

จากการปฏิเสธตนเองสู่การตระหนักรู้ในตนเอง: การวิเคราะห์การเติบโตด้วยตนเอง
ของผู้หญิงผ่านการชกมวยในภาพยนตร์เรื่อง “100 Yen Love”
From Self-Denial to Self-Realization: An Analysis of Women's Personal
Growth Through Boxing in Film "100 Yen Love"

ชุนเซี่ยว โม¹ และ พิม ซามาร่า ยารากิโรม²

Chunxiao Mou¹ and Pim Samara Yarapirom²

^{1,2}สาขาวิชาจีนศึกษา คณะวิทยาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์

^{1,2}Chinese Studies Program, Faculty of International Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Corresponding Author E-mail: pimdejong2517@gmail.com

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บทคัดย่อ

ด้วยพัฒนาการของสังคม ผู้คนจำนวนมากขึ้นได้ตระหนักถึงความไม่ยุติธรรมของสถานะทางสังคมของผู้หญิง และเห็นความสำคัญของการเสริมสร้างศักยภาพผู้หญิง สังคมสมัยใหม่เริ่มสนับสนุนการกำหนดชะตากรรมของตนเองสำหรับผู้หญิงในพื้นที่ที่ผู้ชายเป็นใหญ่ ภาพยนตร์ญี่ปุ่นเรื่อง “100 Yen Love” ถ่ายทอดการเติบโตส่วนบุคคลของหญิงสาวจากภาวะปฏิเสธตนเองสู่การชกมวยสมัครเล่นที่มีความมั่นใจ งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 3 ประการ ได้แก่ 1) เพื่อตรวจสอบกระบวนการเติบโตของตัวละครหญิงในภาพยนตร์เรื่องนี้จากการปฏิเสธตนเองไปสู่การตระหนักรู้ในตนเอง 2) เพื่อสำรวจประเด็นการเลือกปฏิบัติทางเพศและความท้าทายต่อบทบาททางเพศตามประเพณีที่เผชิญ และ 3) เพื่อวิเคราะห์พัฒนาการด้านคุณลักษณะและภาพลักษณ์เชิงสัญลักษณ์ของตัวละครหญิง ซึ่งสะท้อนศักยภาพของผู้หญิงในการฝ่าฝืนข้อจำกัดทางสังคม งานวิจัยนี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน ประกอบด้วย การสำรวจด้วยแบบสอบถามออนไลน์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเจาะจงผู้ชมภาพยนตร์ชาวจีนจำนวน 192 คน และการวิเคราะห์เชิงคุณภาพด้วยการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา การวิเคราะห์การเล่าเรื่อง และการวิเคราะห์สัญลักษณ์ ภายใต้กรอบแนวคิดสตรีนิยม ผลการศึกษาพบว่า การมีส่วนร่วมของผู้หญิงในการชกมวยช่วยเพิ่มความนับถือและการยอมรับในสังคม โดยมีผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามเห็นด้วยร้อยละ 57.3 แม้ผู้ตอบร้อยละ 46.9 ยังคงมองว่าการชกมวยเป็นกีฬาที่มีภาพลักษณ์ชายเป็นใหญ่ นอกจากนี้ ผู้เข้าร่วมร้อยละ 67.7 เรียกร้องให้สื่อเผยแพร่ข่าวสารเกี่ยวกับความสำเร็จของนักมวยหญิงมากขึ้น การวิเคราะห์เชิงคุณภาพเผยว่าการฝึกซ้อมและการเผชิญความท้าทายผ่านกีฬามวยช่วยเสริมสร้างความมั่นใจและความเป็นอิสระให้แก่ตัวละครหญิง สะท้อนถึงการต่อต้านข้อจำกัดทางสังคมและทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อชีวิต ผลงานวิจัยนี้เสนอแนะให้นโยบายกีฬาที่ครอบคลุมทุกเพศมาใช้ และสนับสนุนให้ผู้หญิงมีส่วนร่วมในกีฬามวย เพื่อสร้างความมั่นใจและโอกาสในการกำหนดชะตาชีวิตตนเอง ผลงานนี้ยังมีส่วนเสริมต่อการสนทนาเกี่ยวกับการเสริมพลังของผู้หญิง โดยเน้นว่าการเล่าเรื่องกีฬาในภาพยนตร์สามารถส่งเสริมความเข้มแข็งและศักยภาพของผู้หญิงได้

