

Re-Viewing Select Filipino Songs Using Feminist and New Historicist Perspectives

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Abstract. This research study, was qualitative in nature anchored in the epistemology of interpretivism and made use of the Feminist and New Historicist perspectives in the analysis of ten Filipino songs in Western Visayas with women as theme, focusing on their portrayal in a patriarchal society, historical events and cultural practices referenced in the songs, other historical documents or works support the portrayal of women in the period these songs were written, universal truths and societal conventions. Direct content analysis was utilized to interpret the selected Filipino Songs. Results revealed prominent themes such as, women were being objectified; women were representation of expressions of love, longing, and affection to man; men pursued women in pursuit of love; Filipino songs represented culture and heritage, women represented empowerment and identity; Filipinos valued love and relationship; women were expected to perform specific obligations within family and society; there was a shift in courting styles. Moreover, infographics were created based on the study's results and validated by an ELT expert. The findings aligned with the existing literature on Filipino music, which repeatedly highlights themes of love, family, and cultural identity. The celebration of women's character in the songs reflected the comprehensive societal appreciation for strong family ties and community support within Filipino culture. The presence of these selected Filipino Singer-Composers helped to inspire future generations and preserve the traditions and virtues among Filipinos.

Keywords: Feminist; Ilonggo singer-composer; 'Inday'; New historicist.

1.0 Introduction

Filipinos have long been renowned for their deep passion for music. Throughout history, numerous Ilonggo singers and Hiligaynon songs have achieved timeless and enduring popularity. These musical creations have been widely disseminated through radio, other media platforms, and, more recently, the internet. Filipino music has continuously evolved, embracing new influences and showcasing the talents of both established and emerging artists.

Furthermore, the integration of local songs fostered an investigation of Filipino values and spurred action towards preserving the endangered 'Hiligaynon' as one of the native languages in Western Visayas. This approach also encouraged a more meaningful engagement with song, deepening the connection to this art form while simultaneously upholding the preservation of the local language. Despite music being ubiquitous, the use of Hiligaynon words was unfortunately on the decline. The flora and fauna of the region have always been a captivating subject, inspiring discussions and serving as a source of inspiration and motivation for song lyrics.

Moreover, song can be considered a universal language, appreciated and enjoyed even when the specific lyrics are not understood (Yazid et al., 2019). In addition to this, contemporary songs address a wide range of issues affecting women, including gender inequality, sexual harassment, body image, and the importance of self-love and self-acceptance. These songs are often produced as a tribute to "Inday."

Additionally, "Inday" is a traditional term of endearment in the Visayas regions, akin to how "love" or "honey" is used as a term of affection in certain English-speaking countries. It is also a term of endearment used for young female family members, signifying their preciousness and the love they are held in. Additionally, it serves as a casual greeting among friends. Moreover, "Inday" is an expression of respect, a Visayan term for prominent and influential women in society (Biana et al., 2020).

This research aimed to investigate significant shifts in the portrayals of women in contemporary Ilonggo songs compared to those of the past. By analyzing how female identities are constructed, idealized, or challenged within these songs, the study sought to understand the evolving perspectives on women within the Ilonggo music industry and society. Through a close examination of song lyrics associated with women, the researcher aimed to uncover underlying messages concerning feminism, empowerment, objectification, and agency, shedding light on the complexities of gender dynamics embedded within musical and literary expressions. The researcher observed that contemporary international music features numerous songs addressing women's issues. For example, Taylor Swift's "The Man" tackles double standards and gender bias within the music industry. At the same time, Ariana Grande's "God is a Woman" challenges traditional religious and gender norms, empowering women.

Furthermore, many male singer-songwriters have demonstrated unique perspectives in their songs about women. These songs, such as Bruno Mars' "When I Was Your Man" and John Legend's "All of Me," have resonated with younger generations and garnered significant admiration. These observations suggest that advancements in knowledge and technology from foreign countries have significantly influenced the growth of Pinoy popular music. Filipinos have increasingly embraced the themes explored by these foreign singer-songwriters, resulting in greater engagement with their music compared to traditional Hiligaynon songs or other local music genres. Focusing on women as the subject of this study contributed to ongoing discussions surrounding social issues and fostered a critical examination of how women were depicted in songs across different genres and periods.

