Embracing Me: A Storybook Tackling the Impacts of Social Media's Unrealistic Beauty Standards on Female Adolescents and Young Adults

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Abstract

In our current generation, society and social media have defined 'perfection' and 'beauty' as having slim bodies, porcelain skin, and flawless faces. In addition, different types of beauty standards become widespread on social media, and thus being bombarded with these ideals has been linked to body dissatisfaction, resulting to a negative mental health, and eating habits among female adolescents and young adults. As social media constantly set trends and influence people on their perceptions regarding bodies and appearances, my project aims to raise awareness about these unrealistic beauty standards. I plan to create a printed storybook that vividly portrays the challenges faced by females striving to meet these unrealistic ideals. Through this storybook, females who have the same struggles may feel empowered and may become encouraged to speak up about their experiences. In gathering the data, I conducted an interview with female adolescents and young adults based on their awareness and experiences on having a negative body image, and a few parents with adolescent children to be able to understand their insights and observations. Furthermore, the paper will also discuss the storyline, color schemes and art style utilized for this output.

Keywords: Beauty standards, social media, storybook, body dissatisfaction, young females

Introduction

Adolescence is the phase where maturation, physical and psychological development happen. Given all these sudden changes occurring at the same time, younger females may struggle and start to feel pressured, making them become more self-conscious. Furthermore, it makes it inevitable for women to compare themselves to their peers, celebrities, and models at this point of time, especially when they see it in social media every day.

Factors such as internalization of thin appearance, social comparison, and exposure on social media's beauty standards cause younger females to be more invested with their looks and pressure them to strive in achieving the thin-body ideals (Vuong et al., 2021).

Social media has an impact on influencing and popularizing these beauty ideals, which can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction with one's body and decreased self-confidence among adolescent girls and young adults who consume different social media platforms on a daily basis.

Unrealistic beauty standards have been setting ideal bodies and dictating women on what they should look like to be accepted by society. The idea of beauty has changed due to various influences, including social, cultural, and historical events. These ideas are continuously evolving and being adapted to modern perspectives and beliefs from ancient times to modern times (Bhatti, 2023). Several issues that women are still facing these days are unrealistic expectations from society, with an emphasis on body image and beauty standards set by social media.

In these modern times, the definition of a "perfect body" is having a slim figure, flat stomach, smooth and silky skin, perfect jawline, and sharp nose. In return, women undergo a series of negative self-reflections that make it even more difficult to accept their bodies as they face criticism and harassment based solely on their physical appearance for not meeting the standard created by society and social media. According to Madariaga (2019), this can result in low self-esteem and loss of confidence.

Social media provides convenience in accessing information and connectivity as it keeps users in contact with their peers, friends, family, and distant relatives. Nonetheless, social media has also its negative effects, and one of it is the representation of women with idealized body image. According to Kemp (2023), 41.1% of women across the globe are using social media platforms as of January 2023. One of the most popular platforms used among female adolescents is Instagram (Pedalino & Camerini, 2022).

This platform has negatively affected female's body image and self-esteem, as it constantly portrays images and videos of women, mostly influencers and celebrities, with slim figures and flawless faces as the socially accepted definition of attractive and perfection. Thus, negative impacts of social media and beauty ideals may arise and result in issues such as body dysmorphia, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Meshi & Ellithorpe, 2021).

I will use the theory of Tripartite Influence Model in this study, which serves as the foundation of my topic. Moreover, this theory explores that media, particularly social media, is one of the most influences that are said to affect the body image of young females, resulting in body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. In addition, with the assistance of this theory, it gives insights for better understanding of the concept and awareness.

For this reason, I chose this concept knowing and understanding that social media's beauty standards are immensely concerning and affecting not just how we view our bodies, but also our mental health. In addition, this is an issue that deserves more recognition and awareness as people tend to forget that bodies can also look differently, and we should not compare ourselves to how other people want to present themselves.

As someone who also struggled with negative body image during adolescence, I personally experienced being self-conscious, dissatisfied, and insecure with my body. In spite of that, one person, my friend, made me change my perception of body image. I realized that every flaw and imperfection I have in my body is normal and it is what makes me unique. In fact, these flaws, and imperfections that we have do not make us less beautiful, thus we should not let social media or anyone define who we truly are and learn to love our bodies just the way they are.

As an artist, I was inspired to help people who are in need of comfort and better understanding when it comes to their bodies. Therefore, I chose storybook as my medium because I believe that this is an effective way to redirect most of the younger females' perception of beauty and for them to learn to love and embrace their uniqueness. Through a creative storybook, the challenges faced by female adolescents and young adults about beauty ideals will be presented to further educate and help raise awareness about the issues that we, females, face every day.

The story correlates with the concept as it revolves around the issues of social media's unrealistic beauty standards. As mentioned, I intend to raise awareness by sharing the experiences of someone who has a negative body image striving to attain these standards. Additionally, speaking about these standards and its effects in the form of books can engrave the topic to the people and at the same time engage the audience because of its visual output.

The storybook entitled "Embracing Me" is about accepting our true selves by loving and appreciating every inch of our flaws. To elaborate, the output will be drawn digitally and will be produced as a printed material, considering that physical books can be a break from social media, something that the audiences can come back to without relying on technology, and by having an own copy, the audiences will have a sense of ownership.

