

Unveiling the Tenacity of Somali Women in the Face of Hardship and Harsh Realities in Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid"

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كشف مثابرة المرأة الصومالية بوجه المصاعب والواقع المؤلم في رواية الكاتب جوزيه

كاتوتسيلا "لا تخبريني انك خافه"

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وزارة التربية/ المديرية العامة للرفاهية الثانية

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ملخص عربي

هذا البحث يركز على رواية الكاتب الإيطالي جوزيبي كاتوتسيلا "لا تخبريني انك خافه" والتي لها مساهمة مهمة لفهم تجارب الانسان والتحديات المجتمعية. الدراسة توضح إصرار النساء الصوماليات. وبتحفيز الإصرار القوي للمرأة الصومالية بوجه المصاعب فان البحث يوضح الإصرار اللامتناهي والعزيمة لتحقيق الاحلام. وكذلك صراع المرأة الصومالية لتجاوز المصاعب من خلال النظرية النسوية. الكلمات المهمة:- النظرية النسوية، المثابرة، الثقافة الصومالية، جوزيبي كاتوتسيلا.

Abstract

This study focuses on the Italian author's Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid" who have significantly contributed to the understanding of human experiences and societal challenges. The study handles the determination of Somali women. Motivated by a deep curiosity and admiration for the strength exhibited by Somali women in the face of difficulties, the researcher aims to illuminate their formidable will and perseverance in pursuit of their dreams. The overarching goal is to shed light on the struggle of Somali women, examining their unwavering determination to overcome obstacles through the lens of feminist theory. The hypothesis posits that Somali women, armed with resilient willpower, can navigate hardships and surmount adversities, asserting their identity and challenging societal constraints. This research contributes to the broader discourse on women's empowerment and resilience, providing insights into the indomitable spirit that propels Somali women forward despite challenging circumstances. Through a careful examination of the Italian novelist's portrayal and the application of feminist theory, the study showcases the strength, will, and tenacity of Somali women, redefining traditional narratives surrounding their capabilities. Key Words: feminist theory, tenacity, Somali culture, Giuseppe Catuzzella.

1. Introduction

In the rich tapestry of world literature, Italian authors have contributed significantly to the exploration of human experiences and societal challenges. Giuseppe Catuzzella has delved into the intricate nuances of the human spirit, capturing the essence of resilience and determination. In this academic endeavor, the focus on Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid", whose narratives unfold the compelling stories of Somali women. The researcher, driven by a profound curiosity and admiration for the strength exhibited by

Somali women in the face of adversity, embarks on an exploration of their willpower and perseverance to achieve their dreams.

The overarching goal of this study is to illuminate the struggle of Somali women, shedding light on their formidable will and strength as they confront daunting challenges. At its core, this research seeks to examine the unwavering determination of Somali women to overcome obstacles and surmount adversities, all in pursuit of their aspirations. The study operates within the hypothesis that Somali women possess a resilient willpower, enabling them to navigate through hardships and obstacles despite limited resources and challenging circumstances. The research is conducted through the lens of feminist theory, which posits that women, when equipped with will, confidence, and faith in their abilities, are capable of confronting and overcoming all obstacles, thereby asserting their identity.

As we delve into the intricacies of the lives of Somali women, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on women's empowerment and resilience, providing insights into the indomitable spirit that propels them forward in the face of adversity. Through a careful examination of the Italian novelist's portrayal of Somali women and an application of feminist theory, this research aspires to highlight the strength, will, and tenacity of Somali women, transcending societal constraints and redefining traditional narratives surrounding their capabilities.

2. Literature Review

Hammood (2023) has focused in her study on Samia's resilience and resistance strategies in response to obstacles such as sexism, poverty, and violence. The researcher shed light on how Samia overcomes adversity and adopts a resilient approach. Additionally, the review delves into the societal structures that constrain Samia, perpetuating inequality and oppression. Ultimately, the study reveals a powerful portrayal of Samia's ability to persevere and resist within the context of her unique challenges and societal constraints.