On the other hand, analyzing local songs, specifically those addressing women, proved to be highly significant. This in-depth analysis enabled a deeper understanding of the lyrics and content, revealing the songwriter's intent, cultural context, historical influences, and the emotional depth embedded within the song. This exploration provided valuable insights into social issues, personal experiences, and emotional expressions that resonated with listeners. Moreover, analyzing the music composition, instrumentation, and production techniques offered a glimpse into the artistic choices made by the singer-composer, enriching our understanding and appreciation of the song.

The researcher created an infographic that integrated select Ilonggo songs, followed by a discussion and analysis of these songs. This study aimed to educate today's youth about the songs of the Ilonggos and their contribution to the culture. The research emphasized the "Pana-awan kay Inday" of the Ilonggos by analyzing the development of their character and exploring how they appreciated and interpreted these select songs through the lenses of Feminism and New Historicism.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a Qualitative design. Specifically, the Feminist and New Historicist perspectives were employed. At the same time, direct content analysis was employed to gain rich insights into the Ilonggo song 'Inday,' or woman, as the theme and subject of the song.

2.3 Research Instrument

The researcher used the selected ten (10) Hiligaynon songs composed by six (6) selected Ilonggo singer-composers, with the inclusion of inday/woman as the subject and/or theme of their songs, specifically, the Ilonggo songs used were 'Inday' by Mr. Rafael Buenavides, 'Ikaw Inday', 'Bayle', 'Idog-idog' by Pirot Petchelier, 'Patadyong ni Inday' composed by Sammy Rubido, 'Ang Imo Yuhom', and 'Ako Nagpalangga sang Isa ka Ilongga' by Kim

Carter, 'Basta Ilongga Gwapa' by Clique THIS, 'Kamusta Ka Na Day' by Mista Blaze, and 'Ang Akon Nobya' by Cesar Bareta.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps to conduct. First, the researcher downloaded the copy/lyrics of these ten (10) select Hiligaynon songs on YouTube and encoded them for analysis. Second, the qualitative data gathered from the selected Hiligaynon songs were examined using content analysis. Third, the researcher classified the recurring themes and key symbols to the Hiligaynon songs, offering a nuanced understanding of the Ilonggo singer-composer's connections and experiences to inday/ woman in the society as a whole, and/or tunneled connections of the subject/theme of the chosen Hiligaynon songs of the portrayal of women/indays to culture and history as well. Lastly, the researcher created an infographic material highlighting these Ilonggo singer-composers, accompanied by an analysis of their songs.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative data gathered from the selected Hiligaynon songs were examined using content analysis. The researcher allowed the classification of recurring themes and key symbols in the Hiligaynon songs, offering a nuanced understanding of the Ilonggo singer-composer's connections and experiences to inday/ woman in the society as a whole, and/or tunneled connections of the subject/theme of the chosen Hiligaynon songs on the portrayal of women/days to culture and history as well.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In this qualitative dissertation, ethical considerations were paramount. The researcher prioritized the participants based on the criteria, ensuring confidentiality, maintaining their obscurity, striving to minimize harm, and upholding the principles of fairness, integrity, and respect throughout the research. Additionally, the researcher regularly reviewed the study, addressed any ethical issues that arose, sought guidance from the relevant institutional review board or ethics committee, and ensured that the study adhered to ethical standards and safeguarded the well-being of all participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Women's Portrayal in a Patriarchal Society

Table 1 presents the emerging themes in the portrayal of women in a patriarchal society. There were three (3) identified themes for question number 1. The themes included (1) Indays were pictures of ideal wives. (2) Indays were being objectified. (3) Indays were expressions of love, longing, and affection to man.