In line with this, the output's dimensions will be 8.5 inches length and 8.5 inches width, supported by a hardbound cover. In addition, a total of 67 pages (34 leaves) will be printed on a matte paper with 120 GSM. Hence, announcements, teasers, and quotes regarding body positivity will be posted on my social media, like Instagram or Facebook, as my way to promote my project to reach a wider audience and to get their attention and interest.
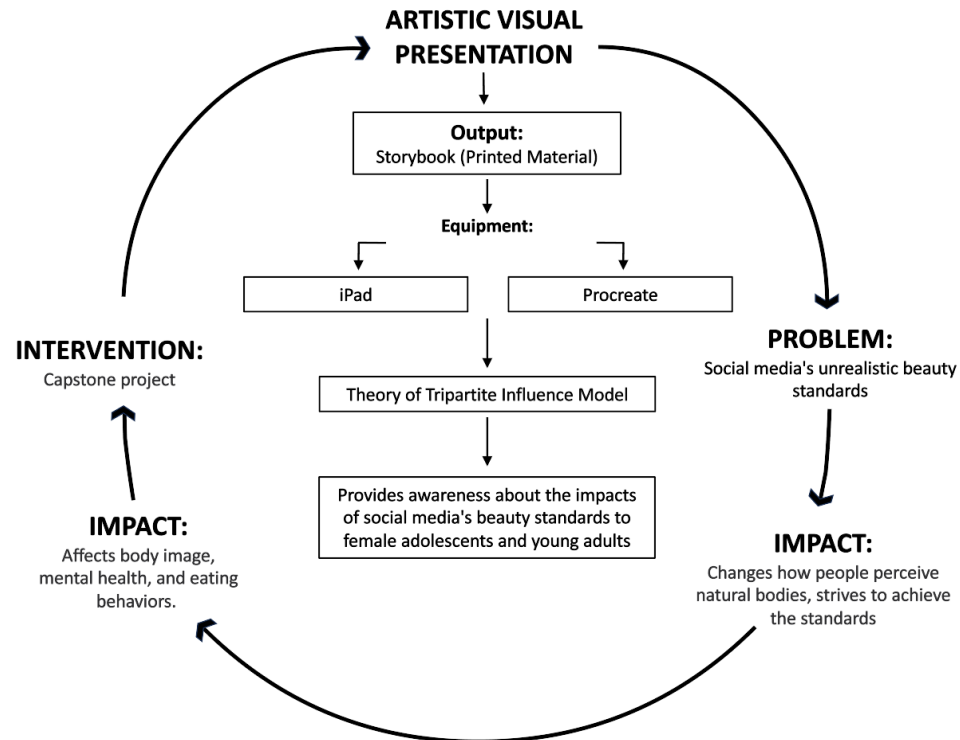
Figure 1 *Framework of the Visual Representation of Overall Concept and Methods of Thesis Project: Storybook*

The creative framework I utilized highlights the components of concepts and methods regarding my project. This section provides a visual representation of issues related to social media's beauty standards, their impacts, the project's output, resources, target audience, theory, purpose, and solution.

I produced this project because this is based on first-hand experience. Considering that I was also exposed to social media and its beauty standards, there were numerous times that I have been comparing myself to others. As result, I became anxious and insecure about my physical appearance due to low self-esteem. Moreover, I find this concept compelling to raise awareness because I realized that I am not the only one struggling with negative body image.

After collecting reliable sources from various studies on how social media's beauty standards affect individuals, with the assistance of Tripartite Influence Model Theory, I discerned that the constant portrayal of beauty ideals negatively impacts how people perceive their bodies and strive for unrealistic standards. In addition, these standards exert pressure on individuals to conform to these ideals.

Mahon and Hevey (2021) stated that by using this model, it proposes that the social media has an impact on how people, especially female adolescents, and young adults, perceive their bodies by conveying messages that highlight the value of looks and putting pressure on people to achieve unattainable body ideals. The internalization of thin standards and appearance comparisons with idealized bodies are two mediating

mechanisms that are believed to cause body dissatisfaction, leading to eating disorders and psychological distress.

Moreover, the thesis output process will be done using an iPad and laptop. Procreate is the software that I will be using in illustrating the scenes of my story, while Adobe InDesign is for compiling and laying out the panels before printing.

The **data gathering method** used in this research is qualitative interview. To further discuss the method, the interviews will be conducted with respondents' consent, and this will be held via Google Meet depending on the availability of the interviewees. The gathered data, particularly personal information, will remain anonymous and confidential. The participants would be 10 female adolescents to young adults from ages 14 – 25 years old, and 5 parents with female adolescent children from Pasay City.

Interview questions will focus on their background, awareness, and experiences on how social media's unrealistic beauty standards affect their body image, how they feel about it and their perception regarding natural bodies and body ideals. Additionally, parents will also be interviewed to understand their insights, observations, and how they will handle their children if they have the same problem as other females. The data collected from the interview will only be utilized for the thesis project.

The following are the questions that will be asked to the participants during interview:

1. What age did you start using social media?
2. What are the social media platforms you are using?
3. Have you encountered being bombarded by these unrealistic beauty ideals?
4. Were there times you compared your appearance to others, such as peers, celebrities, models, or influencers on social media?
5. What effects do these beauty ideals have on your body image?
6. Has social media's beauty standards changed your perceptions about natural bodies and body ideals?

Synthesis

Based on the initial information gathered, the participants started using social media at an early age of 8 to 12 years old. Majority of the females experienced exposure to unrealistic beauty standards on social media, specifically on Facebook and Instagram, because of the widespread contents and trends nowadays. It was stated that they compare their appearances to their peers and to the celebrities that they follow, which only led to feelings of insecurity and intense pressure to fit in with the unrealistic beauty standards. Furthermore, 5 out of 7 females have negatively affected their body image by these standards, leading to body dissatisfaction and unhealthy eating habits. Meanwhile, the other 2 females were positively affected by the standards, making them feel confident about their bodies and giving them inspiration. Additionally, 4 out of 7 females responded that social media's beauty standards have changed their perceptions due to edited or filtered images and cosmetic surgeries. The remaining 3 females believed that it depends on experiences and having your own perceptions when it comes to bodies. Therefore, we can conclude that a greater number of females can still be affected by social media's unrealistic beauty standards even though there are positive impacts about it.

The **research design** of the thesis output is a colorful modern cartoon-like style storybook, wherein various sets of color schemes were utilized. Bright warm colors were used to symbolize warmth, joy, love, and comfort to evoke feelings of optimism and happiness; dark yellowish palette was used to signify insecurity; while dark cool tones were used to represent coldness, disengagement, distress, and timidity to evoke feeling of sadness. These color palettes are in relation to psychology which highlights the character's emotions throughout the story. In terms of textures, grain overlay was applied to each illustration to add visual interest, depth to the objects, dimension, and give emotions. Moreover, this will bring more life and enhance the illustrations' appearance.

The **target audience** of my output are female adolescents and young adults aged 14 years to 25 years old. The output mainly targets females who are currently on their adolescence, but this can also be used by all genders and people with ages 25 and above as the sole purpose of this output is to raise awareness and comfort people who are suffering from negative body image.

