



Female Agency in Suzanne Collins' The Hunger Games (2008)

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Abstract

The study aims to contribute to the understanding of female agency in literary works and its significance in the broader societal context. This study examines how Suzanne Collins' 2008 novel, *The Hunger Games*, addresses female autonomy. This study adopts a descriptive research approach. The data collection technique employed in this research is observation, conducted by reading the text of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008). Furthermore, the data analysis technique utilized in this study is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns and overarching themes within the novel. The steps of this research include familiarizing oneself with the novel's text, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and naming themes, and presenting the analysis results. The study extracts data from the text and contextual elements, employing known theories to decipher the novel's layers of meaning. The findings offer a multidimensional view of how *The Hunger Games* empowers its female characters within the fabric of agency against societal inequalities. Additionally, through a qualitative inquiry informed by Freudian theory, the study enriches scholarly discourse on self-injury behavior in literature, providing insights into human nature and the relevance of psychological theory in understanding literary representations of the human condition.

INTRODUCTION

The feminist movement has significantly impacted literary representation, particularly in children's and young adult literature featuring strong female protagonists (Maier, 2007). This shift reflects changing societal perceptions of gender roles and expectations (Dubrofsky & Ryalls, 2014). Strong female characters in literature challenge stereotypes, demonstrate resilience and agency, and inspire readers, especially young girls, to envision possibilities beyond traditional constraints (Agu, 2024). Exposure to such positive representations has been linked to improved self-esteem, leadership aspirations, and career choices among girls and young women (Olsson & Martiny, 2018).

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The proliferation of diverse and complex female protagonists contributes to a more inclusive and equitable literary landscape (Fahmy et al., 2024). It fosters validation and empowerment among readers who see themselves represented in stories of resilience, courage, and self-discovery (McDonough, 2017). This representation is crucial in children's and young adult literature, as it shapes young readers' perceptions of gender roles and expectations. Works like Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy offer poignant narratives that illuminate the transformative potential of female agency. Through characters like Katniss Everdeen, readers witness the strength and resilience of young women as they navigate challenging circumstances, confront injustice, and strive for personal and societal change (Connors, 2014).

The concept of women's agency is intricately tied to the notion of freedom (Baron et al., 2016). Being an agent entails not only the freedom to make choices but also the courage to confront challenges and strive towards one's objectives (Nursalim, 2024). Empowerment and agency share a symbiotic relationship, fostering positive change and progress (Ulya, 2019, 2022). Research has explored various manifestations of agency exhibited by female characters in literature, identifying dimensions such as self-direction, self-definition, and intrinsic agency (Marlina, 2015). Studies have delved into protagonists' struggles against oppression, focusing on their autonomy and capacity to act independently amidst adversity (Afnita et al., 2023). By highlighting female agency in literature, these studies contribute to broader discussions on agency, autonomy, and empowerment, particularly within young adult literature (Trites, 1997). They underscore the transformative power of agency in enabling individuals, especially young women, to confront challenges, assert their identities, and strive for a more just and equitable society (Avraamidou, 2020; Fuady & Rizaldi, 2022; Ochako et al., 2015).

The feminist movement has had a crucial impact in promoting gender equality across various sectors of society, leading to significant changes in the representation of literature. One notable development in this progress is the increased prominence of children's and young adult books featuring strong female protagonists throughout the 20th century. Hopkins explores the post-feminist movement and girl power of the 1990s, emphasizing the contemporary desire for strong female characters who exhibit independence and strength. These protagonists display proactive attitudes and unwavering determination in pursuing their dreams and goals, representing a significant shift toward more empowered and diverse portrayals of femininity in literature.

Fundamentally, women possess substantial power when they exercise their autonomy and amplify their voices. McDonough, (2017) highlights that the concept of agency provides valuable perspectives on empowerment in literature for younger readers. By delving into discussions about female agency, explores the impact of education on women's empowerment by comparing characters in novels to illustrate the complexity of empowerment within educational contexts (Azzahra et al., 2021). The World Bank noted in 2017 that progress in areas such as public life, education, economics, health, and security is often linked to empowerment. This view aligns with Kabeer (1999) concept of empowerment, which emphasizes enhancing one's ability to make important life choices, particularly in situations where this control was previously absent.

According to feminist theory, agency encompasses the intrinsic drive of women to freely make decisions and take actions that reflect their own dreams. It includes recognizing one's right to pursue genuine aspirations, resist oppression, and, importantly, feel safe in expressing oneself authentically while

remaining true to one's identity (Afnita et al., 2023). Additionally, Isaacs suggests that it is crucial for individuals to actively engage in the struggle against their own oppression to effectively challenge the systemic marginalization of women (Wahyono, 2022). This underscores how agency can empower women to confront and dismantle systems of oppression, leading to increased autonomy and equality within communities (Wongkaren & Wahyuni, 2022).

METHODS

This research focuses on the resistance of female characters against repressive structures, making thematic analysis a suitable method to explore the deeper meaning of acts of resistance. Thematic analysis can be utilized to identify patterns and overarching themes within the novel. The data collection technique employed in this research is observation, conducted by reading the text of *The Hunger Games* (Ruthven, 2017).

