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Research Article

Formulation of Women's Poetics: A Gynocritical Analysis of *Unfettered Wings* by Sana Munir

Aaisha Umt Ur Rashid¹

¹ Department of English, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to offer a nuanced examination of *Unfettered Wings* (2018) from a feminist perspective. Through the distinct framework of gynocriticism, the study explores how this collection of short stories reflects and challenges the traditional representation of women at various levels. In particular, the study indulges in an in-depth examination of the stories in light of the four-dimensional model of gynocriticism that includes Biological, Linguistic, Psychological and Cultural analysis. The analysis emphasizes the role, agency, and portrayal of female characters in the stories. By examining how these characters conform to or subvert female archetypes, the study explores implications for the broader representation of women. Through a step-wise gynocritical critique, this paper explores how each story engages with gender expectations, revealing the complex, marginalized interiority of women's experiences. The research considers the broader socio-cultural context in which Sana Munir wrote, shedding light on the constraints and possibilities available to women in Pakistan. The analysis seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how *Unfettered Wings* (2018) participates in and challenges the literary traditions that shape the portrayal of women specifically in Pakistan, making visible the often overlooked dimensions of women's narratives within the broader literary canon.

Key Words: Gynocriticism, Female Agency, Stereotypes, Gender Roles, Women's Poetics



Correspondence

Aaisha Umt Ur Rashid
aaishamumtaz786@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper aims to examine the status of women in a patriarchal society through the lens of Gynocriticism. The primary source for this research is a collection of short stories written by Sana Munir who is a distinguished writer from Pakistan. Renowned for her insightful examination of the myriad challenges faced by women, Sana Munir emerges as a distinctive literary voice originating from a societal milieu that has not yet fully embraced the empowerment of the female gender. Through her nuanced storytelling and writing techniques, Munir skillfully sheds light on the multifaceted problems faced by women in Pakistan, providing a compelling narrative that resonates with the complexities of their experiences. Her work serves as a poignant commentary on the pervasive gender dynamics, offering readers a glimpse into the struggles, triumphs, and resilience of women navigating a society shaped by entrenched patriarchal norms. Munir's prose not only captivates the readers with its literary finesse and fluidity of narration but also serves as a vehicle for social introspection and discourse. The thematic richness of *Unfettered Wings* (2018) transcends geographical boundaries, inviting readers to reflect on the universal struggles of women while specifically addressing the context of Pakistan's societal fabric. The characters she chooses as her protagonists are all women and the stories are titled after their names.

An intriguing aspect regarding these women lies in their diverse backgrounds, affirming the writer's awareness, knowledge and observation about the multifaceted nature of female experiences within Pakistan.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is qualitative and follows the analytical approach of textual examination. The theory utilized for this analysis is propounded by Elaine Showalter who is a highly influential American Feminist Critic. In her famous essay "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979), Showalter explains her idea of Feminist Criticism which she divides into two types. She associates the first type with *women as readers* and the second one with *women as writers*. The second type, according to Showalter, looks into the "psychodynamics of female creativity" including female language, female literary career and its history. Showalter adapted a French term *la gynocritique* for the study of such a comprehensive and specialized discourse and called it gynocriticism.

By utilizing the theoretical framework of Gynocriticism, this research seeks to investigate the unique voices, diverse experiences and complex issues faced by Pakistani women as portrayed by Sana Munir in her short stories. This critical framework follows the four dimensional analysis technique that focuses on the biological, linguistic, psychological and cultural portrayal of women in literary texts. By meticulously examining the intricacies of characters, themes, settings, and narrative structures of the stories, this gynocritical research elucidates a nuanced analysis of the empowerment and vocal resilience of women in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The research is of considerable importance because of its distinctive approach and its intricate examination of the experiences of marginalized women within a nation where they confront multiple dimensions of ostracism, neglect, and exclusion, extending beyond their immediate social circles to encompass the broader social fabric. The study is particularly valuable as it highlights the agency and resilience of women within a tumultuous societal structure dominated by men. The research is anticipated to make a meaningful contribution to the critical feminist discourse, holding particular significance for social activists, as well as individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing women's rights.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues concerning the rights of women, their maltreatment in society and the pursuit of empowerment have not been new to the feminist discussions. Throughout the evolution of feminism as a collection of movements, feminist writers, alongside their critical counterparts, have played a fundamental role in nurturing female agency. They achieved this by crafting narratives that feature resilient and empowered female characters in their works. In doing so, these writers have contributed to the broader cultural and literary landscape, shaping perceptions and challenging traditional gender norms.

