concluded that even though there are some distinctions regarding roles, work, and personal preferences, a person's worth does not solely rely on it; rather, individuals find a way to assure their worth by providing what they can.

Luna described what the women are capable of today. She said *"the woman has become.. is given a choice. Whether to submit to that form of boundedness or whether to say I will be a man's woman or I will be my own woman and I will make my own way in the world. So independent. The women now is more independent and is given more of a choice."*

These feelings of independence can be seen in various ways. Hilda mentioned: “*well, I'm proud that I can decide for myself. And somehow, I'm independent not just for myself but also for my children. And of course, I'm a proud mom because I can raise my children well.*” For Simone independence is something that a woman must also be aware of within herself. She explained: “*I'm more aware on my own independence and on what I am capable of. I am also proud to know that a woman must have a stand in the world.*”

Empowerment nowadays is gaining its peak and makes women aware of their stand in the society (Allen and Baber, 1992; Sands and Nuccio, 1992; Genovese, 1993; Aronson, and Buchholz, 2001; and Morton, Rabinovich, and Postmes, 2012). However, there are circumstances that are considered to be a hindrance in viewing women's worth.

Cornelia gave details pertaining to how women present themselves. She said: “*because some women don't mind how they present themselves to others. That's why there are times that they are being objectified. And there's a tendency that you as a woman, you judge other women as well.*” Wayname viewed the same context: “*it's too liberated already. Some even engage in casual sex right? And when they wear clothes, it's like they're seducing men.*”

Being a woman, and seeing these negative conceptions that may turn their view on women's worth, it is appropriate how they engage on empowering not just their selves but others as well.

Women Empowerment

Empowering women may only be a portion among the many answers for a stable context of worthiness. But the participants considered it the most. Hilda said: “*of course as a woman, you do not want other women to be degraded.*” Cornelia on the other hand felt hopeful: “*I guess I'm still hopeful-eventually, men and women would be not equal but at least, equitable.*” She also viewed her conception of women. Cornelia: “*women... someone who acknowledges that they have responsibilities. That they have to protect themselves. And someone who acts on that responsibility. And at the same time, they can empower other women as well.*”

Simone deliberately explained that empowerment is just a second step. The first one is awareness. Simone: “*It's difficult because when we recognize the contributions of men, we think that we are lesser; or often times, even if we think we are equal, we fail to see other forms of injustices. Hopefully, women will become more aware on their position in the society.*”

Empowerment is a double sword that can be both advantageous when inculcated with values and can be abused when awareness is not enough.

In addition, the participants also transpired their way of empowering women. Hilda said: “*we must not let ourselves be downgraded. That as a woman, we can do the things that people often say we can't. We just have to trust ourselves despite the negative things. And also, we must not step on other women as well because we are the same. We are the ones who understand what is it really like being a woman.*”

Luna on the other hand imposed how personal drive leads to empowerment. She said: “*you have a purpose... it may not be always a parent.. and you may want to give up on life.. or on things in your life but you must always stay focus on that purpose. And you are the bringer of light. Always strive to be the bringer of light, not only to yourself but to other people*”.

DISCUSSION

This study had two intentions. Firstly, it aimed to explore the context of Filipino women's self-worth by concentrating on how they view themselves as woman. Secondly, this study was conducted to justify the idea of the "woman of worth" through a postmodern feminist perspective.

Essentially, this study supported Covington's Self-worth Theory (2001). This imposes that the worthiness of an individual is scaled in relation to the achievements he/she gets. In this study, it was significant that among the respondents, being able to contribute is the ultimate basis of their worth.

This finding do not contest previous studies (Crocker, 2002; Crocker and Nuer, 2003; Crocker, Brook, Niiya, and Villacorta, 2006; Hakim, 2006; VanDallen, Hoy, and Hoyle, 2009; and Geng and Jiang, 2013) that pertains to the competence of a person and thus attains a sense of achievement. This achievement however, does not only pertain to academic status, but also to the fulfilment one gets whenever he/she contributes for the purpose of success.

Aside from the fact that worth is an automatic thing one gets, the things that makes it more stable is the presence of learning, supportive relationship and self-regulation (Crocker and Nuer, 2003; and Crocker, Brook, Niiya, and Villacorta, 2006). In the study, the participants inculcated their sense of awareness and intention of being worthy not just for themselves but for their family and friends as well.

This sacrificial attitude does not put down their sense of worth; rather, it even builds up on the context that they are making changes and improvements. Although the society imposed some unreachable standards, women have a certain intention not to conform. They feel empowered not with the mentality that they are different but rather, they are being themselves and not someone they are said to be.

With this occurrence, this paper inculcated a postmodern feminist perspective that assures the diversity of what a woman is and how a woman feels worthy (Allen and Baber, 1992; Sands and Nuccio, 1992; Genovese, 1993; Aronson, and Buchholz, 2001; and Morton, Rabinovich, and Postmes, 2012). Worthiness comes not with the consideration whether it's a man or a woman. Rather, they perceived worthiness on the notion that every human being is important. This way of thinking does not only give motivation to every single person but to those who have a constricted idea as well.

Women empowerment has not escaped Filipino culture, which gives a lot of room for awareness. Obligacion (1996) and Imperio (2008) referred to women as someone capable of empowering not just themselves but their fellow women as well. In patterning the results with the ideology of postmodern feminism, although they sense worth through influence, they also transpired differently on what they specifically want to influence.

Feeling empowered may bring up independence, confidence, fulfilment and sense of worthiness; but amongst all these, we cannot contest to the fact that it has disadvantages as well. Such circumstances may shake one's sense of worthiness; but the best weapon according to Covington (2001) is intrinsic motivation. One's capability to contest the norm in order to destroy what bounds her.

A person will not feel worthy when she is bounded in a strict, ideal man-made stereotype. Filipino culture had been gradually changing. Women before have emerged from societal boundedness and women today are consistently threading the path of empowerment. In addition, not conforming is good only to some extent, and that empowerment should not be a reason to abuse freedom. Because apart from attaining self-worth, we must also be aware that great emPOWERment comes great responsibility.

Scope & Limitations

The main focus of the study was to explore the concept of Filipino women's self-worth; however, it did not define the entirety of what a Filipino woman is. Furthermore, since the target participants for this study are women who came from different walks of life, it did not provide a specific reference in depicting the concept of worthiness.

Since this is a purely qualitative study, it limits its capability to fully generalize among Filipino women. Consequently, having a limited number of participants would also inhibit this study to be validated and evaluated cross culturally. There was no treatment that was utilized among the participants. The instrument only served as a validation and profiling for the respondent's claims and was not included on the analysis of data.

RECOMMENDATION

After conducting the study, the researcher suggests the following future study topic. The researcher must propose a wider scope of samples so that it could contribute more for a concrete for generalization. In addition, including their lived experiences in the scope of study can also root for a better understanding regarding worthiness. It is also recommended for future researchers to incorporate a different school of thought or paradigm in order to attain a different perspective in viewing the context.

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