To examine the theme of female autonomy in *The Hunger Games*, the steps are as figure below.

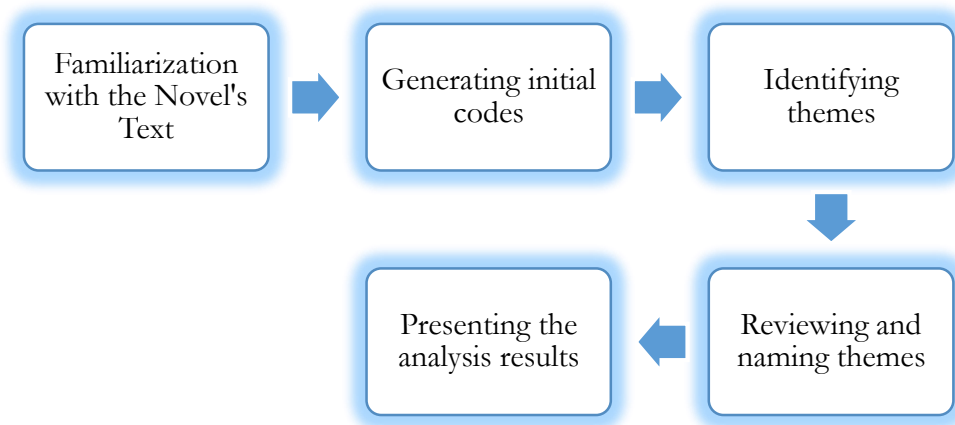


Fig 1. The steps examine the theme of female autonomy in *The Hunger Games*

First step Familiarization with the Novel's Text. This stage involves thoroughly reading the novel to comprehend its story, characters, and conflicts, while noting narrative elements related to female agency, such as dialogues, the protagonist's actions, or situational descriptions. Second step generating initial codes. This stage is conducted by marking relevant sections of the text and assigning labels to those segments. The third identifying themes. At this stage, the codes are grouped into broader, overarching themes. The fourth reviewing and naming themes. This stage involves evaluating themes relevant to the research objectives and refining them to reflect the complexity of the novel's narrative. The last step presenting the analysis results (Altheide & Schneider, 2016; Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Fadhlán et al., 2023; Neuendorf, 2019).

This stage entails explaining how the identified themes shape the novel's central narrative and linking the findings to the theoretical framework applied in the research. This study combines Marxist-feminist theory with the concept of agency as defined by Kathryn Abrams, (1998); Kabeer, (1999) to explore the interplay between socio-economic structures and individual empowerment in marginalized communities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Agency, the capacity to make informed decisions and pursue goals, is central to The Hunger Games. The protagonist, Katniss, navigates a dystopian society, embodying fearlessness, resilience, and determination. Her strategic actions demonstrate her ability to survive and thrive amid adversity. Katniss's journey mirrors the broader struggle for autonomy against systemic injustices. By showcasing her agency in navigating power dynamics and making difficult choices, the novel encourages readers to reflect on their own capacity to act and make a difference. This exploration illuminates the transformative potential of individual action and the importance of asserting one's voice in challenging circumstances.

Female Protagonist's Agency in Disrupting the Injustice System

Katniss Everdeen, the female protagonist in The Hunger Games series, plays a pivotal role in disrupting the injustice system of Panem. Here's a breakdown of her agency in different aspects: (a) survival and resistance; (b) personal autonomy; (c) manipulation and rebellion, and (d) impact on society.

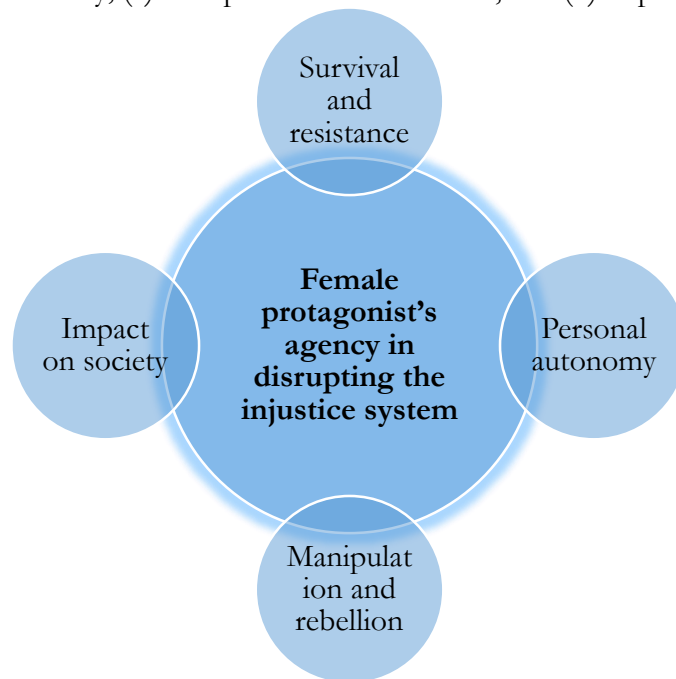


Fig 2. Female protagonist's agency in disrupting the injustice system

The first survival and resistance. Katniss Everdeen emerges as a potent symbol of survival and resistance right from the outset of The Hunger Games. Her decision to volunteer as tribute in place of her younger sister, Prim, stands as a monumental assertion of her agency within the oppressive confines of Panem. This act is far more than a mere substitution; it's a resounding statement of defiance aimed squarely at the Capitol's tyrannical grip over the districts. By stepping forward, Katniss declares that she refuses to let her fate be dictated by others, especially by a corrupt regime that thrives on the suffering and subjugation of its people. In this pivotal moment, Katniss sets the stage for her transformative journey, where her resilience, resourcefulness, and unwavering spirit of rebellion will inspire countless others to challenge the injustice and oppression that define their world.