As for the **design process**, I started by developing the plot and character awareness chart first. After that, I planned the elements and researched on how my approach would be. After being inspired by other artists, I practiced by sketching various art styles and tested out the color palettes that I would be using for the project. With this art study, I was able to establish my approach as it helped me determine the most suitable style for my storybook in terms of art direction. In designing the output, the storybook utilized Joseph Canlas' modern cartoon art style and Sarah Gonzales' coloring techniques by making it colorful and interesting to read. As shown in Figure 2, I began designing the characters according to their personalities. While doing so, I searched for references regarding perspectives, subject placements, and background designs. After consultations and revision, the outlining, coloring, and rendering will proceed in the production phase.
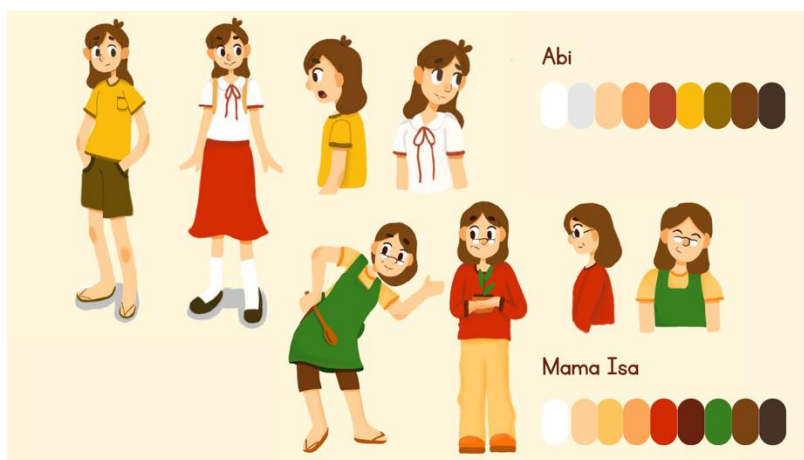

Figure 2 *Character Design*

To further discuss the character design, the main character's indoor clothes depict how insecure she is with her body and how conscious and simply she dresses herself. She always chooses t-shirts instead of 'sando' to hide her armpits. The darker shade of yellow symbolizes insecurity. Moreover, I designed the uniform as simple as possible; red

represents confidence encouraging everyone to be confident in their own ways, for Mama Isa, red symbolizes love and green is for hope. The overall appearance of the characters is inspired by their traits.
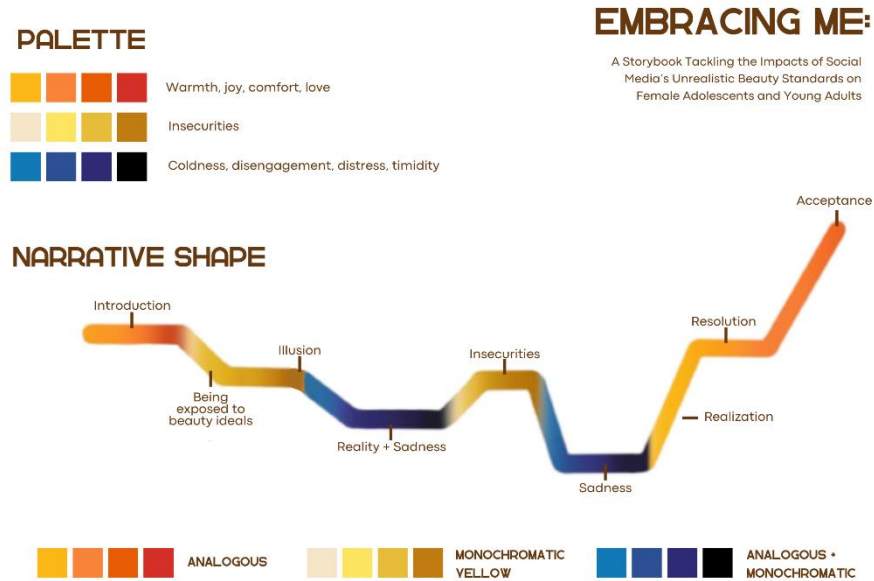

Figure 3 *Color Theme and Narrative Shape*

As shown in Figure 3, the color scheme and narrative shape of my story were identified after analyzing the plot. These elements are vital in depicting the mood for each part of the story. Furthermore, the plot will revolve around the struggles of the main character as she faces her everyday life with a negative body image brought about by the exposure to social media's beauty standards. The story itself is comparable to a roller coaster ride, because the use of color shifting patterns will be seen depending on what the protagonist is feeling.

Colors Progression

Figure 4 *Color palette for warmth and normal days*

Furthermore, the protagonist will have a warm analogous color in the introduction phase that shows how the story will begin on a typical warm day before encountering contents regarding body standards on social media. Another set of warm tones will be seen in the end, as the protagonist achieves her realization, resolution, and acceptance stage.

Figure 5 *Color palette for insecurity phase*

As the story progresses, there will be changes in terms of colors after she gets exposed to social media. With this, the monochromatic yellow color will symbolize her insecurity. Moreover, this is the stage where beauty ideals will affect her confidence and self-doubts, resulting in pressuring her to attain these ideals. The illusion is part of this phase, where different types of standards will be chasing her as a sign of thin internalization while feeling insecure.

Figure 6 *Color Palette for downhill days*

Cool tones will take over after the monochromatic yellow color, symbolizing that having a poor body image and low self-esteem will lead to distress and will impact mental health. As a result, this will end in dissatisfaction towards her body and poor eating habits.
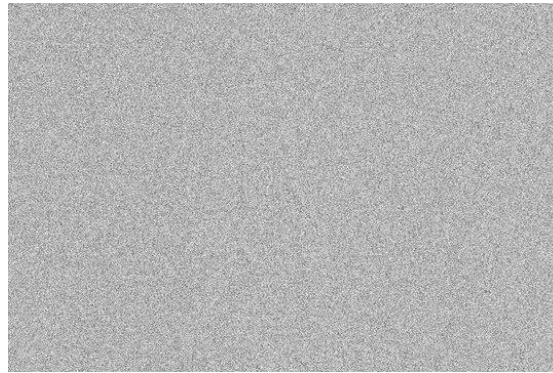
Textures and Techniques

Figure 7 *Grain texture overlay*

As shown in Figure 7, I will be applying a grain texture overlay for this output to create and enhance the complexity, visuals, and a sense of depth and dimensions to the illustrations. The texture overlay will be set only to 3% in order to achieve the calmness and softness look of the artwork, giving the viewers a feeling and emotional connection.