Table 1. *Women's Portrayal in a Patriarchal Society*

Depictions/Themes	
1	Indays were pictures of ideal wives.
2	Indays were being objectified.
3	Indays were expressions of love, longing, and affection to man.

Inday was an Ideal Wife

Ultimately, women were voiceless, labeled, and deprived of their freedom to express their choice and admiration. Women were expected to be passive, dependent, and nurturing to men for protection, guidance, and safeguard. It became apparent that women were relying on the actions and attitudes of men, rather than valuing their essential worth and individuality. Additionally, they were expected to conform to specific roles and behaviors that perpetuated male dominance and traditional norms. Additionally, women prioritized material possessions and outward appearance as markers of success, desirability, social standing, and prestige. Indays embodied the typical figure of longing, physical and sexual desire, romantic object, innocence, disregard, admiration, affection, and attraction. It mostly appeared in the lyrics connotating the speaker's feeling of satisfaction when there was body contact and sex. Women often judge others based on their material possessions, outward displays of wealth, particular beauty standards, extravagance, and the way they are put on pedestals. Her parents were controlling Inday's decision. She did not have any opportunities to give her stand. Moreover, women were being reliant on the actions and attitudes of men and their elders, and deprived of their freedom to express their choices and admiration.

Inday was being Objectified

Women's worth was tied to their desirability or the approval of men in their lives, with the notion that women were considered men's property. Women were also often judged based on their material possessions, outward display of wealth, and particular beauty standards.

Inday was an Expression of Love, Longing, and Affection to Man

Men sought love and connection, despite the challenges they faced along the way. Men had experienced the bitter yet sweet nature of love. Love can be both a source of joy and a profound pain, making it an enduring expression of men's connection to women. In most of the selected songs, one of the Filipinos' traits was to seek love and connection, despite the challenges along the road. These selected songs were richer in expressions of love, longing, and affection. The repetitive use of affectionate terms and imagery evoked a sense of warmth, desire, and intimacy. Through the poetic and heartfelt lyrics of the Hiligaynon songs chosen, it became clear that anyone had experienced the bitter yet sweet nature of love, illustrating that love can be both a source of joy and profound pain, making it an enduring expression of human connection.

3.2 Historical Events and Cultural Practices Referenced in the Song

Table 2 presents the emerging themes of Historical Events and Cultural Practices referenced in the song. There were two (2) identified themes for research question number 2. The themes included (1) Men pursued women in pursuit of love. (2) Hiligaynon songs represented culture and heritage.

Table 2. Historical Events and Cultural Practices Referenced in the Song	
Depictions/Themes	
1	Men pursued women in pursuit of love.
2	Hiligaynon songs represented culture and heritage.

Men Pursued Women in Pursuit of Love

Dominantly, Hiligaynon singer-composers portrayed 'Inday' as a representation of hope, love, and dreams to which the man went through, compromised, and adjusted to express his feelings for 'Inday'. Undeniably, women shaped men's decisions, actions, and motivations; they offered viewpoints and actions that challenged men, and men embraced their presence, evident in the lines, 'Mangin akon ka, indi lang sa damgo...', '...ang taga Manila ga pa Iloilo pa para lang makapangasawa sang isa ka Ilongga'. 'First love never dies' was one of the social conventions among Ilonggos that appeared in one of the songs chosen.

Hiligaynon Songs Represented Culture and Heritage

Songs often highlighted aspects of Ilonggo Culture, including traditional customs such as the essence of courtship, the manner in exchanging conversation with the opposite sex, manner, and tradition during fiesta, the common act and significance of 'plaza', 'supermart', and 'patadyong', Kamusta Ka Na Day', Fiesta, Bayle, 'Siling sang imo nanay, siling sang imo tatay...', 'Bayle sa kasadyahan, tradisyon nga hiwat nga mangin sulundan sa katigulangan...the essence of 'tangkilin ang sariling atin', the virtue of 'words and wisdom of the elders' that dutifully followed by women of before, the virtue of being a gentleman, the trait of 'maginuo pero medyo bastos', and portrayal of traditional and modern 'Maria Clara'- reminding women the power of understanding and compassion. Knapp and Farley in 2022, thus suggesting that the themes and meanings in literature are not universal and cannot be derived solely from the text; instead, they are the product of the author's time and cultural situation.