Shrivastwa (2020) has explored how Afro-American female characters in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" defy conventional gender roles, confronting exploitation from both white and black men. It aims to analyze the tragic experiences of African-American women in a racist society, emphasizing their struggles for survival and self-integration. Notably, female characters exhibit traditionally masculine traits, and the study, utilizing feminism as its methodology, examines the complexities arising from the subversion of gender roles. The working hypothesis suggests that Walker challenges simplistic views on gender and sexuality, advocating against the dual discrimination faced by black women. The research innovatively redefines Afro-American women's roles, providing a nuanced perspective on gender and racial dynamics in society.

Rupa (2023) has delved into Shashi Deshpande's novels, examining the oppression and conflicts faced by female protagonists in the context of traditions and modernity in contemporary Indian society. Her study has focused on how these protagonists respond to obstacles, highlighting their intellect and patience as positive qualities within the middle-class milieu. While concentrating on three key novels— "The Dark Holds No Terrors," "Roots and Shadows," and "That Long Silence"— the analysis extends to Deshpande's overall body of work. She has explored the protagonists' struggles with societal expectations, the tension between traditional values and modern freedoms, and the complexities of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Shashi Deshpande's realistic portrayal of characters from modern urban families connects readers directly with the challenges faced by the protagonists, reflecting on the enduring silence of women in society, as poignantly expressed by Elizabeth Robin.

Building on previous studies exploring the status of women in novels representing various cultures and countries, this study focuses on the determination of Somali women and their resilience in overcoming challenges and difficult circumstances to pursue their dreams, as depicted in Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid". The analysis is approached from a feminist perspective to demonstrate that the author effectively conveys the authentic portrayal of the struggles, challenges, and willpower of Somali women through the female character Samia. Samia serves as a genuine representation of Somali women, illustrating their strength and resilience. The study aims to assert that the author skillfully portrays the true image of the aspirations and challenges faced by Somali women, using Samia as a genuine model.

3. Methodology:

This qualitative research explores the determination of Somali women in facing challenging circumstances, employing a feminist lens to analyze the text and draw conclusions regarding women's capability to confront difficulties in Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid". The data for this study are sourced from texts, articles, and research works that delve into the subject. The feminist theory serves as a key to analyzing and uncovering the role of the feminine persona in the narrative, aligning with Feminists' perspective that women can break societal constraints with sufficient willpower. Feminism contends that empowered women, armed with strength and determination, can achieve their goals through persistent struggle. The study delves into the feminist belief that women, when subjected to pressure and injustice, exhibit a counteractive response, rebelling against obstacles and fighting for their rights. This precisely aligns with the focus of the current research on the feminine character of Samia, emerging from the depths of hardships and challenges, fighting relentlessly to achieve her dreams and objectives.

Relevant data is taken from selected texts, ensuring a diverse range of sources that provide a comprehensive view of the subject. Include narratives, personal accounts, and scholarly works that shed light on Somali women's experiences in confronting difficulties.

Feminist theory is adopted to analyze the text, as the analytical framework. The text is examined through the lens of feminism to identify instances of women breaking societal norms and asserting their willpower. Focusing on the portrayal of women's willpower and determination to achieve their goals.

Through this methodology, the research aims to contribute to the understanding of Somali women's strength and her will to defeat difficulties, enriching feminist perspectives on women's empowerment and agency.

4. Results and discussions:

In the face of challenging circumstances in Giuseppe Catuzzella's "Don't Tell Me You're Afraid", the indomitable will of the female character Samia emerges as a powerful force, steadfast in its determination to overcome obstacles and realize dreams. This unwavering resolve reflects the resilience and tenacity inherent in the female spirit, portraying a commitment to confront adversity head-on. The narrative of the feminine individual unfolds as a testament to her unwavering intent, illustrating a conscious decision to defy the odds and pursue aspirations despite the difficulties that may loom large. It is within this context of adversity that the true strength of the feminine character is revealed, as she navigates through hardships with a resolute spirit, firmly set on the path towards the fulfillment of her dreams.