Logline

Abi is a 15-year-old girl who struggles with her body image as she strives to attain the unrealistic beauty standards that are set by social media.

Synopsis

This will portray the story of Abi, a 9th grade student, known for her bright and warm personality. Unfortunately, everything changes after she gets exposed to social media. Throughout the story, she will be seen struggling with her body image the more she gets exposed to social media's beauty standards, which will then lead to insecurities and anxiety

about her appearance. The body ideals will slowly get into her head and consume her. As she strives to attain them, it will only make her feel dissatisfied and sad with her own body. As the story goes on, Abi will feel a lack of contentment, that is why she tries things such as wearing a bra twice her size to enlarge her chest, applying make-up to hide her acne and enhance her facial appearance, and losing weight in an unhealthy way. Eventually, as she starts noticing her body imperfections – acne, body shape, body hair, and skin discoloration, she will feel dissatisfaction while seeing how her body is built differently from others.

However, a turning point will be encountered as she starts a discussion with her mother who has become very worried of her behavioral changes and eating habits. Abi will realize and try to do new things like taking a break from social media by picking a new hobby such as reading books during her leisure time, volunteering at their barangay and surrounding herself with positive people to keep herself busy from using social media. Moreover, she also starts to focus on herself by analyzing the things she loves about herself. Soon enough, after the practices of refraining herself from getting exposed again to beauty ideals, Abi finally learns how to love and accept herself, embracing herself and realizing that flaws and imperfections that she has do not make her less beautiful.

Pre-Production Stage

During the pre-production stage, I developed the storyline first by assessing the flow of my story and how I wanted the issues and awareness of the chosen topic to be addressed, followed by the character study by determining the personality, traits, desires, difficulties, and life path of my character. In planning the design of the overall visual of my project, I have researched for my Review of Related Works (RRW) and applied it to my overall output including color techniques, and textures.

Furthermore, a Gantt chart was created to use my time efficiently in creating the output and tracking the targeted dates according to the timeline given by the instructor. Moreover, a budget table was created to oversee and further understand the materials and their anticipated cost. Additionally, this was used to determine the minimum monetary requirements to produce this output.
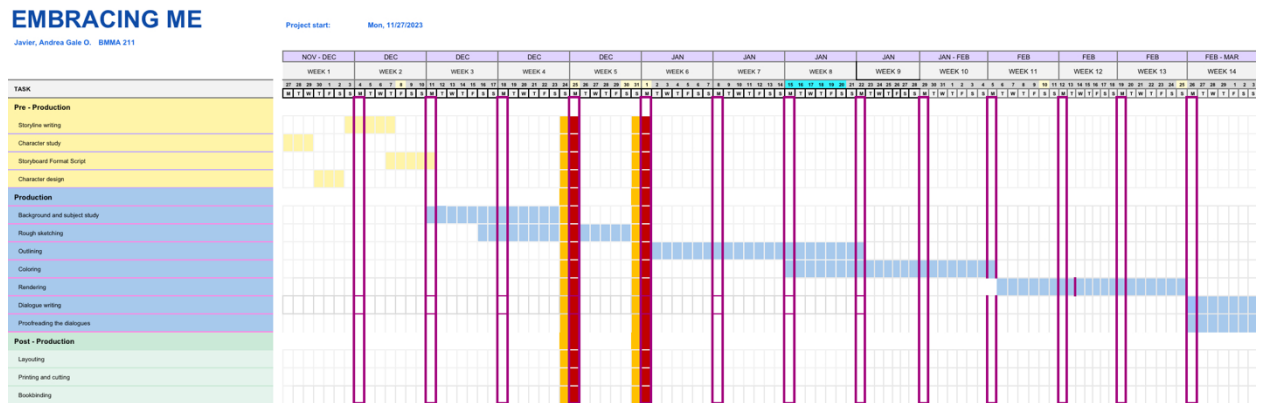

Table 1 *Gantt Chart*

ITEM	UNIT COST	QUANTITY		AMOUNT
Laptop	30,000	1		30,000
Huion H1060P (Pen Tablet)	1,849	1		1,849
Transportation	UNIT COST	QUANTITY	DAYS	AMOUNT
• Tricycle	10	2 Tricycles	1 Day	20
• Jeep	12	4 Jeeps	1 Day	48
		Total (Transportation)		68
		TOTAL (PRE-PRODUCTION)		**31,917**

ITEM	UNIT COST	QUANTITY / DAYS		AMOUNT
iPad 9th Generation	16,800	1		16,800
iPad Screen Protector	129	1		129
Goojodoq (Stylus)	598	1		598
Stylus Nib Tip	49	3		147
Procreate	699	1		699
Transportation	UNIT COST	QUANTITY	DAYS	AMOUNT
• Tricycle	10	2 Tricycles	2 Days	40
• Jeep	12	4 Jeeps	2 Days	96
		Total (Transportation)		136
		TOTAL (PRODUCTION)		**18,509**

ITEM / SERVICE	UNIT COST	QUANTITY / DAYS		AMOUNT
Adobe InDesign	1,046 *per month*	1	30 Days	1,046
Test Prints (Colored)	17	3		51
Printing				
• 8.5x8.5 inches • Back-to-back • Colored • 120 GSM • Matte	35 Php per paper	34 leaves		1,190
Bookbinding				
Cover • Hardbound • Matte • Laminated	250	1		250
Transportation	UNIT COST	QUANTITY	DAYS	AMOUNT
• Tricycle	10	2 Tricycles	2 Days	40
• Jeep	12	6 Jeeps	2 Days	144
		Total (Transportation)		184
		TOTAL (POST-PRODUCTION)		**2,721**
	GRAND TOTAL (PREPROD + PROD + POSTPROD)			**53,147**