3.2 Historical Documents or Works Support the Portrayal of Women in the Period These Songs Were Written

Table 3 presents the emerging theme in Historical Documents or Works supporting the period these songs were written, of which 'Women represented empowerment and identity.

Table 3. Historical Documents or Works Support the Portrayal of Women in the Period in which these Songs were Written	
Depictions/Themes	
1	Women represented empowerment and identity.

Women Represented Empowerment and Identity

The researcher found that the selected Hiligaynon singer-composers were inspired and motivated by several Ilongga/Filipina icons who advocate in numerous areas and take pride in the Philippines. The life stories of women leaders highlighted the struggles and victories of women in their quest for empowerment and identity in

society, embodying resilience and strength. These manifestations depicted the universal truth that someone could overcome challenges and adversities, reflecting the general status of women at the time. As mentioned, Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a resemblance of strength and power; Hidilyn Diaz, the Philippine's first gold medalist in Olympic history, gives a big name to all Ilonggas', Maggerose Corado, the company's founder and owner of weavers' group, Hongkong Trade Development Council World Trade Fair, Myrtle Sarrosa, a Filipina and an Ilongga cost player known as 'Cosplay Cutie of Iloilo', winner of Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition of 2012, Sheila Valderrama, a theater actress 'Tales of the Manuvu' as the First Woman, and Best New Female Recording Artist in Guadalupe. In addition to this, women's empowerment was evident in the song, 'Patadyong ni Inday' since it emphasized the strength of 'Inday' in that period. These women strength appeared on the lines, 'Tana man ga kaput kang arado kag pala', 'Suray man sa adlaw, init ginaagwanta', 'Nga ang mga babaye pwedi man magdumara' and maalikaya nga Modern Maria Clara.

Lwamba et al. (2022) observed gaps of rigorous evidence in certain regions (notably MENA and Latin America) and in interventions specifically targeting women as actors of peacebuilding. Gender norms and practices were important elements to consider in programme design and implementation to maximise potential benefits. Focusing solely on empowerment may not be sufficient in the absence of addressing restrictive gender norms and practices that can undermine the effectiveness of interventions. Lastly, programme designers and implementers should consider explicitly targeting specific empowerment outcomes, promoting social capital and exchange, and tailoring the intervention components to the desired empowerment-related outcomes.

3.4 Universal Truths and Societal Conventions Evident in the Song

Table 4 presents the emerging themes of Universal Truths and Societal Conventions evident in the song. There are three (3) identified themes for research question number 4. The themes included (1) Ilonggo and Ilongga valued Love and relationships. (2) Women were expected to perform specific obligations within the family and society. (3) There was a shift in courting styles.

Table 4. Universal Truths and Societal Conventions Evident in the Song	
Depictions/Themes	
1	Ilonggos and Ilonggas valued Love and relationships.
2	Women were expected to fulfill specific obligations within their families and society.
3	There was a shift in courting styles.

Ilonggos and Ilonggas Valued Love and Relationship

The theme of love was a universal truth that echoed across cultures. Inday frequently portrayed romantic relationships, emphasizing the joys and challenges of love. This also reflected societal conventions regarding courtship, family expectations, and emotional dynamics between partners. Moreover, in the lines 'Siguro magliwat gid siya kung magkasal kaming duha kag kami ay magka baby na...', 'Bangod kay siya palangga, ako na lang agwanta...', 'Mabati-an akon Corazon, ginatawag ang ngalan mo baby...', 'Ikaw lang day ang akon palanggaon...', 'Tani mabal-an mo nga ari lang ko di para sa imo...', 'Gusto nya mag taxi gid kami, pagkaarte, maghulag daw milyonarya...nagapasonsyong daw artista.', 'Kay ari ko di para sa imo, magahigugma kag magapod hasta san-o...' manifested the real feelings and revelations of men towards indays', that despite those heartaches and compromises love and relationship conquered all.