คำสำคัญ: การตระหนักรู้ในตนเองของผู้หญิง, การปฏิเสธตนเอง, บทบาททางเพศ, สตรีนิยม, ภาพยนตร์ญี่ปุ่น

Abstract

With societal development, more people have come to recognize the injustice of women's social status and the importance of empowering women. Modern societies have begun to support women's self-determination even in male-dominated spaces. The Japanese film "100 Yen Love" depicts the personal growth of a young woman from self-denial to a confident amateur boxer. This study has three objectives: 1) to examine the process of the female protagonist's growth in this film, from self-denial to self-realization; 2) to explore issues of gender discrimination and challenges to traditional gender roles that she faces; and 3) to analyze the development of her character's attributes and symbolic imagery, reflecting women's capacity to overcome social constraints. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including a purposive online questionnaire survey of 192 Chinese audience members who watched the film, and qualitative analysis through content analysis, narrative analysis, and semiotic analysis under a feminist interpretive framework. The findings show that women's participation in boxing can enhance their respect and recognition in society, with 57.3% of respondents agreeing, although 46.9% of respondents still perceive boxing as a male-dominated sport. Furthermore, a majority with 67.7% called for more media coverage of women's boxing achievements. Qualitative analysis revealed that the protagonist's boxing training and challenges bolstered her confidence and agency, reflecting resistance to social constraints and a positive attitude toward life. This study recommends gender-inclusive sports policies and support for women's participation in boxing to build confidence and opportunities for self-determination. It contributes to women's empowerment discourse by highlighting how sports narratives in film can foster women's strength and potential.

Keywords: Female self-realization, Self-denial, Gender roles, Feminism, Japanese cinema

Introduction

Women's issues have long been a global concern. Although modern societies have made progress toward gender equality, traditional norms and stereotypes persist. For example, Japan's cultural context still reflects deeply rooted gender inequality, with a clear separation of gender roles between men and women. In this context, sports – especially combat sports like boxing – can offer new avenues for challenging those roles. The Japanese film *100 Yen Love* (2014) tells the story of Satomi, a young woman who overcomes personal and social barriers by taking up boxing. The film portrays her journey from self-denial (passivity and social marginalization) to self-realization (confidence and autonomy), using narrative and symbolic imagery to challenge traditional gender expectations. Notably, the film's central theme has been recognized beyond Japan: Jia Ling's 2024 Chinese remake *YOLO* retains *100 Yen Love*'s core message of self-belief and empowerment.



This study applies feminist film theory and semiotic analysis to *100 Yen Love*, linking the research problem to theory and case study. By examining Satomi's character arc, the film's visual symbolism, and audience interpretations, we investigate how the narrative embodies concepts of female empowerment (e.g. challenging the “male gaze” and Confucian gender norms). The research problem – understanding how media portrayals of sports can promote women's self-realization – is grounded in feminist theory (Mulvey's *male gaze*, concepts of self-actualization) and in the empirical context of the film and its reception.

Research Objectives

This study has three specific, measurable objectives tied to analytical processes:

1. **Character and Symbolism:** To analyze how the protagonist's character development and the film's visual symbols depict stages of female self-realization (e.g. moving from passivity to agency through boxing).

2. **Gender Roles:** To examine how the film portrays traditional gender roles and the ways the narrative and cinematic techniques challenge or reinforce these roles (for instance, by subverting Confucian expectations of women).