Table 2 *Budget Breakdown*

Production Stage

The production stage mainly focuses on planning and rough sketching of the illustrations. As shown in Figures 8 to 12, I created a storyboard to organize the scenes to have a smooth flow of telling the story. Consultations with the adviser will be done first to see if there are revisions to be made before proceeding to clean sketching and outlining of each panel. After studying the proper executions of colors along with light and shadows, this will all be applied to the illustrations including the textures.
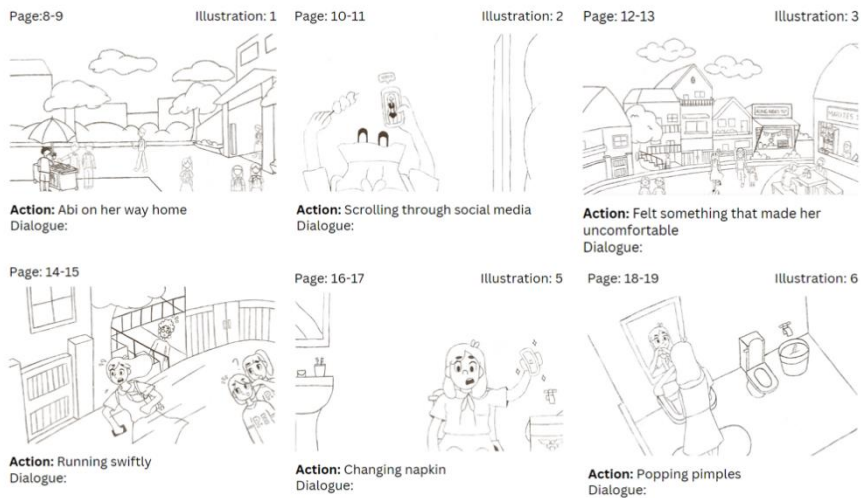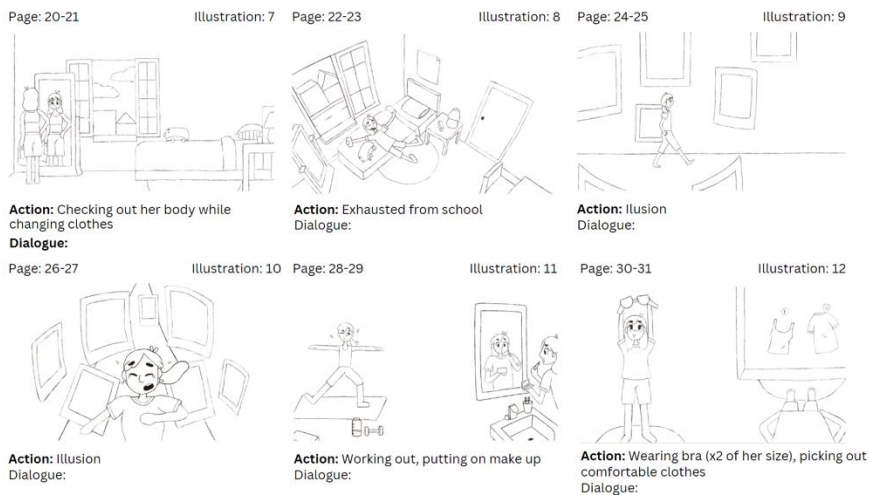
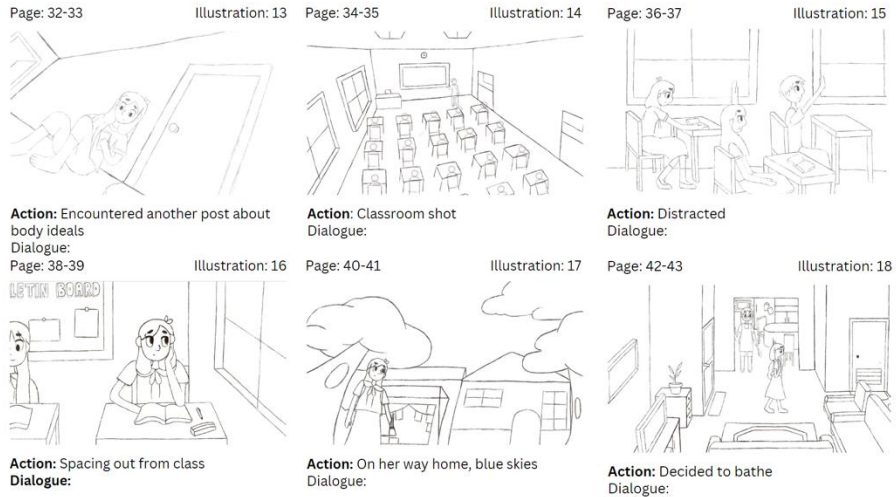**Figure 8** *Storyboard Page 1*

Figure 9 *Storyboard Page 2*

Page: 32-33 Illustration: 13 Page: 34-35 Illustration: 14 Page: 36-37 Illustration: 15

Action: Encountered another post about body ideals
Dialogue:

Action: Classroom shot
Dialogue:

Action: Distracted
Dialogue:

Page: 38-39 Illustration: 16 Page: 40-41 Illustration: 17 Page: 42-43 Illustration: 18

Action: Spacing out from class
Dialogue:

Action: On her way home, blue skies
Dialogue:

Action: Decided to bathe
Dialogue:

Figure 10 *Storyboard Page 3*

Page: 44-45 Illustration: 19 Page: 46-47 Illustration: 20 Page: 48-49 Illustration: 21

Action: Scrubbing her armpits intensely
Dialogue:

Action: Staring, feeling insecure
Dialogue:

Action: Eating, no appetite
Dialogue: Dinner

Page: 50-51 Illustration: 22 Page: 52-53 Illustration: 23 Page: 54-55 Illustration: 24

Action: Confrontation
Dialogue:

Action: Mama Isa checking on Abi
Dialogue:

Action: Comforting, heart to heart talk
Dialogue:

Figure 11 *Storyboard Page 4*

Page: 56-57   Illustration: 25

Action: Crying till she falls asleep, had realizations
Dialogue:

Page: 58-59   Illustration: 26

Action: Went on volunteering to keep herself busy, surrounded herself with positive people
Dialogue:

Page: 60-61   Illustration: 27

Action: Social media detox, reading a book
Dialogue:

Page: 62-63   Illustration: 28

Action: Focus on herself more
Dialogue:

Page: 64-65   Illustration: 29

Action: Acceptance & loving herself
Dialogue:

Figure 12 *Storyboard Page 5*

BEDROOM

KITCHEN

BATHROOM

LIVING ROOM
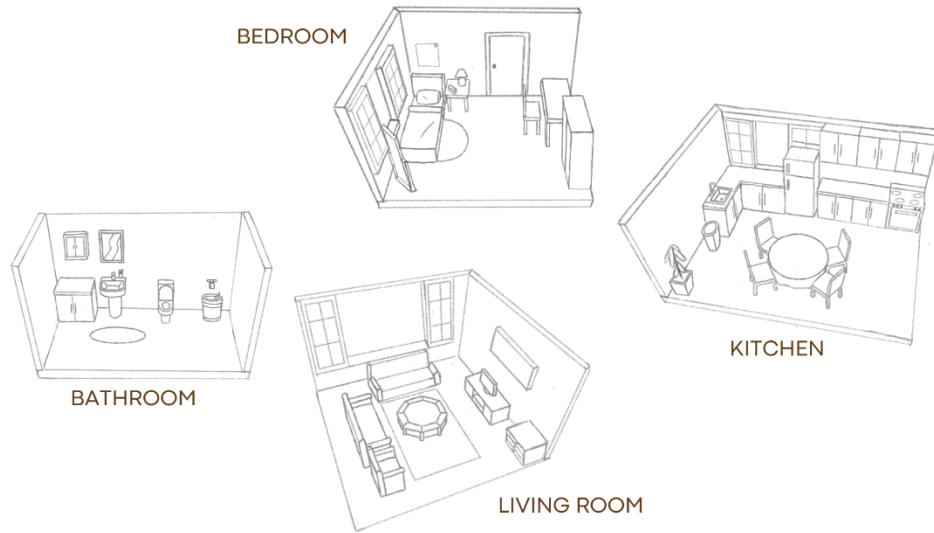
Figure 13 *Environmental Design*

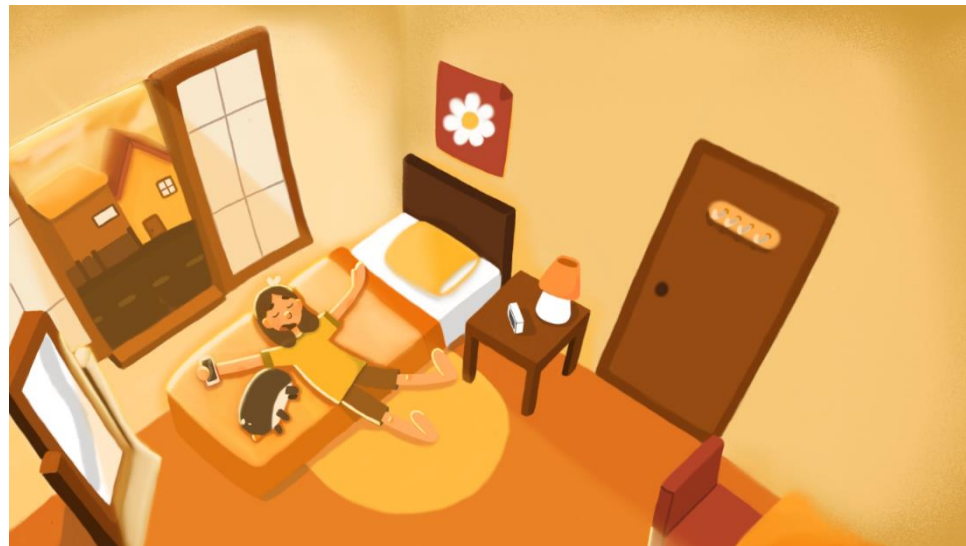**Figure 14** *Rendered Illustration 1 with Warm Palette*

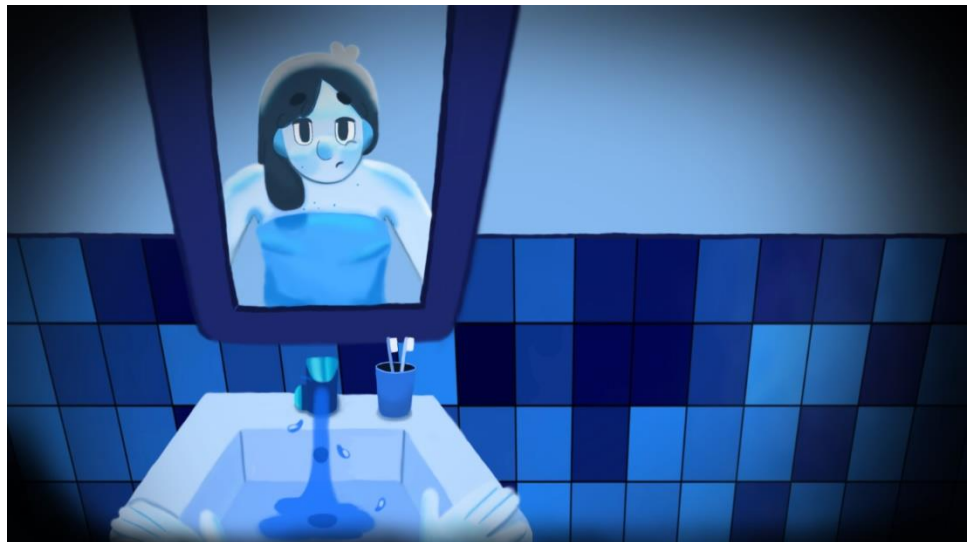**Figure 15** *Rendered Illustration 2 with Insecurity Palette*

Figure 16 *Rendered Illustration 3 with Cool Palette*

Post-Production Stage

For the post-production of my output, illustrations will be compiled and arranged one-by-one according to the storyline. The layout editing of the scenes per page will start after the consultation and revision. After finalizing everything, and if there are no longer adjustments to be made, the actual printing will proceed. The storybook will be exhibited at Asia Pacific College during the School of Multimedia Arts (SOMA) week once it gets approved by the instructors. In addition, the output will be promoted as well on social media to accommodate a larger group of audience.
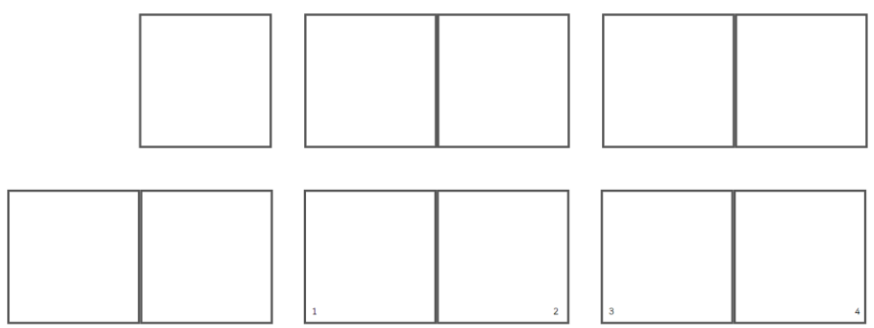

Figure 17 *Storybook Layout*

Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviews existing literature and articles regarding body image, social media usage, unrealistic beauty standards, body dissatisfaction among young females, medium and approach for further understanding of the study and its relevance in society.