Women were Expected to Perform Specific Obligations within the Family and Society

The songs depicted traditional gender roles, showcasing how women were sometimes expected to fulfill their specific obligations within the family and society. In three songs by Kim Carter, women appeared as 'dependent' on men. Mr. Carter's lyrics underpinned the idea that the speaker was still cautious of the current suitor to his ex-girlfriend. These concepts reflected the societal conventions that shaped women's identity and role, balancing traditional expectations with modern views of gender equality. Women drove for success and self-improvement, evident in the lines 'Indi lang pagtuntuha kay makasari ka...' 'Siguraduha lang palihug...', 'Galing ang akon ginakaugtan kay nagbayle ka sa iban, kanami imaoy, kanami ilumpat, kanami ihikog', 'Ining sexi kong nobya class kung mag eksena maghulag daw sa milyonarya kag kon maglakat pa, pakendeng kendeng pa daw sa naga pasonsyong sya nga artista daw artista sobra gid sya...'

There was a Shift in Courting Styles

This kind of courtship is evident in the songs that appear in both traditional and modern forms, of which the traditional ones reflect the act and effort initially made by a man. On modern ones, it could be a motive from either a man or a woman, with the easiest way to interact being through chats and various social media platforms.

Similarly, Cabazor et al. (2024) revealed that the value formation of young adult Filipinos was primarily influenced by their family, which was shaped by the values they observed in them, as well as by other external influences, including religion, education, peers, and social media. Three (3) master themes emerged on Filipino values that construct the participants' partner choice, namely, Upholding the Same Values, Building the Relationship, and Assessing Individuality in the Relationship, which all serve as a guide in the decision-making of whether they would pursue a potential person romantically or not. The master themes were supported by eight (8) Filipino values that are still highly relevant in young adult Filipinos' romantic relationships. The participants emphasized the process of choosing a potential partner by describing the behaviors and values they observed in their potential partner. Overall, the results provided insight into the predominant external influences on value formation and their impact on the values that young adult Filipinos prioritize, which serve as a basis for their partner choices.

3.5 Results of Analysis

'Inday'

The song highlighted the importance of family relationships, as Inday was very obedient to her parents. This dragged on the suitor issue, where the suitor initially approached the parents and built a connection, compared to Inday. Additionally, according to Mr. Raffy, the case of Nonoy, one of the contributors to the song, portrayed 'devotion' to Inday, as he died unmarried.

'Ikaw Inday'

The composer was telling the truth about Inday and accepted the fact that they could not be together, yet he was devoted to his love for Inday.

'Bayle'

The song tells the story of a man who would like to 'bale' in the day, yet his father-in-law approached her first. He showed respect by allowing him to avoid conflict instead. This was a manifestation that family relationships were more important than anything else. The speaker in the song gave way to his in-laws because he valued family relationships.

'Idog-idog'

In this song, the composer emphasized the ways of the speaker, who was a man. After several requests, Inday also rejected him on several occasions, yet he insisted. Aligned with conventional notions of masculinity and courting, the actions portrayed by the speaker here projected the idea that he was willing to take risks to court Inday. The idea of being a gentleman, in contrast, is performed by him in this song. Additionally, this song reminded listeners of how socialization occurred in Baylehan during those years. Women also adhered to respect and were very particular in their actions, especially in responding to men's approaches.

'Patadyong Ni Inday'

The title itself depicted Filipino culture and values – a representation of heritage, femininity, and the passage of time. Ilonggo carried this culture in such a way that they were keepers of strength and power, particularly of women, the wisdom of the elders, and honoring one's roots. This also highlighted the sacrifices and perseverance made for family and the community.