Nevertheless, while robust portrayals of female characters are quite customary in the Western literary canon, the Eastern literary landscape often lacks such blatant depictions of women. This discrepancy may stem from a combination of factors, including the limited presence of female writers offering strong narrative perspectives and apprehensions about how such perspectives might be received by a predominantly male readership.

In the existing state of the Eastern literary scenario, even the smallest opportunities for facilitating the expression of female voice are accorded significant importance. Emerging female writers from Pakistan frequently delve into a rich tapestry of themes encompassing identity, gender issues, culture, and politics. Through their literary endeavors, these writers offer nuanced and insightful perspectives that contribute to a deeper understanding of Pakistani society. Writers such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Khawar Mumtaz and Uzma Aslam Khan are known for their dealing with a variety of themes and issues relating the Pakistani Culture and its diaspora. However, there has been a notable absence of attention on the challenges faced by Pakistani women across various professions and settings. Sana Munir addresses this void comprehensively in her anthology, *Unfettered Wings* (2018) and emerges as an astounding female voice depicting the struggles of women in Pakistani society. Ali Furqan Syed, in his research paper titled, "Sana Munir's Unfettered Wings: An Insight into The Lives of Seemingly Commonplace Yet Contextually Phenomenal Female Protagonists" writes, "The women in all the stories show their strength, power, bravery, courage and fortitude of relationship in an ordinary setting that is unfolded into extraordinary circumstances (Syed, 2021, p.53).

Madiha Akhtar in her article published in Dawn, writes about the female agency that is exhibited in the stories written by Sana Munir. She is of the view that the circumstances of their lives do not turn these female protagonists weak as they “are not portrayed as damsels in distress. No matter their caste or creed, they are shown as anything but the ‘weaker sex’(Akhtar, 2018). Another writer in his article “Unfettered Wings — stories of female fortitude” points towards the universality of experiences portrayed by the author in her stories, “even the men reading this book will easily comprehend that such incidents do happen with women and are a commonality in our country’s urban and rural façade” (Iftikhar, 2020). These stories certainly compel the reader to question why women in this part of the world are subjected to social injustice and gender bias.

DISCUSSION

If we look into feminism and its concepts established in the revolutionary nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, we come across strong critical voices such as Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millet. Virginia Woolf’s famous essay “A Room of One’s Own”, published in 1919, established the foundation for feminist criticism with a particular focus on how men treat women as inferiors. In her philosophical contemplations, she posited the notion that the definition of womanhood is often dictated by the male perspective, exercising influence over not just societal constructs but permeating through the realms of economics, politics, and literature. Expanding on this perspective, she asserted that female scholars within the literary domain can attain prominence by forging unique paths of their own, thereby reclaiming agency in the shaping of their narratives. Yet, this proposition dissipated amidst the weightier preoccupations that gripped humanity during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the tumultuous era of World War II in the 1940s.

Later on, Simone de Beauvoir’s “The Second Sex” (1949) echoed concerns similar to Virginia Woolf’s, emphasizing patriarchal control over women and the need for women to define themselves independently. Millet’s “Sexual Politics” (1970) further explored the constraints women face in social systems. A common thread in these works is a strong call to eradicate the unjust subjugation of women in male-dominated societies.

With the publication of “Towards a Feminist Poetics” (1979) by Elaine Showalter, an altogether new theoretical framework was established for the study of works written by female writers. Showalter’s literary analysis offered a captivating route for studying women’s literature and challenging societal stereotypes. This study explores Sana Munir’s extraordinary narratives of ordinary women using Showalter’s four-dimensional analytical model.