3. **Audience Attitudes:** To evaluate audience attitudes toward women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sports (like boxing) and assess how these attitudes relate to themes of self-realization and social recognition in the film.

Literature Review

1. The historical development of women's issues

1.1 Early Feminist Thought (17th - 18th Century): Early feminist thought emerged from influences such as the Enlightenment, French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and American War of Independence. Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (2016) criticized restrictions on women's education and advocated for equal rights in education and careers. Olympe de Gouges' "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen (1791)" demanded political equality, paralleling the male-focused "Declaration of the Rights of Man. In 19th-century America" Frances Wright became one of the first women to publicly advocate for gender equality, sparking widespread debate on women's social roles.

1.2 The Feminist Movement of the 19th Century: The 19th century was pivotal for feminism, focusing on legal rights, education, and political participation, reshaping societal views on women's roles. The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention marked the formal start of the American feminist movement. In 1869, Mill (1869) published "The Subjection of Women", advocating for gender equality, particularly in marriage, significantly advancing feminist thought.

2. Feminism in the 20th Century

20th-century feminism evolved through First-Wave, Second Wave, and Third-Wave Feminism. International bodies like the United Nations advanced women's rights, notably with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted in 1979 (United Nations, 1979), promoting global gender equality. Women gained political, legal, economic, and educational rights, reshaping gender roles and social perceptions.

3. Contemporary Feminism, also known as Fourth-Wave Feminism: 21st Century

Fourth-Wave Feminism primarily focuses on combating issues such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and online abuse, leveraging social media and digital

platforms to advance feminist causes. The “MeToo movement” is one of the defining events of this wave, where women around the world began sharing their experiences and demanding structural changes in society. Tarana Burke is the founder of the “MeToo movement.”

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1. Feminist Film Analysis and Female Athletes

Previous studies of sports films with female leads (e.g. Caudwell’s analyses of *Girlfight* and *Bend It Like Beckham*) emphasize how such narratives challenge stereotypes by featuring strong women protagonists. These films often depict sports as a means for women to claim space in male-dominated arenas, aligning with feminist goals of gender equality. In *100 Yen Love*, Satomi’s engagement with boxing can be viewed through this lens, as she disrupts the traditional dichotomy between men and women.

2. Self-denial, Self-realization, and Self-transcendence

The concepts of self-denial, self-realization, and self-transcendence describe stages of personal transformation. Self-denial involves negative self-perception and internalized oppression, whereas self-realization refers to achieving one’s potential and autonomy. In cinematic terms, these stages can be depicted through narrative arcs: Satomi begins in a state of withdrawal (self-denial) and gradually progresses toward empowerment (self-realization and even self-transcendence). This progression mirrors theories of personal growth and has been noted in feminist scholarship as a common theme in women-centered narratives.

3. Semiotic Analysis and the "Male Gaze"

Laura Mulvey’s theory of the *male gaze* (1975/2006) argues that mainstream cinema traditionally positions women as objects of male visual pleasure. A feminist semiotic analysis examines how a film’s framing and imagery either perpetuate or subvert this gaze. In *100 Yen Love*, Satomi is the subject of her own narrative rather than a passive spectacle; the camera often aligns with her perspective, and male characters serve as supporters rather than dominant saviors. This subversion of the male gaze aligns with contemporary feminist efforts to redefine women’s representation in media.

4. Cultural Context: Confucian Gender Norms

Japanese society has long been influenced by Confucian traditions that delineate strict gender roles. Barbasiewicz (2013) notes that Japan is characterized by deeply rooted gender inequality and a sharp division between the male public sphere and the female domestic sphere. Japanese women historically have been confined to roles as wives and

mothers, limiting their social agency. *100 Yen Love* is set against this backdrop: Satomi's initial condition (living with her mother in seclusion, lacking work or social status) reflects those constraints, and her transformation through boxing signifies a break from Confucian prescriptions. Understanding this context helps explain both the film's narrative stakes and the real-world significance of a female boxer achieving self-worth.