The iconic quote "I volunteer as tribute!" echoes through the reaping square, marking the moment Katniss Everdeen seizes control of her destiny in The Hunger Games (Smith, 2022). This powerful declaration of agency reverberates against the Capitol's control, symbolizing Katniss's defiance and unwavering determination. By stepping forward to take her sister Prim's place,

Katniss asserts her right to make choices that defy the Capitol's ruthless machinations. It's not just about survival but a profound act of rebellion against a system that thrives on subjugation. In this pivotal moment, Katniss refuses to be a pawn, instead choosing to be an active participant in shaping her own fate and protecting those she loves. This quote encapsulates her willingness to confront adversity head-on and showcases her strength as a symbol of resistance in a world where every move is monitored and manipulated.

The quote "I am not pretty. I am not beautiful. I am as radiant as the sun." encapsulates Katniss Everdeen's agency in embracing her identity and challenging societal norms regarding beauty (Putra & Silfiana, 2019; Trites, 1997; Widyaningrum et al., 2023). In a society where appearance is often valued above all else, Katniss's assertion serves as a powerful rejection of superficial expectations. Her words highlight her resilience and inner strength, qualities that become central to her survival and resistance throughout the novel. By defining herself on her own terms and refusing to conform to conventional standards of beauty, Katniss embodies a form of defiance that goes beyond physical appearance, ultimately making her a compelling symbol of empowerment and independence within the narrative.

The second personal autonomy. Throughout The Hunger Games series, Katniss Everdeen embodies female agency, consistently asserting her autonomy against external pressures. From defying the Capitol's rules in the Games to challenging authority in District 13, Katniss navigates complex challenges while staying true to herself. Her decisions, whether in survival strategies or personal relationships, reflect a commitment to self-determination. Katniss's journey highlights her resilience and unwavering dedication to maintaining control over her identity and destiny, making her a compelling protagonist whose agency drives the narrative and inspires readers to question societal norms and expectations.

The quote "I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (Ninkov, 2020) encapsulates Katniss Everdeen's unwavering determination to assert her individuality and resist being treated as a mere pawn in the Capitol's manipulative games. This statement reveals Katniss's deep-rooted belief in her own worth and her refusal to be defined solely by the Capitol's schemes. It signifies her insistence on making her own choices, especially when faced with external pressures and societal expectations that seek to diminish her agency. By asserting that she is more than a disposable pawn, Katniss affirms her autonomy and underscores her commitment to navigating her own path, even in the most challenging and controlled environments.

Another quote "I wish I could freeze this moment, right here, right now and live in it forever" showcases Katniss Everdeen's inner struggle and her longing for authenticity in her relationships (Dimitrova et al., 2014; Na et al., 2023). It reflects her deep-seated need for personal autonomy in choosing whom to trust and how to navigate the complex dynamics of her romantic feelings, especially within the constraints imposed by the Capitol's manipulations. Katniss's desire to freeze a moment of genuine connection reveals her longing for emotional autonomy in a world of manipulation. It highlights her struggle for authenticity in relationships, free from external control. This sentiment underscores her resilience and determination to assert agency in personal matters, despite the challenges of navigating trust in a scrutinized society.

The third manipulation and rebellion. Katniss Everdeen's journey in The Hunger Games exemplifies a complex interplay between being a pawn in the

Capitol's propaganda machine and wielding her agency to subvert that system. From her strategic alliances in the arena to her role as the Mockingjay, Katniss navigates Panem's political theatre with a blend of calculated strategy and genuine defiance. Her actions challenge the Capitol's narrative of control, transforming her from a symbol of compliance into a catalyst for rebellion. In District 13, she continues to assert her autonomy, confronting authority and questioning the status quo, thereby shaking the foundations of power in Panem.

Katniss's agency is further demonstrated through pivotal moments of resistance, such as her refusal to acquiesce to the tesserae system and her decision to volunteer for the Games. These acts, while seemingly modest, accumulate into a formidable force challenging the established order. By defying systems that perpetuate inequality and choosing to confront danger head-on, Katniss becomes a symbol of hope and empowerment. Her journey illustrates the transformative power of individual agency in the face of systemic injustice, inspiring others to question oppressive regimes and consider their own capacity for resistance.

In essence, the protagonist's decision to volunteer for the Hunger Games serves as a catalyst for a larger narrative of resistance and rebellion. It highlights the resilience and determination of individuals to challenge entrenched power structures and fight for a more just and equitable society.