The Biological Model

The narratives told within *Unfettered Wings* (2018) not only mirror the intricacies of reality but also intimately align themselves with the geographical settings in which they unfold. Each story revolves around a female character living in a certain region of Pakistan, posited in a certain domestic or career-based setting. The anthology comprises ten stories, each narrated from the personal viewpoint of a particular woman or revolving around a woman’s character. From Reema, the guardian of secrets, to Maria, the unrestrained spirit, from Habiba, adorned with topaz eyes, to Saima, the brave officer, each character possesses a distinctive and captivating uniqueness. These women of varied professions living in diverse social and cultural surroundings experience situations that resonate as universally relatable. First, we will look at the stories through the lens of a biological model.

Throughout the text, we find varied references to the female body, each with distinct contextual meanings. In “Nazia,” the narrative explores different perspectives on the female body, depicting a divorced woman’s struggles with abusive relationships. As events unfold, the protagonist forms a delicate bond with a man named Imran, who appears to be a promising companion for her and a devoted father figure to her son.

In the course of the narrative, references are made to the anatomy of the female character, including mentions of the chest, legs, limbs, neckline, and lower body. For instance, during a meeting with Imran, Nazia notices the interest in Imran’s gaze on her body. It is important to note that the omnipotent narrator is all aware of what is going on in Imran’s mind:

She had a full bosom but a small waist. No one would ever think she had had a baby. Her legs were shapely and her face was oval. What was most striking to him, were the small beads of perspiration on her neck that slowly slid down the arch and got lost upon entering the neckline of her pale yellow kurta. (Munir, 2018, p.122)

Fascinatingly, we delve deeper into the intricacies of Imran’s thought process. We witness him “still lost in his thoughts, imagining the new destination of the droplets, when Nazia looked up and saw him staring at her neckline”(Munir, 2018, p.122). This discourse not only underscores the commodification of women’s bodies but also alludes to the discomfort experienced by females due to such objectification by males.

This discomfort intensifies at a later juncture in the narrative when Nazia encounters a more profound and unsettling moment. While traveling on the local bus, she experiences a teenage boy squeeze her bottom. Her reaction is natural when we witness her “screaming in the middle of the road, calling out names to men in general—abuse to her ex-husband and filthy names to the Pakistani society that failed to give respect to women” (Munir, 2018, p.127).

Later on, during the same day, the protagonist experiences different emotions when her little son pats her chest and demands to be fed. Despite all the disturbance of the day, she smiles at him and “let him have a go, especially when it meant she could get fifteen minutes of peace, quiet and solitude while her son suckled” (Munir, 2018, p.130).

The author's portrayal of the female body evolves in accordance with the context of her stories. During sensitive moments, such as the portrayal of the rape of a young girl in "Reema," she adopts a less explicit and more ambiguous narrative approach. In contrast, in another narrative, in "Maria," the author's expression takes on a bolder tone. This shift in approach is notable as the storyline revolves around a character involved in prostitution. The narrative critiques traditional gender roles and stereotypes, using irony to highlight societal biases in depicting individuals in sex work. Maria, a wealthy prostitute, captures the attention of a young man, Baseer, who engages in a one-time sexual encounter with her. Despite her divine appearance, Maria seeks only his innocence, challenging the preconceived notions. The author's daring narration aligns seamlessly with the boldness exhibited by the protagonist as she “laughed muffled laughs when his face darkened with embarrassment as he explored her nooks and crannies, her vales and mounts” (Munir, 2018, p.62).

In stark contrast to the daring and somewhat impudent discourse in this narrative, the story of Habiba unfolds to depict an entirely different female experience. Habiba and Ayesha, two sisters living in the farthest land of Balochistan with their father, brother and cousin, experience a completely isolated life because their father is involved in a dubious business of abducting people. This familial setting is marked by geographical isolation, where the consequences of their patriarch's illicit activities cast a shadow over the sisters' daily lives, creating an atmosphere of seclusion and detachment from broader society. The writer does portray these female characters quite artistically, but their physical appearance is hidden behind their robes:

Black trousers covered their legs down to their ankles, and the *chador* they wrapped around their head and bosom was sometimes also wrapped around half their face. If it were not for the markings of the delicately patterned *henna* on their dainty feet, one would have trouble deciphering whether the person under the veil was a man or a woman. (Munir, 2018, pp.89-90)

The story reflects the harsh reality of severe seclusion faced by women in certain parts of Pakistan, mirroring widespread mistreatment by male family members. In these areas, women are often seen as possessions, with any act of defiance considered a serious offense, even leading to honor killings. The writer effectively addresses these often-overlooked issues, realistically portraying the challenges in these communities.

