

Inamorata: How Women Are Loved — Affective Stylistics in Barangay Love Stories

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
Love stories have been a popular genre in media for centuries, serving as powerful representations that both reflect and influence popular culture's views on romance and gender roles. This qualitative study, <i>Inamorata</i>, examined how women are portrayed as recipients of love in selected episodes of the Filipino radio drama <i>Barangay Love Stories</i> through an affective stylistics approach. This study utilized three purposively selected episodes of <i>Barangay Love Stories</i> (BLS), namely <i>Pinaagaw</i>, <i>Bulaklak</i>, and <i>Labing-tatlo</i>. The transcripts were manually coded, and emotional themes were identified and categorized through textual analysis informed by an affective stylistics approach. Findings revealed twelve recurring themes, with <i>Companionship Love</i> emerging as the most prevalent, followed by <i>Romantic</i>, <i>Sexual</i>, and <i>Friendship Love</i>. These themes reflected both progressive and traditional portrayals of women: while some narratives emphasized emotional equality, agency, and self-worth, others reinforced enduring ideals such as physical beauty, maternal sacrifice, and silent endurance. The results imply that BLS presents a complex representation of love shaped by conflicting cultural values. It mirrors the evolving Filipino social landscape, where modern expressions of female independence intersect with long-standing gender norms. Likewise, findings underscore the value of local narratives in literature instruction and highlight the need for more empowering portrayals of women in media. KEYWORDS: Textual Analysis, Affective Stylistics, Gender Roles, Filipino Radio Drama, <i>Barangay Love Stories</i>.	Published On: 08 July 2026 Available on: https://ijiissh.com/

INTRODUCTION

Love stories have long been a dominant genre in media across cultures, shaping and reflecting public ideas about romance, emotion, and gender. Across global media landscapes, scholars have shown that serialized narratives such as soap operas and drama series shape audiences' understanding of intimacy, femininity, masculinity, and relationship expectations. These texts do not merely entertain; they also participate in the construction of social meanings by repeatedly presenting specific images of women, love, and emotional roles. As media consumption continues to shift through digital platforms, these representations gain wider reach and greater influence, especially among audiences who engage with stories through online streaming and social media.

In the Philippine context, radio drama remains a significant cultural form because it continues to present the romantic lives of ordinary Filipinos in ways that mirror everyday struggles, aspirations, and emotional realities. Programs such as *Barangay Love Stories* (BLS) are especially popular because they dramatize love, heartbreak, sacrifice, and survival in familiar local settings. These narratives offer a useful lens for examining how Filipino society perceives love and how women are positioned within romantic relationships. Bandasak (2021) explains that romantic love develops over time and is best represented through stories that show people growing together in a relationship. Likewise, Terrades (2023) notes that radio dramas serve as cultural resources that both reflect and shape gender roles and the construction of identity. Through emotionally resonant storytelling, these programs also provide listeners, particularly women, with a space to reflect on love, identity, and modern life.

Meanwhile, *Barangay Love Stories* has successfully transitioned from traditional radio broadcasting to digital streaming, expanding its audience and sustaining its relevance in contemporary media culture. Its presence on YouTube and other digital platforms demonstrates how a long-running radio drama can remain influential by reaching both older listeners and younger, digitally engaged

audiences. As a living archive of love narratives, BLS offers a rich site for examining how women are portrayed in Philippine popular storytelling. However, despite its popularity, the series has not been extensively examined in terms of how it constructs women specifically as receivers of love within its emotional and relational narratives.

International studies have emphasized the power of mass media in shaping ideas about romance and gender expectations. Ibrahim-Olojoku and Abubakar (2025) argue that regular exposure to soap operas shapes women's emotional orientations by reinforcing ideals of intimacy and relationship behavior. Similarly, Iapalucci (2025) points out that audiovisual media influence young adults' understanding of gender equality by repeatedly reproducing conventional feminine roles in serialized drama. Samarakoon et al. (2023) further observe that digitalization has transformed media consumption patterns, which in turn reshapes how gender roles are represented and interpreted in broadcast media. These studies collectively suggest that media narratives remain central to the social production of gendered meanings.

In the Philippine setting, earlier radio dramas have been shown to reinforce traditional gender roles through romantic narratives and performance conventions. Serquiña (2023) notes that early radio drama on DZUP helped normalize dominant conceptions of femininity and masculinity in postcolonial Filipino media. More recently, Manalili and Malcampo (2025) found that Filipino Gen Z women actively reflect on and reinterpret mass-mediated romance, often challenging portrayals of women as passive or emotionally dependent. These findings suggest that Filipino audiences are not merely passive receivers of media messages but active interpreters who negotiate meaning based on their experiences and contexts.