Most of the Peacekeepers turn a blind eye to the few of us who hunt because they are as hungry for fresh meat as anybody is. In fact, they are among our best customers (Ruthven, 2017).

The protagonist's early acts of defiance, such as her illicit hunting, embody her agency and resilience in Suzanne Collins' dystopian narrative. Motivated by survival and subtle resistance against the Capitol's oppressive control, she navigates dangers and exploits weaknesses in the system. Her actions challenge the unjust tesserae system and signal the beginning of her journey towards rebellion. As the story progresses, her strategic maneuvers in the Hunger Games disrupt the Capitol's complacency, compelling its citizens to confront the moral implications of their passive complicity. The protagonist's efforts not only reshape the Games' dynamics but also sow seeds of dissent within the Capitol, igniting a spark of rebellion amidst decadence and apathy.

I remember the importance of sustaining the star-crossed lover routine and I lean over and give Peeta a long, lingering kiss. I imagine the teary sighs emanating from the Capitol and pretend to brush away a tear of my own (Smith, 2022).

In Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* the protagonist deftly navigates the Capitol's penchant for drama by crafting a captivating narrative of romance and tragedy during the 74th Hunger Games. Understanding the Capitol residents' fervent appreciation for spectacle, she orchestrates a tale of star-crossed love with her fellow district partner, Peeta. This narrative not only captivates the hearts of the Capitol audience but also serves as a strategic move to garner support and sponsorship.

In *The Hunger Games* the Capitol citizens view the competition as a grand spectacle, eagerly wagering on and sponsoring tributes. Recognizing this, the protagonist strategically positions herself and Peeta as star-crossed lovers, leveraging their popularity to secure essential supplies. Their romantic saga captures the Capitol's imagination, becoming a focal point of gossip and admiration. This skilful manipulation of the Capitol's obsession with drama becomes a crucial tool in the protagonist's quest for survival and rebellion. The unexpected romantic moment in the arena introduces a new dimension to the Games, captivating viewers and prompting significant rule modifications,

highlighting the protagonist's ability to influence the narrative and challenge established norms.

The introduction of the rule allowing two victors from the same district, triggered by the protagonist's strategic enactment of the star-crossed lovers narrative, reflects her capacity to subvert the established order. By leveraging the Capitol citizens' pity and anticipation of romantic drama, she demonstrates her ability to wield agency within the confines of the arena. This calculated manipulation of the Capitol's wealth and fascination with spectacle underscores her strategic approach to survival and rebellion. Through these actions, the protagonist not only asserts her agency in her bid to win the Games but also challenges the oppressive regime governing Panem, offering a critique of voyeurism, commodification of emotions, and the distortion of reality in media and entertainment.

The quote "I'm not allowed to bet, but if I could, my money would be on you," uttered by Peeta Mellark, reflects a significant moment in *The Hunger Games* where genuine support emerges amidst the Capitol's manipulative schemes. This statement underscores Katniss's remarkable ability to navigate the Capitol's propaganda machine and leverage her position to her advantage. Initially presented as a strategic alliance, Katniss's relationship with Peeta evolves into a genuine connection, defying the Capitol's attempts to exploit it for entertainment. This transformation highlights Katniss's resilience and defiance against external pressures. By refusing to let manipulation dictate her emotions, she demonstrates her agency in forging authentic relationships within a controlled environment. Katniss's ability to maintain sincerity and form meaningful connections, even as she manipulates the Capitol's narrative, showcases her strength of character and unwavering determination to preserve her sense of self in the face of adversity.

The fourth impact on society. Katniss Everdeen's actions in *The Hunger Games* series profoundly impact Panem's society, serving as a catalyst for rebellion against the Capitol's tyranny. Her initial act of volunteering as tribute ignites a flame of defiance that spreads across the districts, inspiring others to question and resist the oppressive system. Katniss's compassion and empathy challenge the dehumanization inherent in the Games, while her resilience in the face of adversity inspires hope and determination. Her agency ripples through the narrative, disrupting the injustice system and the foundations of power in Panem. Katniss's journey exemplifies the transformative power of individual agency in challenging oppression and fostering societal change.

Katniss Everdeen's journey in *The Hunger Games* series is encapsulated in her powerful declaration: "I don't want to just survive. I want to live." This statement exemplifies her profound desire to thrive and make a meaningful impact beyond mere survival. Her actions, from defiance in the Games to her role as the Mockingjay, inspire resistance against oppression and challenge the status quo. Katniss's agency disrupts the unjust system and power structures in Panem, making her a symbol of hope and change. Her refusal to passively accept the Capitol's rule and her bold actions inspire others to join the fight for freedom and justice, transforming her personal aspiration to truly live into a catalyst for societal transformation.

Despite initial hesitancy, Katniss's gradual assertion of agency becomes a pivotal force for revolutionary change. Her journey of self-discovery and resistance underscores her evolution and resonates as a powerful narrative of courage and resilience. Through her actions, Katniss becomes a beacon of hope, sparking a ripple effect that challenges the status quo and paves the way for transformative societal shifts. Her story demonstrates the complexity of

navigating oppressive environments and the transformative potential of individual agency in effecting meaningful change.