The Linguistic Model

Wilfred L. Guerin writes in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* (2005):

Though women writers may have to use "male" language, feminist critics have identified sex-related writing strategies such as the use of associational rather than linear logic, other "feminine" artistic choices such as free play of meaning and a lack of closure, as well as genre preference such as letters, journals, confessional, domestic, and body-centered discourse (Guerin, 2005, pp.226-227).

Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism operates at a comparable level, delving into a thorough analysis of the literary techniques employed by female authors in their works. The linguistic model highlights the utilization of feminine linguistic structures and themes. Showalter believes that all types of feminist criticism, “being woman-centered or gynocentric, must search for terminology to rescue themselves from becoming a synonym for inferiority” (Guerin, 2005, p.226).

Because of the above assertion by the feminist critic, the study examines how Sana Munir's narration and terminology in each one of her stories compel the readers to think deeply about the issues that she tries to bring forth to the outside world. Her brilliance in aligning the narrative patterns with the themes and requirements of the plot structures is noteworthy. She crafts female protagonists with diverse backgrounds and professions, portraying their lives and interactions with others in a remarkably realistic manner. A careful linguistic analysis of her stories reveals her mastery of the feminine artistic choices and the powerful impact they have on the readers.

In the stories titled, Maria, Habiba, Summi, Saima and Nazia, we come across very powerful narration and a noteworthy attention to detail. The narrative skillfully captures the essence of objects, places, and buildings, interweaving them with nuanced emotions, ranging from the bitter to the sweet. Particularly noteworthy is the

distinctly feminine imagery employed, which adds a layer of depth and sensitivity to the portrayal of these elements. Through the lens of emotion-laden descriptions, the connection between the physical world and the characters' feelings is artfully depicted, contributing to a rich and evocative narrative.

The narration in the story "Maria" immediately takes our attention because the writer adopts an unconventional technique for this piece. The story begins with a question to the readers, employing the direct address technique which continues till the end of the story. This literary technique, also known as "breaking the fourth wall" involves the narrator acknowledging the existence of the readers and creating a more interactive and engaging connection between the narrator and the reader. It is important to note that although this technique is more frequently utilized in visual formats, fiction writers often make use of it in their works. This approach is effective when the writer intends to engage readers in their work and simplify complex issues, making them more accessible. Moreover, this method also lends fluidity to the narration, making it more interesting and memorable.

The detailed descriptions in these stories point towards the writer's inclination towards creating a scenario that the readers can visualize and see. Her commitment to the principle of "showing rather than telling" imparts a distinctive quality to her narratives. By opting for vivid descriptions, sensory details, and nuanced expressions, she cultivates a storytelling style that draws readers into a more intimate connection with the narrative:

The ground beneath his feet was covered with a plush cream carpet. His feet sank into it as he walked a few steps with trembling legs. In the middle of a huge expanse of a room were sets of sofas and couches, milky white with lilac cushions. In the middle of these, was a table composed of glass alone; the top, vertices and legs – pure, unbreakable glass (Munir, 2018, p.55).

In these stories, readers embark on a journey alongside the narrator, sharing their perspectives, witnessing events, and forming their own opinions about the settings and characters. Here's another instance of a detailed description in the same story:

She emerged like a vision from behind the tightly shut door, wearing a white dress with streaks of heather and lilac. Her shins were bare, and her steps were light in the flat sliver pumps she had worn. The allure of the house was overshadowed by this exquisite creature that Baseer's eyes beheld. (Munir, 2018, p.50)

Another noteworthy point is how the writer intentionally employs strong language to express disdain for the mistreatment of female characters by a male-dominated society. There are many instances in the stories where the female protagonists use powerful language to express their inner turmoil. In the story, "Nazia", the protagonist associates negative emotions with her ex-husband because of the ill-treatment she received from him. She thinks about him as "the buffoon of the man that he was (Munir, 2018, p.134)" and the "oaf she had divorced (Munir, 2018, p.134)" and holds him "responsible for her misadventures in life (Munir, 2018, p.135)".