Research methodology

Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative film analysis with quantitative audience survey data. This design allows a multifaceted examination of the research questions: the film provides rich narrative content to be analyzed, while the survey captures viewers' interpretations and attitudes. The interpretivist paradigm guides the qualitative analysis, aiming to understand the meanings derived by individuals, and ensuring that both the film's content and the survey responses are interpreted in context.

Data collection

An open online questionnaire (in Chinese) was distributed to a non-random sample of Chinese viewers who had seen both *100 Yen Love* and its Chinese remake *YOLO*. Since participants were Chinese, all instruments were presented in Chinese. The questionnaire had three sections: one assessing participants' perceptions and feelings about the film after viewing, including scales on confidence and gender attitudes; another gathering opinions on women's participation in sports; and a demographics section (age, gender, education, etc.). The sample was balanced by gender (approximately 50% female, 50% male) and included respondents of varying ages and occupations, ensuring diverse perspectives.

1. Qualitative Data: This study aims to explore the personal growth journey of the female character in "100 Yen Love", focusing on how she transitions from self-denial to self-actualization through boxing. This theme involves the character's internal psychological changes, self-awareness, and how she achieves self-worth through boxing—a sport traditionally associated with men—within a specific socio-cultural context.

The study focuses on the subjective psychological journey of the female character, including self-denial, self-doubt, and eventual self-actualization. Interpretivism emphasizes understanding the complexity of these subjective experiences, particularly how they occur and evolve within specific socio-cultural contexts. The growth of the female character in "100 Yen Love" is not merely an individual process but is also profoundly influenced by societal

gender roles and cultural background. Interpretivism encourages researchers to analyze, from a contextual perspective, how the character confronts self-denial in a specific social setting and achieves personal growth through boxing.

This study not only examines the growth process of the film's characters but also explores how the audience interprets and resonates with this process. Interpretivism allows researchers to understand the diverse interpretations and emotional responses of different viewers regarding the female character's development.

2. Questionnaire: Since the researcher collected samples from Chinese people who had watched the movie by distributing online questionnaires on the website <https://www.wjx.cn/vm/tVUfPll.aspx>, the researcher used Cochran's (1977) formula for calculating the sample size because the population who watched the movie, research could not know the total number. Therefore, taking confidence $Z = 95\%$ with 0.05 precision the calculation for required sample size, that should be as 384 people. However, the researchers collected data from 192 people who had watched the film, which was 50% of the calculated samples. Rattanamanee and Phasunon (2019) "RESPONSE RATE IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH" identified that the response rate of the online questionnaire was between 20-65% and Kerlinger (1986) discuss a response rate of less than 40 or 50 percent for an online questionnaire is normal. In addition, a study by Baruch (1999) determined that the response rate of a self-administered questionnaire had an average of 55.6%, and Berdie et al. (1986) stated that an acceptable response rate is 50%, with 60-70% being considered very good. For online questionnaires in the social sciences or business fields, it may be considered acceptable, but other factors should also be considered, such as sample representativeness and data reliability. In this research, data were collected by the online questionnaire representative of those who have watched the movie. A survey of 192 individuals in China explored perceptions of women in boxing, and among these respondents, those who had watched "100 Yen Love (or YOLO)" were further examined to investigate their reactions to the film. It examined gender perspectives on boxing and the protagonist's transformation. The study highlights boxing as a tool for self-transformation, challenging gender stereotypes and tracing the journey from self-denial to self-actualization.

Data analysis method

1. Film Content Analysis: We performed a qualitative content analysis of *100 Yen Love*, examining plot events, character development, dialogue, and visual symbols. A semiotic approach was used to interpret recurring motifs (e.g. boxing rings, training sequences) and how

they signify empowerment. We also applied feminist theory (e.g. the concept of the male gaze) to interpret how the film's cinematography and storytelling position the female protagonist.