'Ang Imo Yuhom'

The underlying message of this song was about one's deep feelings, and willingness to overcome obstacles for love, and that the power of love continued to inspire, gave courage, determination, and helplessness in pursuit of love and a relationship, that the man was willing to take a risk and give up even his vices to win Inday's heart. These concepts were evident in the lines, 'Tanan nga Lubi sakaon ko para lang mareplayan ka (the courting was done in modern mode), tanan nga bisyo talikdan ko, magahigugma kag maga upod hasta san o (this showed 'devotion' to Inday).

'Ako Nagpalangga sang Isa ka Ilongga'

It was depicted in the song as the universal theme of love and regret in a man's relationship. The truth is that someone's worth will be valued the moment they are gone or far away. The speaker wanted to evoke his sentiment of longing, echoing the listener's past love - how he endured bittersweet memories. These thoughts created societal conventions like 'possessiveness' toward his ex-girlfriend that can lead to jealousy and control, highlighting the importance of 'love and relationship' through showing empathy, love, and care in interpersonal connections, regardless of romantic history.

'Basta Ilongga Gwapa'

The title itself was attributed to all Ilongga. Added to this was the 'Modern Maria Clara' term used by the composer to emphasize the ideal image of a Filipina from a traditional Maria Clara to a modern-day Maria Clara. This manifested the concept that the transformation of women evolved over the years. They broke the traditional gender and societal roles and expectations that women face.

'Kamusta Ka Na Day'

Most of the lines denoted the concept of how a man traditionally courts a woman, despite the song belonging to a modern era. This was a manifestation that the courting styles of Filipinos adapted both traditional and modern ones. Ilongga gave importance to their love and relationship. Despite the modernity of the time, they continued to embrace traditional ways of courting, particularly the values and actions of a 'gentleman'.

'Ang Akon Nobya'

In this song, the speaker was somehow regretful of having a 'classy and extravagant' life, evident in the lines, 'gusto nya mag taxi gid kami, pagkaarte, pakimi-kimi, class kun mag eksena, maghulag daw milyonarya, naga pasonsyong daw artista, class ang iya ras, padehins-dehins pa, sobra gid sya, ako na lang kuntani ang ma resyn na, surrender na, girlfriend yet, he was willing to compromise because of the devotion and love for Inday. In line with this, women often exhibited these traits to fulfill specific societal roles, as reflected in their manner of dress, speech, gait, and behavior. To conform to these various norms, they prioritized material possessions and outward appearance as markers of success and desirability.

4.0 Conclusion

These key findings indicated that the selected Hiligaynon songs served as a medium for cultural and societal expressions, reflecting both traditional values and contemporary experiences. The lyrics emphasized the significance of family bonds, as well as the joys, pains, and triumphs of everyday life, resonating with listeners on emotional, historical, cultural, and societal levels.

The findings of this study align with the existing literature on Filipino music, specifically the Ilonggo, which repeatedly highlights themes of love, family, and cultural identity. The celebration of the character 'Inday' in the songs mirrored the comprehensive societal appreciation for strong family ties and community support within Ilonggo culture.

The lyrics of the Hiligaynon songs were analyzed, and common themes were extracted. The study revealed that Ilonggos possess the same general characteristics of simplicity, honesty, integrity, industry, hard work, sincerity, and resilience. Re-viewing Filipino songs through feminist and new historicist lenses can reveal how women are portrayed and how these portrayals reflect and shape societal norms and power dynamics within a specific historical context. Feminist analysis can uncover instances of gender stereotypes, marginalization, or empowerment in the lyrics and themes of these songs. New Historicism offers a framework for understanding how these songs engage with the prevailing social, political, and cultural discourses of their time, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between the music and the historical context in which it was created. These interdisciplinary approaches enable researchers to examine the intricate interplay between music, gender, and history in the Philippines and beyond. By examining the lyrics, the singer-composer's background, and the song's reception, researchers can gain insight into the evolving roles and representations of women in Filipino society, as well as in other nations. Thus, it facilitates a deeper understanding of how cultural products, such as songs, can both reflect and challenge dominant ideologies, contributing to broader discussions on gender equality and social change in certain nations.

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9.0 References

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