Young female protagonist's agency in rejecting authority

In Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* the Capitol maintains strict control over the dissemination of information about life in the various districts of Panem. Communication between districts is heavily restricted, contributing to a sense of isolation and limited understanding among residents. The Capitol's prohibition on speaking openly about the realities of life in Panem serves to reinforce this divide, ensuring that residents remain ignorant of each other's cultures and struggles. However, when the protagonist forms an alliance with Rue, a young girl from District 11, she challenges this tradition of silence. During a brief discussion about their respective districts, the protagonist refuses to adhere to the Capitol's imposed secrecy. Instead, she chooses to openly acknowledge and discuss the harsh realities faced by District 11 residents, defying the Capitol's attempts to suppress the truth. The following quotation exemplifies this pivotal moment of defiance and solidarity between the protagonist and Rue, as they reject the Capitol's efforts to keep them isolated and uninformed about each other's lives. Through their alliance and shared resistance, they symbolize a glimmer of hope for unity and understanding among the districts of Panem.

I'd have thought, in district Eleven, you'd have a bit more to eat than us. You know, since your grow the food," I say, Rue's eyes widen. "Oh, no, we're not allowed to eat the crops." "They arrest you or something?" I ask. "The whip you and make everyone else watch," says Rue. "The mayor's very strict about it (Collins, 2008).

In the brutal arena of the Hunger Games, tributes are expected to engage in violence and bloodshed, perpetuating division among the districts. However, the protagonist defies this cruel mandate by forming an unlikely bond with Rue from District Eleven. Instead of succumbing to the Capitol's agenda of fostering animosity, the protagonist chooses compassion and empathy, forging a friendship rooted in mutual respect and solidarity. This genuine connection transcends the imposed boundaries of the Games, challenging the Capitol's narrative of division and symbolizing the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

The protagonist's courageous actions extend beyond the arena as she fearlessly inquires about life in other districts, despite the watchful eyes of the Capitol authorities. By shedding light on the harsh realities faced by citizens across Panem, she becomes a voice for the curious and oppressed, challenging the Capitol's attempts to suppress knowledge and perpetuate ignorance. Her bold inquiries and compassionate actions ignite a spark of awareness and resistance, inspiring others to question the status quo and unite against the oppressive forces that seek to keep them divided and subjugated. Through these acts of defiance, the protagonist asserts her agency and challenges the very foundations of the Capitol's control over Panem.

However, the protagonist staunchly refuses to be reduced to a mere pawn in the Capitol's twisted game of power and control. In rejecting the Capitol's attempts to manipulate and exploit her for their own amusement, she defiantly asserts her autonomy and agency. The following quotation serves as a poignant example of her refusal to be treated as a disposable commodity by the Capitol:

I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece of their Games. And so am I (Collins, 2008).

The excerpt illuminates a profound defiance against oppressive authority,

portraying a protagonist who staunchly refuses to adhere to subservience. With unwavering determination, she confronts her oppressor, fuelled by an unyielding resolve to no longer serve as a pawn to authority. Her visceral reaction to Rue's tragic demise at the hands of the Capitol ignites a firestorm of fury within her, propelling her towards a relentless pursuit of justice and liberation. Amidst the chaos and cruelty of the Hunger Games arena, she endeavors to showcase her indomitable spirit, valiantly challenging the status quo and daring to defy the establishment. At the core of her impassioned plea lies a fervent desire to debunk the dehumanizing narrative imposed upon the tributes, asserting their inherent humanity, dignity, and inherent right to autonomy. Through her bold stance, she embarks on a courageous journey to reclaim not only her own freedom but also to champion the rights of all those subjected to governmental oppression. In the pivotal moment captured within the quoted passage, the protagonist's decisive action serves as a testament to her unwavering commitment to defiance and liberation. On the quotation above, the protagonist decides to do something. Her clear action can be following quotation below:

Slowly, one stem at a time, I decorate her body in the flowers. Covering the ugly wound. Wreathing her hair with bright color. They'll have to show it. Or, even if they choose to turn the camera elsewhere at this moment, they'll have to bring them back when they collect the bodies and everyone will see her then know I did it. I step back and take a last look at Rue. She could really be asleep in that meadow after all (Collins, 2008).

In the wake of Rue's tragic passing, the female protagonist's consciousness is stirred, awakening a profound awareness of the Capitol's egregious injustices. With a heart heavy with grief and a spirit aflame with righteous fury, she resolves to resist the oppressive regime and exact retribution for Rue's untimely demise. Her mission transcends mere vengeance; it is a bold declaration of the worthiness of every life, a rallying cry against the Capitol's callous disregard for human dignity. In the annals of the Hunger Games, never before has a tribute mourned the loss of another with such palpable anguish, defying the Capitol's expectation of stoic compliance. Through her defiant actions, she sends a clear message to the heartless machinations of the Capitol: she will not be complicit in their insatiable thirst for bloodshed.