2. Survey Analysis: Quantitative data from closed-ended questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, mean scores). For example, Likert-scale responses were averaged to assess agreement with statements about boxing and gender roles. Qualitative open-ended responses from the survey were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and thematic coding, allowing us to explore viewers' personal interpretations of the protagonist's journey and symbolism in their own words. This combination of analyses provided both numerical trends and in-depth insights into audience interpretations.

Results

1. "100 Yen Love": An analysis of female self-realization

1.1 Movie Overview

"100 Yen Love" (Japanese: 百円の恋) is an independent Japanese film directed by Masaharu Take and starring Sakura Ando. It tells the story of a woman from the lower rungs of society who, amid life's hardships, discovers herself and undergoes spiritual growth and transformation through boxing. The film, adopting a realist style, portrays the oppression faced by women in society while also highlighting their resilience and the potential for self-breakthrough in adversity.

1.1.1 Linear Narrative Structure and Rhythm Changes: The film employs a traditional linear narrative, unfolding according to the protagonist's life trajectory. She starts as a dispirited, aimless woman who relies entirely on her family, drifting through life without purpose. Over time, she undergoes awakening and struggle, ultimately finding self-identity in a boxing match. This narrative allows the audience to "personally experience" her anxiety, confusion, and growth, fostering a deeper emotional resonance.

1.1.2 Stages of Female Growth: The protagonist's journey progresses through several stages: from "self-exile and social marginalization" to "self-doubt and self-awareness", then to "self-recognition and attempts at self-transcendence", and finally to "self-breakthrough and the establishment of an independent identity". The film portrays her growth trajectory through the process of learning boxing.

1.1.3 The Process of growth path about female self-realization

The first step: Degeneration Stage (Unemployed Recluse, Self-Abandonment): Passive Decadence, Escapism.

The Second Step: Forced Independence (Leaving Home, Entering Society): Stepping Out of the Comfort Zone

The Third Step: Encountering Boxing (Stumbling into a New World): Meeting Boxer Kano and Developing an Interest in Boxing, but Life Gradually Descends into Despair. At the same time, her part-time job is not going smoothly. Her colleagues often verbally humiliate and “harass” her.

The Fourth Step: Facing Setbacks (Being Belittled, Reality Strikes): Realizing Her Own Incompetence, Experiencing “Sexual Assault” from a Colleague. In the Chinese remake “YOLO”, the protagonist attempts to end her life by jumping off a building. Her personal development reaches its lowest point.

The Fifth Step: Embracing Challenges (Hard Training, Growth Through Battle): She confronts humiliation head-on, begins serious training, and no longer remains lazy. Through repeated failures, she gradually pushes past her limits. Through her efforts, she earns the opportunity to compete, completing her self-growth.

The Sixth Step: Completing Transformation (Professional Match, Self-Realization): She has found the goal she wants to achieve and has earned her family's respect through her own efforts. In the end, she enters a boxing match, facing a much stronger opponent. Although she loses the match, she has already won in life, filled with inner strength. In the final scene of the Chinese remake “YOLO”, the protagonist walks alone through the streets, symbolizing her true independence—no longer relying on anyone and no longer resenting herself.

1.2 Character creation and female self-realization in the film

“100 Yen Love” largely breaks away from the traditional “male gaze” and can even be seen as an “anti-male gaze” work. The portrayal of the female protagonist is highly realistic, without deliberately beautifying her appearance. Instead, the film presents her as a dispirited, ordinary, and even somewhat unkempt woman. In traditional films, when women engage in sports, they are often filmed with sexually suggestive imagery, such as slow-motion shots or close-ups emphasizing their bodies. However, in “100 Yen Love”, the camera focuses on her sweat, scars, and gaze rather than her body curves. Her training attire consists of loose sportswear, deliberately avoiding any form of sexualization. The narrative centers on the protagonist's personal growth rather than being driven by male characters. Her ex-boyfriend

and other male figures serve more as obstacles or foils to her transformation, rather than as her saviors or dominant figures.