Body Image

According to Burychka et al. (2021), body image is people's positive and negative impressions, ideas, behaviors, and attitudes towards their bodies and appearance. The development process of a person's body image is constantly changing and influenced not only by their physical or psychological characteristics, but also by their socio-cultural environment such as the cultural ideal of beauty and the pressure set by the media to meet this ideal.

The beauty of the human body has been given importance by people throughout history. An individual's perception of their own body may be affected according to their society, exposure to social media, and popular culture. Brazier (2023) states that when a person has a positive body image, it is associated with acceptance, and they are more satisfied with their appearance. However, when someone has a negative body image, they are dissatisfied, therefore they strive to be different.

The perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral characteristics of body image have been significantly influenced by social media, as it encourages them to be involved in beauty trends to fit in and be accepted by society. In addition, it is widely known that social media has brought people together on a worldwide scale, but it has also been used to establish standards of appearance. This has been shown to have an impact on people's self-esteem in relation to body image, body modification, and how they see themselves in society (Henriques & Patnaik, 2020).

Social Media

As stated by Bengtsson and Johansson (2022), social media is defined as online applications and websites where it enables users to interact with others, share opinions and interests, and search for information. With an estimation of 3 billion consumers worldwide, social media has been a part of every individual's life, especially adolescents, as they are the avid and most active users of social media nowadays (Schonning et al., 2020).

Social media use is becoming more relevant and popular to adolescents these days. In addition, one of the most used image-based social media platforms is Instagram, given that it encourages teenagers to post images, interact with others by commenting, as well as like posts of one another (Steinsbekk et al., 2021). According to Koehler and Parrell (2020), the engagement of adolescents with social media correlates to their mental health since exposure to it may result in a high level of social isolation, depression, and anxiety.

The literature also highlights the negative consequences. In addition, this includes exposure to unrealistic body ideals, and social comparison on these platforms can lead to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Jiotsa et al., 2020). Moreover, in a similar study by Fioravanti et al. (2022), the continuous exposure to the standards developed by social media platforms can often lead to female adolescents and young women comparing themselves with others, as well as feeling dissatisfied with their own appearance.

Unrealistic Beauty Standards

According to Kaur et al. (2023), beauty standards are the societal pressures and standards imposed on physical appearance and beliefs about beauty. The definition of beauty and perfection is now based on how slim the bodies are and how perfect the face proportion is. Adolescent girls and young adults' perception of beauty heavily relies on the ideal beauty standards created by social media platforms. Moreover, based on a study by Kaziga et al. (2021), females may feel immense pressure because of the societal standards on beauty. This can greatly affect how they view their bodies, including their self-esteem, especially when they fail to meet the beauty norms of society.

The constant portrayal of unattainable beauty standards causes adolescent girls to compare themselves to these ideals, negatively affecting their self-worth and leading to body image issues, such as sense of dissatisfaction towards their bodies, lower self-esteem, and mental health issues like depression and anxiety. As stated by Termizi and Herwan (2021), young female adults concurred that the representation of social media's beauty ideals have caused them to compare themselves to others which had increased their dissatisfaction about their appearance and made them feel uncomfortable with their looks due to the ideals portrayed in different social media platforms. As a result, these females who attempt to change their looks to resemble the characters seen on social media may end up with eating disorders.

Thus, these negative behaviors may result in eating disorders, excessive exercise, and cosmetic surgeries. In a similar study, Avci & Akliman (2018) said that females, despite having a normal weight, still strive to lose weight to fit the standard that being a beautiful woman in the society is equivalent to having skinny and slim body. As social media continues to develop and create beauty standards, it also influences people's self-esteem, as well as their susceptibility for depression and anxiety due to body dissatisfactions (Yamout et al., 2019).

Storybook as a Medium

Storybooks are composed of design elements and formats that increase the reader's interest and stimulate their senses, thus becoming an aid to learn effectively. According to Wei & Ma (2020), storybooks are designed for adolescents because they accommodate their nature and possess attributes that are relevant to the development of language, cognitive engagement, creative thinking, and enjoyment.

A great way for youngsters to learn new languages, ideas, and principles is through storybooks. One of the goals of a picture book is to educate, interact, and build generalizable knowledge for adolescents to learn and transfer information outside of storybooks to everyday situations. Learning with visual features is also beneficial because illustrations are correlated with languages and it effectively conveys information to its readers (Strouse et al., 2018).

The literature highlights that books have been a part of people's everyday lives and that both physical books and e-books have advantages and disadvantages. However, most people still prefer to read physical books over e-books since the pages can be turned easily

and the book itself does not require the use of batteries to be functional. Furthermore, physical books are preferred more than e-books because the prevalence of eye strain is lessened even when reading for extended periods of time (Jain, 2020).

As stated by Sapsaglam et al. (2020), e-books are prone to causing eye fatigue, difficulty in reading, and addiction to screens. The literature also highlights that picture books for storytelling are also more effective in terms of recall compared to using e-books due to drawbacks. Additionally, reading storybooks has a positive impact when it comes to abilities, memory retention, and overall learning.