Women, positioned as the second gender, encounter challenges in expressing themselves and navigating survival. Their struggle is intricately linked to the feminist movement, which advocates for gender equality between women and men. According to Tong (2009), feminism encompasses the genuine plight of women who grapple with oppression, power imbalances, hegemony, injustice, and violence. The journey of women's resistance commences with their courage to assert their identities in the public sphere. As articulated by Beauvoir (1949), it is the determination and resolve of women that propels them to persist in their fight until they achieve milestones. The ongoing battle against the oppression faced by women is a collective effort to demand equal rights across all aspects of life, forging a path toward a more equitable and just society.

As usual, I wanted to win, but I was only eight years old, and everyone was participating, even the adults. At the race the year before I'd finished in eighteenth place, and this time I wanted to cross the finish line in the top five. When my father and mother saw me so motivated, from the time I was little, they tried to figure out what was going through my head (Catozzella, 2016, p:14).

The provided text, recounting the determined aspirations of an eight-year-old female character to excel in a race, is analytically examined through a feminist lens in the context of Somali women facing adversity. The narrative challenges traditional gender norms by portraying a young girl aspiring to win in a competitive setting, thereby aligning with feminist discourse advocating for the dismantling of societal expectations. The parents' supportive response to the protagonist's motivation reflects an early form of feminist parenting, breaking away from gender stereotypes. The protagonist's agency and resilience, evident in the pursuit of improvement despite a previous setback, symbolically mirror broader feminist struggles for recognition and equality. The metaphorical significance of the race extends beyond individual ambition, representing the collective quest for acknowledgment and success faced by Somali women within a patriarchal society. This feminist analysis underscores the early manifestations of female tenacity and resilience, offering insights into

the intersectionality of Somali feminism and the complexities of gender dynamics in the face of societal challenges.

In Beauvoir's (1949) perspective, it is the determination and steadfastness of women that propels them to persevere until they reach the pinnacle of success. The ongoing struggle of women against the oppression they face is a collective endeavor aimed at advocating for equal rights across all facets of life, challenging the pervasive gender disparities between men and women.

So tell me. . . . How do you think you can win against those kids who are bigger than you”?

By running faster than them, Aabe! Maybe not yet, but someday I’ll be the fastest runner in all of Mogadishu (Catozzella, 2016, p:15).

This quotation from the text encapsulates a feminist perspective that aligns with the belief in a woman's ability to overcome challenges through determination and resilience. The interaction between the protagonist and Aabe reflects a gendered expectation, questioning the young girl's capacity to compete against larger children. However, the protagonist's response challenges traditional gender norms by expressing her determination to succeed through her skills, specifically in running. This aligns with feminist theory, which contends that women can confront and defeat difficulties through their own agency and capabilities. The statement not only asserts the protagonist's confidence in her potential but also challenges societal expectations that may limit women based on physical attributes. It symbolizes a feminist narrative wherein the female character refuses to be defined or restricted by her gender, showcasing her resolve to excel and succeed in traditionally male-dominated spheres. In this way, the quotation contributes to a feminist discourse by highlighting the protagonist's agency and determination to overcome gender-based obstacles.

According to Hannam (2013), the concept of feminism can be understood as recognizing the power disparity between genders, with women historically assigned inferior roles to men. The feminist movement is catalyzed by the assertion that women should enjoy equal rights to men. Through feminist ideologies and activism, women advocate for a shift in cultural perspectives that perpetuate discrimination, aiming for a more dynamic and equitable balance. The objective is to challenge societal norms and ensure that women's opposition to discrimination receives the cultural acknowledgment necessary for fostering transformative change.

"Well, war, as I said, took the sea away from me. But on the other hand, it made me want to run. Because my desire to run is as deep as the sea. Running is my sea" (Catozzella, 2016, p:17). In alignment with a feminist perspective asserting a woman's capability to achieve her goals, the impact of war, as mentioned, deprived her of the sea. Paradoxically, it ignited a profound desire within her to run, as deep and boundless as the sea itself. Running becomes her metaphorical sea, symbolizing the resilience and determination of a woman to pursue her aspirations despite external challenges and constraints. This reinterpretation emphasizes the protagonist's agency and strength, aligning with the feminist narrative that underscores a woman's innate ability to overcome obstacles and pursue her ambitions.