While the Capitol revels in the spectacle of ruthless carnage, she refuses to succumb to their twisted desires, instead choosing to honor Rue's memory with empathy and compassion. Adorning her body as a symbol of defiance, she stands resolute in her refusal to be a puppet of the Capitol's tyranny, bravely asserting her autonomy and agency in the face of oppression. By embracing her humanity and rejecting the Capitol's dehumanizing dictates, she strikes a decisive blow against their authority, a defiant act of rebellion that reverberates with the power of defiance and resilience. Through her courageous defiance, she not only honors Rue's memory but also serves as a beacon of hope for all those oppressed by the Capitol's tyranny, reminding them that even in the darkest of times, the flame of resistance burns bright. The deeper discussion of the main female character's agency in rejecting authority within the novel: defiance in the games and relationship with Peeta.

Defiance in the games

Throughout the Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen emerges as a defiant force against the Capitol's authority, showcasing her unwavering resolve and agency. From the outset, Katniss refuses to conform to the Capitol's expectations, forging alliances based on her own terms and leveraging her skills to challenge the Gamemakers' control. Her refusal to play by the rules becomes increasingly evident as the Games progress, culminating in a pivotal moment of defiance during the final moments with the nightlock berries. By choosing to

defy the Capitol's authority over life and death, Katniss asserts her autonomy and rejects the notion of being a mere pawn in their twisted game. This act not only symbolizes her rejection of the Capitol's oppressive regime but also inspires others to question the status quo and stand up against tyranny. Katniss's defiance serves as a catalyst for rebellion and resistance, showcasing the transformative power of individual agency in the face of overwhelming odds.

Katniss's unwavering defiance against the Capitol's control in *The Hunger Games* is powerfully encapsulated in her declaration: "I don't care if I die. I'm not going to win their games for them." This quote exemplifies her refusal to conform to the arena's imposed rules, especially in life-or-death situations, showcasing her agency and resilience. Her determination to challenge injustice and assert autonomy, even under immense pressure, is further demonstrated in the pivotal moment with the nightlock berries, symbolizing her ultimate rejection of the Capitol's authority. This act marks a turning point, inspiring widespread resistance and transforming Katniss into a powerful symbol of rebellion. Her defiance encourages others to question the oppressive regime and resist tyranny, embodying the transformative power of individual agency in the face of systemic oppression.

Relationship with Peeta

Katniss Everdeen's relationship with Peeta Mellark in *The Hunger Games* series serves as a significant avenue for defying authority and asserting agency. Initially presented as a Capitol-orchestrated strategy, their bond evolves into something more profound, challenging the regime's manipulative narrative. Katniss navigates her feelings on her own terms, showcasing her autonomy in matters of the heart. Her growing affection for Peeta reflects her capacity to form genuine connections despite external pressures, transcending the Capitol's control. This relationship exemplifies Katniss's defiance against authority and her determination to remain authentic. It underscores her resilience in refusing to be defined by others' narratives, highlighting her strength as a character who asserts her agency in personal matters even within the constraints of a manipulative and oppressive system.

Katniss's journey of self-discovery and emotional growth in her relationship with Peeta is a testament to her agency and resilience in the face of external manipulation. Initially thrust into a narrative orchestrated by the Capitol, Katniss grapples with conflicting emotions and the gradual realization of her genuine feelings for Peeta. This internal struggle culminates in her profound acknowledgment: "I realize only one person will be damaged beyond repair if Peeta dies. Me." This revelation reflects the complexities of navigating love amidst a backdrop of political intrigue and manipulation. As she unravels her own emotions and asserts her autonomy in the relationship, Katniss defies the Capitol's attempts to control their narrative solely for their own gain. Her journey with Peeta becomes a symbol of resilience, challenging the notion that her feelings can be manipulated or dictated by external forces. Through this, Katniss emerges as a powerful example of agency in matters of the heart, showcasing her ability to transcend societal expectations and assert her own identity and desires.

Overall, Katniss Everdeen's agency in rejecting authority in *The Hunger Games* novel is a central theme that drives the narrative forward. Her defiance, autonomy, and willingness to challenge oppressive systems make her a compelling protagonist who embodies the spirit of rebellion and resistance.

Female protagonist's agency in having the ability to negotiating

The protagonist's remarkable ability to strategize and manipulate circumstances to her advantage is a testament to her agency within the confines

of the brutal Hunger Games arena. Her adeptness in devising a plan to attract sponsors, thereby securing vital resources and support, showcases her ingenuity and resourcefulness in navigating the deadly competition. Moreover, her cunning extends beyond mere survival tactics; she demonstrates a shrewd aptitude for outsmarting the Gamemakers themselves. In a pivotal moment within the game, she engineers a clever scheme to deceive the very architects of the Games, subverting their authority and reshaping the rules in her favor. While the Gamemakers wield the power to dictate the parameters of the Games, the protagonist refuses to be bound by their arbitrary regulations. Despite the Gamemakers' initial decree allowing for two victors from the same district, their subsequent alteration to the rules, mandating only one survivor from District 12, fails to deter her resolve. Instead of succumbing to the pressure to eliminate her district partner, she defiantly rejects the notion of sacrificing another innocent life for her own gain. Her unwavering commitment to her principles and her refusal to compromise her integrity in the face of adversity exemplify her indomitable spirit and unwavering moral compass. The quoted passage encapsulates the protagonist's defiance and resilience as she navigates the treacherous landscape of the Hunger Games, emerging as a symbol of resistance against the oppressive forces that seek to dictate her fate.