2. Gender Roles, Self-Denial, and Self-Realization in Japanese Society: The Influences of Confucianism

As previously mentioned, since Confucianism was introduced to Japan from ancient China, it has had a profound impact on Japan's politics, culture, ethics, education system, and even family values. Although Japan's acceptance and interpretation of Confucianism have varied throughout different historical periods, its core values remain deeply embedded in the country's social structure. Japanese society has long been influenced by Confucian thought, which emphasizes traditional gender roles—men are expected to be strong and confident, while women are confined to domestic duties. This rigid gender framework contributes to the protagonist's initial state of “self-denial”—she is passive, lacks ambition, and is marginalized in society.

Although modern Japan has made progress toward gender equality, women still face obstacles to “self-realization” in male-dominated fields. The protagonist's initial “low social status and lack of self-esteem” reflect the challenges many Japanese women face in real life, particularly in the workplace and in sports. Her story resonates with the broader struggle of Japanese women attempting to “break into male-dominated domains”. This film suggests that sports—once considered an “exclusive male space”—can serve as a “pathway for female empowerment”. This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which aligns with “Frankl's (1959) concept of Meaning-Making Theory”, suggesting that overcoming difficulties leads to “greater personal achievement”. Through this phenomenological analysis, the protagonist's internal psychological transformation is explored.

Japan's long-standing Confucian influence stems from its historical absorption and adaptation of Confucian ethics, integrating them into political governance, social order, cultural ideology, and even economic structures. Despite Japan's high degree of Westernization in the modern era, Confucianism still exerts a subtle influence on family life, workplaces, education, and social values. By tracing the persistent presence of Confucianism in Japan's history, politics, and culture, it becomes evident that despite the country's integration of various domestic and foreign ideologies, Confucianism remains a fundamental pillar of its social philosophy. Even in the face of modernization and globalization, Confucian legacies continue to shape Japan's institutional structures, moral values, and cultural identity, making it a cornerstone of Japanese society.

3. Qualitative Analysis of 100 Yen Love

3.1 Plot and Narrative Structure: The *100 Yen Love* employs a straightforward linear narrative that traces Satomi's growth. Initially an unemployed recluse, Satomi's world is small and passive, reflecting internalized self-denial. Gradually, after her brother introduces her to boxing, the narrative follows her through training, challenges, and matches. This clear structure – moving from isolation to empowerment – enhances the emotional impact. The film's editing pace quickens during Satomi's training montages and fighting scenes, symbolizing her growing confidence and determination, before slowing during moments of doubt, which fosters empathy and resonance with viewers.

3.2 Character Development and Symbolism: The film centers entirely on Satomi's perspective, diverging from traditional sports films that often focus on male coaches or partners. Male characters in *100 Yen Love* play supporting roles: her coach encourages her progress, and her eventual husband becomes an equal partner rather than her savior. This portrays Satomi as an active agent in her own story. Symbolic imagery underscores her transformation: the boxing ring, initially a foreign and intimidating space, becomes her arena of self-discovery. Scars and bruises she earns symbolize the price of growth, while recurring close-ups of her training indicate her evolving discipline. Over time, Satomi's wardrobe and posture change subtly (from passive clothing to more dynamic attire, from slouching to confident stance), visually marking her journey toward self-realization.

3.3 Gender Roles and Cultural Context: Satomi's initial lifestyle – staying at home, lacking ambition, and being financially dependent on family – echoes traditional Confucian gender roles in Japan. Early in the film, she embodies the “good wife/daughter” archetype with no personal goals. Boxing, a sport stereotypically associated with men, represents a direct challenge to these norms. As Satomi excels, the film highlights how stepping into a male-dominated domain allows her to “reframe” her identity. The narrative thus explicitly contrasts her first self-denying role with her later empowered role, illustrating how the community's perception shifts alongside hers. By the final act, as Satomi competes successfully, the film visualizes the collapse of old stereotypes: she is seen on equal footing in a public space, suggesting that her personal triumph in sports defies cultural constraints.