Color Approach

According to Chang et al. (2018), colors play a huge role in storybooks, and for people, it is the most important visual experience as they evoke different emotions and have a greater ability to capture attentions which increases the readers' interest and focus on reading. In addition, colors affect the readers' behavior, cognitive skills, and performance. It has also been found that warm colors such as red, orange, and yellow are arousing, exciting, interesting, and lively, thus enhancing the learning of readers. Meanwhile, black is associated with worry and fear. On the other hand, blue represents both positive and negative emotions such as calmness, sadness, depression, and loneliness which can also give readers certain feelings (West & Silberman, 2019).

The element of color can establish mood, provide hints about the characters' emotional states, highlight certain objects that will draw attention to illustrations, and create a signal between objects and characters. In terms of color shifts, they are significant and utilized in the development of the character and settings of the story since they indicate twists in events and convey the main point of the story without using words. Additionally, color is one of the important elements that illustrators employ in telling a story aside from perspectives, frames, and patterns. Furthermore, the researchers expound the importance of colors and how children have strong emotional connections with colors that are crucial in reading and learning (Martinez et al., 2020).

A study by Purbasari (2021) showed that aside from aesthetics, color is the most efficient way to convey meaning and messages in a nonverbal communication because it can influence the mind and eyes of a person. Joyful and sad messages can be delivered instantly by using appropriate colors at the right moment and place in a scene. Moreover, color serves as an effective tool for immediately determining and clarifying complex information. As stated by Maule et al. (2023), colors are incredibly associative due to their strong emotional correlations, and it helps us discern between objects with identical shapes, segment them visually from their surroundings, and identify visual sceneries.

Review of Related Works

This chapter discusses the related works and techniques in terms of inspiration of the story, color scheme, art style, medium, and texture that I will use based on how I envision the visual appearance of my creative output for this study.

Color Scheme

Figure 18 *Maribel's Year (2023)*

Maribel's Year is an evocative lyrical picture book written by Michelle Sterling and illustrated by Sarah Gonzales. The book tackles the special connection between a father and daughter, and the different cultures of Filipinos and Americans. Throughout the illustrations, Gonzales used warm and cool tones to represent the feelings of love, warmth, nostalgia, cold, and sadness.

With this reference, the color techniques I will use for my creative output are warm colors for my protagonist's joyful moments and cool tones for her cold and downhearted scenes. Further, I want to give my audience a warm and comforting feeling as this output will serve as their friend to lean on.

Cartoon Style

Figure 19 *My Pinsans & Me: Amara's Talent Show (2022)*

Written by Monica Canlas-Tuy and Eric Tuy, My Pinsans & Me: Amara's Talent Show is a children's book about the reunion of an extended Filipino family. It portrays teamwork and on a deeper side, embracing one another's uniqueness. The illustrator, Joseph Canlas, used modern cartoon art style featuring semi-thick outlines, geometric shapes, and vibrant colors to attract the audience and deliver its creativity to them. As for

my creative output, I will use a similar art style to deliver my work well. In this output, I will incorporate my cartoonish style in the illustrations that I will make for my storybook.

Medium

Figure 20 *Katie Can Change the World (2014)*

Katie Can Change the World, written by Jennifer Dewing, is a storybook about spreading kindness and empowering children to have confidence in their abilities. In line with this, I also chose "storybook" as my medium to convey the messages that I want my readers to understand through illustrations and texts. This creative output will provide visual storytelling incorporated with eye-catching hues, expressive characters, and relatable settings.
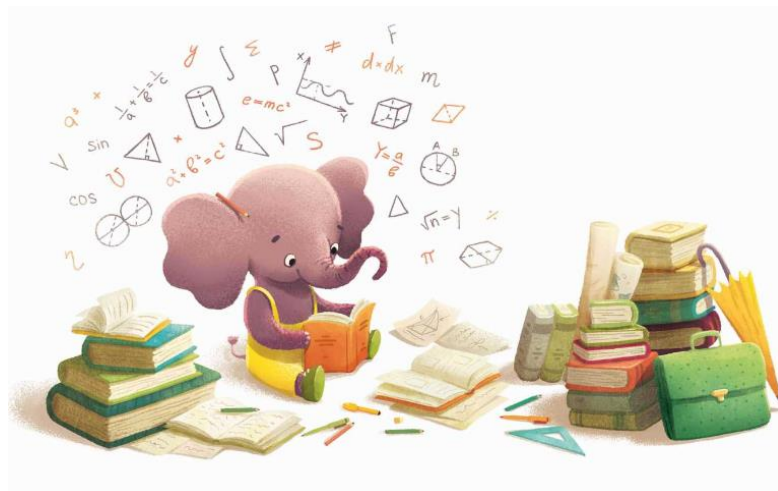
Texture

Figure 21 *BARNABE (2016)*

BARNABE is a children's book illustrated by Alena Tkach; this portrays the story of a young elephant who discovers the value of education. Moreover, the illustrator used a grain texture in her work to aid in giving the objects depth and in highlighting the dimensions and personality. In my storybook, the texture will be slightly similar to BARNABE. I also plan to use a grain texture to give my illustrations visual interest and evoke emotions.

Inspiration

Figure 22 *Love Your Body (2020)*

Written by Jessica Sanders, Love Your Body is a book that promotes the idea of self-love and self-care. It encourages its readers to value their uniqueness while celebrating their bodies and building resilience. The book delivers a beautiful message that everyone is perfectly flawed, and that freedom is achieved by accepting and loving our bodies with confidence.

My creative output is highly inspired by this book in terms of empowering body positivity and encouraging its readers to love and embrace their bodies regardless of the appearance. I opted to make a storybook relatable and empowering to serve as a reminder that no one needs to feel pressured to attain the unrealistic standards set by society because those standards are just a product of society's ideals. Furthermore, I want to inspire them to become confident and brave at heart in facing these issues that have been affecting their body image, embrace their flaws, and to love and appreciate their bodies wholeheartedly.

Figure 23 *WANNABE (2020)*

WANNABE is an empowering K-pop song performed by a South Korean girl group called ITZY. This song encourages people to be confident, embrace their true selves, normalize the idea of being different, and defy societal expectations. Through its meaningful and powerful lyrics, the song tells us that we should not let others dictate what we should do and how we should view ourselves.

Moreover, the song matches with my story since numerous people had also experienced the struggle against societal expectations. As a result, they faced immense pressure by following the standards. In my storybook, I will be emphasizing the importance of self-love, thus making it serve as an inspiration for the readers to accept themselves wholeheartedly.

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