We come across strong female protagonists in these stories who seem to be fully aware of their basic human rights. The writer emphasizes her female characters over males, aiming to portray female agency in a chaotic, male-dominated world. In the story "Maria," the well-defined male protagonist encounters a rich prostitute in Lahore, leading to the intriguing choice of naming the story after her. This focus on the female characters highlights the writer's undivided attention in portraying the multihued experiences of Pakistani women.

In the story titled "Saima", the daunting female police officer struggles to solve a murder case using her analytical skills. Saima's husband, Asif, is a police officer; however, she tends to resolve her issues independently, particularly if assistance is offered by a man. It is pertinent to note that in her attempt to highlight the female agency through the daunting female protagonists, Sana Munir is not oblivious to the fact that she has to do justice to her male characters as well. For this, she gives due attention to the development of the male characters but it is her artistry that no matter how strong the male characters appear, the female protagonists seem to overpower this portrayal. It implies that the artist's ability to shape and present female characters is exceptional, creating a scenario in the story where the women take center stage despite the apparent strength of the male characters.

The Psychological Model

Generally, feminist criticism is inclined towards psychoanalysis for a variety of reasons. Critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar trace female images in the works of authors such as Bronte sisters, Jane Austen and George Eliot arguing that these writers often associate themselves with the literary characters that they create. They also "describe a feminine utopia for which women authors yearn and where wholeness rather than 'otherness' would prevail as a means of identity" (Guerin, 2005, p.227).

In the anthology under study, we come across this urge for a "feminine utopia" that the writer exhibits in each story. The women in some of the stories are mistreated, abused and even murdered. Due to mistreatment, certain

protagonists adopt a resilient and reactive stance toward life and those around them, gaining awareness of their rights and advocating for themselves. For example, when blamed for her failed marriage by a neighbor, Nazia reaches a breaking point, expressing her frustration and intolerance for accusations about the turmoil in her life. "What failed was neither my marriage nor I", she shouts, "What failed was that bastard who was the poorest excuse for a husband" (Munir, 2018, p.129).

In another story, Reema's enduring psychological trauma from childhood is depicted, with Sana Munir exploring the lasting impact it had on her mind throughout her life, including her old age. The protagonist was raped by her favorite uncle at the age of ten and this memory did not get erased even after years of an settled life. The author employs a stream of consciousness technique to narrate the story, skillfully aligning it with the cognitive experiences of the protagonist who grapples with Alzheimer's disease.

The author's profound exploration of female psychology is captivating and thought-provoking. Sana Munir goes beyond surface-level portrayals, delving into the intricate complexities of women's minds. She seems dedicated to unraveling the nuances of their thoughts, feelings, and reactions, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the internal landscapes of her female protagonists.

The Cultural Model

Culture is not only a static backdrop but an active, dominant force that permeates and shapes virtually every facet of human existence. Its significance resounds through the many dimensions of life, exerting a profound impact on individuals, communities, and societies. From shaping societal traditions to influencing personal beliefs and behaviors, culture is an intricate tapestry woven into the very fabric of human experience.

Nevertheless, it is intriguing to note that cultural stereotypes disproportionately impact women globally, with notable effects in Pakistan, where societal norms restrict women more than empower them in various aspects of life. Showalter's model of culture examines feminist concerns in social contexts, "acknowledging class, racial, national, and historical differences and determinants among women. It also offers a collective experience that unites women over time and space" (Guerin, 2005, p.6).

Sana Munir portrays these collective experiences in her stories, revealing layers of her country's cultural milieu. Along with this, her narratives feature rebellious and brave women challenging societal norms, breaking stereotypes, and going against the cultural currents.

An extreme example of this cultural assertion is witnessed when Habiba tries to give her blanket to the prisoner out of sheer humanity and her brother physically abuses her based on his so called high moral-cultural thinking. When he is scolded by his father, he makes the whole act sound "like a capital sin" (Munir, 2018, p.105). This episode does not scare Habiba though, as she commits an even greater sin by the end of the story by offering food to the captive who was kept hungry for days. Habiba must bear the consequences in the form of her death, when her brother, keeping his culture and honor "intact" shoots her right between her eyes.