4. Quantitative Findings

The survey results are reported separately for clarity.

4.1 Demographics (Section 3.1): The sample consisted of approximately equal numbers of male and female respondents (about 50% each). Respondents spanned a range

of ages and professions. Notably, younger participants tended to show greater interest and openness to the topic of women in boxing, suggesting generational differences in attitudes.

4.2 Attitudes on Boxing and Empowerment (Section 3.2): Female participants' responses indicate that boxing is perceived positively in terms of personal impact. Most female respondents agreed that boxing significantly enhances women's confidence and physical well-being (mean score = 0.67 on a scale where higher values indicate stronger agreement). Similarly, many believed that sports involvement offers greater social recognition to women: the average score for the statement "Women can improve their social status through sports" was relatively high (=1.52), meaning more respondents agreed than disagreed.

However, views on broader gender equality were more mixed. The statement regarding boxing's impact on gender equality received a moderate average score (=0.95), indicating only partial agreement. Responses showed divided opinions on whether boxing truly advances women's rights or merely challenges individual women to overcome obstacles. Acceptance of women entering male-dominated sports was moderate (mean = 0.54, indicating uncertainty or neutrality overall), with a relatively high standard deviation (=0.83) pointing to varied viewpoints. Likewise, views on the media and society's role in promoting women's boxing were split (mean = 0.53), reflecting uncertainty about collective support.

4.3 Interpretation: Overall, the quantitative data suggest that respondents generally recognize boxing as empowering on a personal level (confidence, strength) but remain ambivalent about its ability to transform societal norms. Many participants see boxing as a catalyst for women's self-improvement, yet they question its reach in changing deep-seated gender inequalities. In summary, the numeric findings align with the film's message that individual self-realization is attainable through sports, even if collective attitudes lag behind.

Discussion

The findings align with and extend existing scholarship on female empowerment through sports. Consistent with feminist film theory, *100 Yen Love* subverts the traditional *male gaze* by portraying Satomi as the active subject of her story, like how recent literature emphasizes female agency in sports narratives. The film's focus on individual transformation echoes Wollstonecraft's early advocacy for women's autonomy, as Satomi's journey embodies the pursuit of self-knowledge and equality that *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* originally championed.

Our survey results also resonate with prior observations about cultural ambivalence. Barbasiewicz (2013) showed that traditional gender-role divisions continue to influence Japanese women’s family and working lives. This tension is reflected in our participants’ mixed responses: while they generally support women building confidence through boxing, they remain unsure if it truly challenges gender hierarchies. In other words, just as some Japanese women struggle between Confucian roles and modern aspirations, our respondents acknowledge the personal empowerment offered by boxing but still perceive limitations to its societal impact.

Furthermore, the story of *100 Yen Love* has proven relatable beyond Japan. As a South China Morning Post review observes, Jia Ling’s Chinese remake *YOLO* retains the original’s central theme of self-belief (Marsh, 2024). This cross-cultural adaptation suggests that the narrative of a woman finding confidence through boxing appeals in different societies. Our discussion of the film’s symbolic imagery and the viewer attitudes underscore why: the film provides a concrete example of how resistance to social constraints (by stepping into a male-coded space) can lead to personal growth. This reinforces theoretical arguments that sports can be empowering, as other research has found with self-defense classes and boxing programs improving women’s self-esteem.

Taken together, these findings illustrate how *100 Yen Love* contributes to feminist discourse. By combining content analysis with audience data, this study bridges the gap between media representation and viewer interpretation. It shows empirically that narratives of empowerment can inspire positive attitudes, while also highlighting lingering cultural barriers. The mixed attitudes uncovered in the survey point to the need for broader social change – a conclusion echoed in the film’s final message of transcending self-doubt.