Samia overcomes the societal constraints that encircle her, hindering the fulfillment of her goals as depicted in the female character Samia. Despite facing discrimination and being marginalized as a black woman, Samia tenaciously clings to hope, emerging as a beacon of resilience. Her unwavering determination becomes a powerful force, enabling her to persistently resist the relentless waves of violence aimed at diminishing her or thwarting her ambitions (Hammood, 2023).

"So I wasn't able to give what I could have. I tried to keep to the edge of the group, I did everything I'd planned to do, but something inside me didn't respond as I had expected" (Catozzella, 2016, p:29).

The text above reflects a nuanced exploration of the internal struggles and expectations experienced by Samia, offering insights that can be analyzed through a feminist perspective emphasizing a woman's ability to achieve her goals. The narrative suggests that Samia, encounters challenges in fully realizing her intentions despite meticulous planning. This resonates with the feminist discourse that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of women's experiences, including internal conflicts and societal pressures. The mention of something inside not responding as expected may signify the complexities of navigating societal expectations and personal aspirations. From a feminist standpoint, this could be interpreted as an acknowledgment of the external forces that may hinder women's ability to fully express their agency and achieve their goals,

emphasizing the importance of addressing both internal and external barriers in the pursuit of empowerment and success.

To win for me. To win to prove to myself and everyone else that the war could put an end to some things but not everything. To win to make Aabe and Hooyo happy (Catozzella, 2016, p: 41).

This text reflects a feminist perspective on a woman's agency and determination to achieve her goals, despite the adversities brought about by war. The protagonist's motivation to win is not merely for external validation but is rooted in a personal quest for self-affirmation and resilience. The feminist lens here emphasizes the woman's autonomy and ability to define her own success, transcending societal expectations. The desire to prove that the war cannot annihilate all aspects of her life underscores a feminist theme of resilience and the capacity of women to persevere in the face of challenges. Moreover, the commitment to bring happiness to family members, specifically mentioning Aabe and Hooyo, highlights the interconnectedness of personal and familial goals, showcasing a woman's multifaceted role as an individual and a nurturer. This perspective aligns with feminist ideals that recognize and celebrate the diverse motivations and accomplishments of women.

On the day of my tenth birthday I realized that running freed me from my thoughts. And so, meter by meter, kilometer after kilometer, the skinny little girl was able to overtake the majority of the group and get behind the four fastest runners (Catozzella, 2016, p:55).

The protagonist's perspective on her tenth birthday reveals a feminist perspective that underscores a woman's capacity to achieve her goals, particularly through the empowering act of running. The realization that running serves as a liberation from her thoughts suggests a form of bodily autonomy and agency, allowing the girl to transcend mental barriers. The emphasis on the gradual progression, "meter by meter, kilometer after kilometer," symbolizes the incremental steps a woman takes to overcome obstacles, highlighting the persistence and determination often associated with feminist narratives. The portrayal of the "skinny little girl" overtaking the majority of the group and trailing behind the fastest runners exemplifies the potential for women to not only compete but excel in areas traditionally dominated by men. This narrative reinforces the feminist notion that physical prowess and determination are not gender-bound, challenging stereotypes and celebrating the individual achievements of women.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives and quotations examined collectively affirm the empowering truth that Somali women possess the resilience, willpower, and determination to triumph over various difficulties. From the symbolic act of running as a liberating force to the intersectional struggles faced by characters like Samia, these stories highlight the indomitable spirit of Somali women. The feminist perspective applied to these narratives emphasizes that societal constraints, whether physical, cultural, or internal, can be overcome through a woman's unwavering will and persistent struggle. The portrayal of Somali women as agents of change and empowerment challenges stereotypes and underscores their ability to navigate complexities, demand equality, and achieve their goals. These stories collectively contribute to a narrative of strength, tenacity, and triumph, reflecting the broader reality that Somali women, with their ability and determination, can indeed conquer and transcend the challenges set before them

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