In "Nazia," the crucial marriage and divorce issues are addressed. The story beautifully elucidates pre-marriage rituals in Pakistani culture, as Nazia's mother instructs her on behavior during a suitor's visit, emphasizing that in the groom selection process, "it is not the girl who gets to choose the boy" (Munir, 2018, p.124). She is instructed to lower her gaze, put on an artificial shy demeanor and cover herself completely when she appears in front of the guests. The psychological impact this ritual has on the mindset of the Pakistani girls is very aptly described when we read that Nazia "felt like an animal trainer's pet monkey, whose every gesture was being monitored and controlled" (Munir, 2018, p.15).

Later, with tough lessons learned from her divorce and life in general, Nazia lets go of her fear and openly declares her relationship with Imran. She walks beside him towards the gate of the court where her ex-husband stands, staring at her with bloodshot eyes. This has no impact on Nazia, who has endured to her limits and reached the pinnacle of her feminine potential. Similarly, we witness female agency in almost all the stories. Despite the cultural barriers and societal hindrances that these women encounter, they are ready to lay bare the strength and vigor that life, people and society have inculcated in them. Sana Munir masterfully captures this female agency, intricately weaving a tapestry of women's psychology, employing language with finesse, and asserting selfhood amidst the intricate layers of a complex societal backdrop.

CONCLUSION

This research employs a nuanced critical approach to examine *Unfettered Wings* (2018), utilizing the four-dimensional gynocritical method. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study focuses on the female protagonists

within the selected short stories. Significantly, it sheds light on the often overlooked experiences of women in Pakistan, contributing to the feminist literary discourse.

The analysis, however, does not only address the issues faced by women in Pakistan but also expands the scope of feminist critique, offering fresh insights and opportunities for discovery to scholars in the field. The author's profound exploration of female psychology is truly intriguing. Sana Munir demonstrates a remarkable understanding of the multiplicity of female experiences, acknowledging that women navigate a diverse array of challenges, joys, and complexities.

Furthermore, Munir displays a nuanced grasp of the differences in language usage between men and women. This linguistic acuity adds a layer of realism to her storytelling, allowing readers to connect more deeply with the characters as they express themselves in a manner that resonates with the authentic nuances of female communication.

Moreover, Munir's mastery in presenting the cultural milieu of the country, particularly as it pertains to women, is evident. By grounding her narratives in a rich cultural context, Munir not only enhances the authenticity of her stories but also provides readers with a broader understanding of how cultural dynamics impact the experiences of women. In essence, Sana Munir's exploration goes beyond mere storytelling; it is a thoughtful examination of the complexities of being a woman in various cultural and societal contexts. Through her adept portrayal of female characters, linguistic sensitivity, and cultural insight, Munir contributes to a more comprehensive and empathetic understanding of the intricate tapestry of female experiences.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The research holds particular importance for social activists, as well as individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing women's rights, particularly in countries such as Pakistan. By delving into the unique socio-cultural dynamics and psychological frameworks, this study aims to unearth nuanced insights that can inform targeted advocacy strategies. The focus will extend beyond identifying challenges to proposing actionable solutions, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues surrounding women's rights in specific cultural contexts. The ultimate goal is to empower activists and organizations with evidence-based knowledge, enhancing their ability to effect positive change and promote gender equality in these regions.

Positioning this research as a cornerstone for understanding women's issues in diverse areas of Pakistan paves the way for a more impactful project. Collaborating with dedicated activists focusing on women's rights allows this initiative to evolve into a comprehensive endeavor, identifying challenges and devising targeted interventions. By integrating local nuances and grassroots insights, the collaborative approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of initiatives. This transforms the project into a dynamic force, amplifying women's voices and fostering meaningful change in communities across Pakistan.

Furthermore, by serving as a catalyst, this project has the potential to inspire and contribute to additional publications within the field. These publications can play a transformative role in societal perceptions, placing a distinct emphasis on women's agency and empowerment. By sharing well-researched findings and innovative perspectives, these publications can stimulate societal dialogue, challenging norms and fostering a shift towards more inclusive and equitable structures. In essence, this initiative extends beyond a singular research effort, evolving into a sustained force for catalyzing revolutionary changes in society's perception of women, with a heightened focus on their agency and empowerment.

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