Table 1. Comparison of male and female under Confucianism

No.	Catalogue	Male	Female
1	Division of labor field	Public domain: governance, academia	Private domain: family responsibilities, obedience
2	The Status of the "Three Obedience"	Men as strong ("gang")	Women as gentle ("rou")
3	Yin-Yang dualism	Yang: is active and superior	Yin: is passive and subordinate

Table 2. Comparison of the “male gaze” perspective on male and female

No.	Catalogue	Male	Female
1	Agency and Authority	Decision-makers: Act, control, observe	Objects of aesthetic pleasure: Looked at, admired, desired
2	Power Dynamics and Control	Power subject: Active gaze, Controllers of narrative	Weakness object: Passive gaze, Controlled by narrative
3	Identity and Perception	Autonomous: Defines others, rarely scrutinized	Objectified: Defined by male perception, taught to conform

Table 3. Comparison of women's self-denial and self- Realization

No.	Catalogue	Self-Denial	Self-Realization
1	Perception of Self and External Expectations	Trapped in external expectations, defines worth through external validation	Develops self-awareness, redefines self-worth beyond societal norms
2	Autonomy and Control	Dependent on others, lacks autonomy, cycle of powerlessness	Asserts autonomy, takes control emotionally, economically, and intellectually
3	Overcoming Fear and Taking Risks	Fear and self-doubt, avoids risks, limited by societal norms	Confidence and independence, challenges limitations, takes risks

Conclusion

This study investigated 1) the film’s depiction of character growth and symbolism, 2) its treatment of gender roles, and 3) audience attitudes toward women in boxing. Regarding the first objective, *100 Yen Love* portrays Satomi’s development through a series of stages – from reluctant “self-denial” to confident “self-realization” – using linear narrative and visual metaphors (the boxing ring, training scenes) to mark her progress. The analysis showed that

boxing functions as a liberating symbol, enabling Satomi to redefine her identity beyond cultural stereotypes.

For the second objective, we found that the film both reflects and challenges traditional gender roles. It explicitly situates Satomi within a Confucian framework of passive femininity, only to invert that framework as she excels in a male-dominated sport. This portrayal encourages viewers to rethink assumptions about women's capabilities. The survey's moderate acceptance of women in "male" sports suggests that while many see potential in such role redefinition, entrenched norms still limit full equality.

Concerning the third objective, the audience survey yielded concrete insights: most respondents believed boxing increased women's confidence and provided some social recognition. These quantitative results empirically support the film's message that active participation in sports can foster empowerment. However, the divided opinions on gender equality indicate that sports alone may not overcome all societal constraints.

In sum, this research provides empirical evidence that aligns with feminist film theory and self-realization concepts. The protagonist's journey and the positive, though tentative, audience responses underscore the film's thesis: that self-actualization – even self-transcendence – is achievable by resisting social constraints. The study highlights sports as a vehicle for personal growth and offers policy implications (e.g. promoting inclusive sports programs) to facilitate women's self-realization.

Future Research Directions and suggestion

Based on these findings, future research might explore:

1. **Cross-Cultural Studies:** Comparing similar films or sports narratives in different cultural contexts (e.g. Japanese 100 Yen Love versus Chinese YOLO) to identify universal and culture-specific elements of female empowerment through sports.

2. **Longitudinal Research:** Conducting long-term studies of women involved in traditionally male sports to assess how sustained participation influences their self-perception, mental health, and social status over time.

3. **Media Influence Studies:** Investigating how various media representations of female athletes (beyond film) shape public attitudes toward gender roles, and whether exposure to empowering stories leads to measurable changes in perceptions.

4. **Policy and Program Integration:** Examining how social policies (e.g. gender-inclusive sports initiatives, educational programs) in combination with media narratives can promote gender equality in sports. Research could evaluate what institutional supports most effectively translate personal empowerment into broader social change.

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