Despite these insights, a national gap remains in the limited number of studies that examine how women are portrayed specifically as lovers or love recipients in Philippine radio drama, especially in highly popular and continuing programs such as *Barangay Love Stories*. Existing local studies tend to focus more broadly on gender representation, audience reception, or romance narratives, but they rarely isolate the emotional and stylistic construction of women within love-centered storytelling. In addition, many studies rely on feminist or narrative analysis alone, leaving a gap for approaches that combine interpretive reading with attention to how textual features shape readers' emotional responses.

A local gap also exists: there are few studies that examine *Barangay Love Stories* as a digital cultural text worthy of close literary and stylistic analysis. Although the program has a large and sustained audience, its episodes have not been sufficiently analyzed as sites where love, gender, and emotion are constructed through language and narrative form. In particular, there is limited research on how women are represented as recipients of love in selected BLS episodes and how these portrayals reflect both progressive and traditional gender values. This gap points to the need for a more focused investigation that treats BLS not only as entertainment but also as a meaningful text for understanding contemporary Filipino views on women and love.

To address these gaps, this study examines selected episodes of *Barangay Love Stories* through a qualitative textual analysis anchored in Affective Stylistics. It seeks to explain how women are represented as receivers of love and how emotional meanings are produced through narrative and stylistic choices. By doing so, the study contributes to discussions on gender representation, media influence, and the cultural construction of love in the Philippine context. Its findings may be useful for media practitioners, educators, and researchers interested in promoting more critical, balanced, and empowering portrayals of women in popular culture.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study adopted a qualitative research design, using textual analysis guided by affective stylistics, to examine how women are portrayed as recipients of love in selected episodes of *Barangay Love Stories*. Qualitative inquiry was appropriate for this study because it privileges the interpretation of non-numerical data, allowing the researcher to derive meaning from narratives, language, and contextual representations of lived experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, as cited in Kristianingsih et al., 2023). Through transcription and close reading of the selected episodes, the study identified recurring emotional themes, narrative patterns, and stylistic features that construct women's roles within love narratives. Informed by affective stylistics, the analysis focused on how linguistic choices and emotional cues shape interpretations of love and gender, while frequency counts and percentages supplemented the qualitative findings by indicating the recurrence of salient themes across episodes. Purposive sampling was employed to select episodes that are most relevant to the research problem and most likely to yield rich insight into the portrayal of women as recipients of love (Stratton, 2024).

To examine the construction of emotional responses and gender portrayals through the lens of Affective Stylistics, this study employed purposive sampling to select three consecutive episodes from the official *Barangay LS 97.1* YouTube channel: (1) "Pinaagaw" – The Jomari Story (March 19, 2025; 42:55), (2) "Bulaklak" – The Catalina Story (March 20, 2025; 42:49), and (3) "Labing-tatlo" – The JB Story (March 21, 2025; 38:16). In addition, inclusion criteria required that the episodes fall within the designated chronological timeframe and center on romantic narratives involving women. Conversely, episodes lacking romantic elements or female-centered emotional development were excluded. By isolating consecutive, gender-focused narratives, this sampling strategy captured a diverse yet structurally coherent spectrum of female romantic experiences, ensuring the selected texts directly address the research objectives and facilitate a robust textual analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis, guided by the Affective Stylistics approach, uncovered twelve recurring themes from three selected episodes: Pinaagaw, Bulaklak, and Labing-tatlo. The data provides a complete analysis of love in all its forms, as illustrated in three episodes. Sexual love is depicted through physical attraction and social attitudes toward sexuality. In Pinaagaw, Jomari consistently verbalizes appreciation for Paula's physical beauty and speaks of her in idealized language ("She's like a goddess descended from the heavens"), which shows his strong physical attraction. While in Labin-tatlo, Marnie's frankness regarding her sex life ("I've gotten pretty good at making you feel good in bed.") is opposed to JB's unease, bringing out the double standards of society that criticize women more for their sexual past. The theme discusses how desire and societal pressures mold love relationships.