Yes, they have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces. They'd have failed the Capitol. Might possibly even be executed, slowly and painfully while the cameras broadcast it to every screen in the country (Collins, 2008).

The quoted passage sheds light on the protagonist's astute strategy for navigating the treacherous realm of the Hunger Games and outwitting the formidable Gamemakers. Recognizing the sadistic pleasure the Capitol and its orchestrators derive from maintaining control and asserting dominance over the districts of Panem, she understands the stakes at play. With a keen understanding of the Gamemakers' vested interest in ensuring a victor emerges from the arena, she seizes upon their inherent desire for spectacle and manipulation to devise a daring plan. Rather than succumb to the pressure to eliminate her fellow tribute, she ingeniously opts for a bold and selfless alternative: staging her own demise in a manner that appears to result in the deaths of both tributes. By orchestrating this ruse, she not only subverts the Gamemakers' expectations but also strikes a poignant blow against the oppressive regime that seeks to dehumanize and exploit her and her fellow tributes. In demonstrating her capacity for both strategic cunning and selfless sacrifice, she emerges as a formidable agent of resistance, challenging the Capitol's authority and inspiring others to defy the oppressive forces that seek to oppress them. Her audacious act of defiance serves as a powerful reminder of the indomitable spirit and resilience of the human spirit, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. The gamemakers are successfully tricked by her in the following quotation, and they are declared the Hunger Games winners. It is evident from the following quotation:

I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta's hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a good-bye, and we begin counting. "One." Maybe I'm wrong. "Two." Maybe they don't care if we both die. "Three!" It's too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare. The frantic voice of Claudius Templesmith shouts above them. "Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark! I give you — the tributes of District Twelve!" (Collins, 2008).

The quoted passage vividly portrays the protagonist's resolute

determination to achieve victory in the harrowing arena of the Hunger Games. Faced with the daunting task of outmaneuvering the formidable Gamemakers, she employs a bold and calculated strategy, brandishing the deadly berries as a potent weapon to assert her defiance and ensure her survival. In a daring display of courage and resolve, she confronts the oppressive forces of the Capitol, refusing to submit to their control and manipulation. Instead, she seizes agency over her own destiny, embarking on a perilous gambit to protect both herself and her ally, Peeta. Driven by a fierce sense of self-preservation and a steadfast commitment to justice, she refuses to sacrifice either of their lives to appease the Capitol's insatiable appetite for bloodshed. With a blend of cunning intellect and resourcefulness, she orchestrates a daring escape from the clutches of death, emerging triumphant over both her adversaries and the oppressive regime they represent. Her actions serve as a testament to her multifaceted abilities, showcasing not only her prowess in hunting and archery but also her sharp wit and strategic acumen. By challenging the Capitol's authority and putting them to the ultimate test, she emerges victorious, proving that even in the face of overwhelming odds, the human spirit remains unyielding and indomitable. She puts the Capitol to the test by threatening to kill Peeta and herself. This passage demonstrates her ability to use agency to win the game.

The female protagonist, Katniss, successfully bargained with the Capitol even though in a tricky and risky way. Her success is proven in the quotation "The frantic voice of Claudius Templesmith shouts above them. "Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark! I give you — the tributes of District Twelve!" (Collins, 2008). This quote demonstrates her capacity for goal-oriented action. She has shown herself to be a courageous, strong, accountable, self-reliant, and determined individual. She demonstrates that an empowered woman may accomplish her goals with the series of activities she takes.

It is clear from the preceding quotation taken that the female lead character is exercising agency. She can act in accordance with her moral principles and her own voice. The protagonist first acts in a way that upsets the authority's established system. She breaks the law and engages in illicit hunting activities. She also deliberately engaged in cordial communication with the District Eleven delegate, thereby undermining the authority of the Capitol. She also shows the Capitol that she is not a game for their amusement by purposefully challenging them and giving them a slap in the face. She can also bargain to get what she wants. This ability is one of the factors that led her to win the Hunger Games.

Furthermore, negotiation and diplomacy play crucial roles in Katniss Everdeen's journey in *The Hunger Games* series. Here's a detailed look at her agency in negotiating within the novel: (a) alliance building; (b) playing to strengths; (c) negotiating survival.

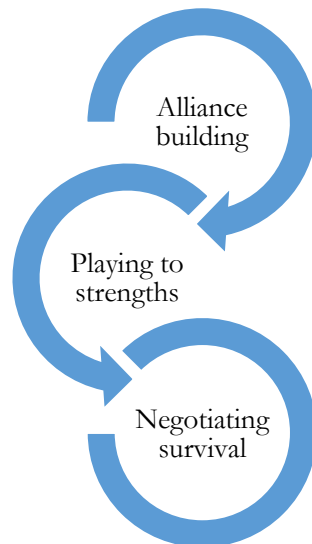


Fig 3. Agency in negotiating within the novel

Alliance building

Katniss demonstrates her negotiation skills early in the series by forming alliances strategically. During the Games, she allies with Rue, Thresh, and ultimately Peeta, leveraging these alliances for survival and strategic advantage. These negotiations showcase her ability to assess situations, form partnerships, and navigate complex relationships under extreme pressure.