Parental sacrifice and care are demonstrated by nurturing and familial love. In Pinaagaw, Paula's mother is presented as a tough OFW who comes back to the Philippines to give birth and then leaves to work abroad again, exemplifying selfless maternal love. Likewise, in Bulaklak, Manuel is complimented for being such a responsible and loving father figure ("It seems like he's acting like your father figure."). These instances highlight how family ties are constructed on sacrifice and emotional support. Love of friendship is also evident, especially in Bulaklak, where the hero takes solace in friendships at work ("I felt comfortable in the place where I was working back then.") and sustains long-standing relationships, like that of Teresa's, even with physical distance. Such abiding friendship shows how friendships are a source of stability and emotional satisfaction.

Companionship love persists, especially in how characters forge relationships through shared kindness, forgiveness, and experience. In Pinaagaw, Jomari values Paula's personality (I'm supposedly happy, easy to talk to, and cute.), while in Labin-tatlo, Marnie and JB develop intimacy through playful teasing and emotional support (Hey, you weren't that sweet before.). However, not all relationships are healthy; insecure love is seen in Jomari's jealousy and self-doubt, ("What chance do I have against that? Your ex-boyfriend is here."), while toxic love emerges in their conflicts ("You're playing the victim too."). Contrarily, selfless love is exemplified by the patience and forgiving nature of Paula, as opposed to self-love, where characters such as Marnie demand their value ("You deserve that.") and the Bulaklak hero brags about her independence.

Lastly, romantic love is illustrated in JB's strong admiration for Marnie's character and appearance, while enduring love is demonstrated through friendship that stands the test of time and distance. Protective love manifests itself when JB's dad comes to the defense of Marnie from biased judgments, underscoring the belief that love is a form of advocacy and care. In combination, these themes present a multifaceted portrait of love, such from passionate and caring to insecure and destructive, mirroring the complexities of human relationships across contexts.

A detailed analysis of the emergent themes picturing women as recipients of love in chosen BLS episodes, grouping them into 12 different types with their respective frequency and percentage distribution. The coded instances across all the themes amount to 38, thus providing a numerable basis for interpretation.

It is evident that "Companionship Love" is the most prevalent theme, occurring 7 times (18.42%), which implies that the stories tend to highlight love based on partnership, shared comprehension, and emotional unity. It is followed in the proximity of "Sexual Love," "Friendship Love," and "Romantic Love," each occurring 5 times (13.16%). The even distribution of these themes suggests an even-handed depiction of love involving physical attraction, platonic attachment, and conventional romantic sentiment. While "Motherly/Parental/Nurturing Love" and "Self-Love" each occur 3 times (7.90%), they suggest infrequent but significant portrayals of care and personal development.

It can be noted that "Insecure Love," "Selfless Love," "Toxic Love," and "Protective Love" each happen twice (5.26%), displaying multifaceted yet less common expressions of love with emotional volatility, unlimited commitment, hurtful patterns, and protection tendencies. Importantly, the least common themes are most particularly "Sacrificial Love" and "Enduring Love," which happen only once (2.63% each), implying that although these kinds of love are recognized, they are not part of the central theme.

The study found that these themes reflected a constant negotiation between modern and traditional gender expectations. Some portrayals highlighted women's independence, assertiveness, and sexual agency, while others continued to reinforce stereotypes such as the idealization of beauty or the glorification of self-sacrificing motherhood. This thematic distribution underscores the evolving yet conflicted representation of femininity and love in Filipino media.

Hence, the data reveals a prioritization of positive, mutual forms of love, with selective inclusion of more challenging or underrepresented themes to add depth to the storytelling.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study reveal that love, as experienced by women in Barangay Love Stories, is portrayed as deeply emotional yet strongly shaped by cultural expectations. The frequent appearance of Companionship Love shows a shift toward valuing emotional equality and mutual respect in relationships. However, this progressive depiction exists alongside enduring narratives that continue to evaluate women based on their appearance, nurturing roles, or willingness to endure hardship. Specifically, women were often framed in terms of how much they could give, whether through maternal sacrifice as seen in Bulaklak, or idealized physical beauty as in Pinaagaw. These portrayals uphold the "superwoman" and "goddess" tropes, suggesting that women are loved more when they meet unattainable standards. Simultaneously, themes such as Self-Love and Sexual Liberation challenged these norms by presenting

women as autonomous beings capable of choosing their paths and asserting their desires. Yet, these narratives remained limited and often met with tension or conflict within the storyline.

Moreover, the emergence of Insecure Love and Toxic Love hinted at the emotional consequences of these conflicting standards. Female characters were sometimes portrayed as questioning their worth, especially in relationships where societal ideals clashed with personal identity. This demonstrates how Barangay Love Stories acts as a mirror to the transitional nature of Filipino society, where traditional values coexist with contemporary ideas about gender, identity, and love.

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