The quote, "I can still hear the sound of the little girl from District 11 singing. Rue's favorite song. It's funny, but the melody is the one part I remember. I heard it once in the woods before the Games. But now I have a different reason to remember it," (Smith, 2022), encapsulates a pivotal moment in *The Hunger Games* where Katniss forms an alliance with Rue, showcasing her strategic prowess in leveraging partnerships for survival and advantage. This alliance is not merely a matter of convenience but a testament to Katniss's ability to assess situations and navigate complex relationships under extreme pressure. Through her bond with Rue, Katniss not only gains a valuable ally but also demonstrates her empathy and compassion, traits that set her apart in the cutthroat environment of the Games. This strategic formation of partnership highlights Katniss's resourcefulness and adaptability, essential qualities that enable her to thrive amidst the chaos and danger of the arena. Additionally, this alliance serves as a catalyst for Katniss's growth, prompting her to question the brutality of the Games and sparking her defiance against the Capitol's oppressive regime. Thus, this moment not only reflects Katniss's tactical acumen but also her evolving character and resilience in the face of adversity.

Playing to strengths

Katniss negotiates by playing to her strengths, particularly her archery skills and knowledge of survival tactics. In the arena, she uses these skills to gain favor with sponsors, manipulate the environment to her advantage, and negotiate alliances based on mutual benefit. Her ability to leverage her strengths highlights her resourcefulness and adaptability.

The quote, "I take a step back. And for the first time, I allow myself to think about the possibility that I might make it home, that I might get to live," effectively captures Katniss's strategic prowess and adaptability in the arena, where every decision can mean the difference between life and death (Collins, 2008). This moment of realization reflects her keen strategic thinking and negotiation tactics as she assesses her situation, taking stock of her strengths and weaknesses amidst the brutal environment of the Games. Katniss's ability to adapt and play to her strengths showcases not only her resourcefulness but also

her exceptional negotiation skills, which prove crucial in navigating the myriad challenges and threats posed by the Capitol's deadly spectacle. Her strategic mindset enables her to anticipate and counteract potential dangers, forming alliances when necessary and leveraging her unique abilities to gain advantages over her adversaries. This calculated approach not only contributes to her survival but also underscores her resilience and determination to outwit the Capitol's machinations at every turn. Overall, this pivotal moment highlights Katniss's remarkable ability to navigate complex situations with precision, making her a formidable contender in the deadly arena of the Hunger Games.

Negotiating survival

Throughout *The Hunger Games* series, Katniss Everdeen's agency is exemplified by her constant negotiation for survival, not just for herself but for her loved ones and allies. Her decisions, driven by the need to protect others, shape the narrative significantly. Katniss's ability to navigate alliances, political landscapes, and media representations influences key events, showcasing her skill in making difficult choices under challenging circumstances and highlighting her pivotal role in driving the story forward.

The quote, "I'm going to be the one in charge. I'm going to have to make the decisions. It's not just about surviving anymore," encapsulates Katniss's agency and resilience, which are central to her navigation of the Hunger Games' treacherous landscape. This realization marks a turning point in her journey, highlighting her ability to make difficult decisions for herself and her loved ones, underscoring her multifaceted negotiation for survival. Katniss's role in forming alliances, making strategic choices, and prioritizing others' safety extends beyond physical survival in the arena, significantly impacting the series' narrative. Her strategic thinking and clear assessment of situations enable her to navigate complex relationships with far-reaching consequences. Katniss's negotiation for survival encompasses challenging the Capitol's oppressive forces while protecting those she cares about. Her determination to make choices based on her values, rather than succumbing to external pressures, highlights her strength as a character. This pivotal role in shaping the narrative through agency and unwavering commitment to protect her loved ones defines Katniss's journey throughout the series, transforming her from a reluctant participant to a decisive leader in the fight against oppression.

CONCLUSION

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* explores female autonomy and agency in an oppressive society through protagonist Katniss Everdeen. Employing feminist theory and content analysis, this study examines Katniss's struggles, strategies, and identity assertion within a tyrannical regime. It investigates her decision-making, navigation of power dynamics, and challenges to societal norms, highlighting her resilience and commitment to justice. Katniss's character development, relationships, and narrative trajectory offer insights into agency within a dystopian context, contributing to discussions on gender dynamics, power structures, and resistance. The analysis reveals Katniss's strengths, vulnerabilities, and strategies for navigating complex political and social landscapes, showcasing the multifaceted nature of agency under systemic oppression. Ultimately, this study highlights the enduring relevance of *The Hunger Games* as a narrative that inspires conversations about female empowerment and serves as a catalyst for critical inquiries into gender dynamics and power relations within fictional and real-world contexts. It encourages researchers to consider alternative lenses, challenge assumptions,

and contribute to ongoing discussions about gender equality, social justice, and the power of storytelling to inspire change.

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