

Women's Empowerment in the *Birds of Prey* Movie (2020)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of women's empowerment in *Birds of Prey* (2020), directed by Cathy Yan. It focuses on the narrative development of the central female characters Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya as they navigate processes of self-assertion, autonomy, and resistance. Employing a qualitative methodology through thematic analysis, the research applies Naila Kabeer's empowerment framework, which conceptualizes empowerment through three interconnected dimensions: resources, agency, and achievements. The analysis reveals that each protagonist experiences empowerment through distinct personal trajectories. Harley Quinn reclaims her independence following her separation from the Joker. Black Canary asserts her voice and defends others against systemic violence. Huntress converts past trauma into a source of strength. Renee Montoya rejects institutional constraints to act in alignment with her ethical convictions. The film underscores the transformative power of female solidarity and emphasizes that empowerment is a multifaceted construct, expressed through diverse forms of strength, independence, and resilience.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature has long served as both a mirror and a lens for examining the evolution of human values, beliefs, and social structures (Smith, 2017). As a form of cultural expression, literature captures human experiences and offers a space for critical reflection on social, historical, and moral issues. Northrop Frye (1964) emphasized literature's role in deepening our understanding of reality through imagination and human-centered storytelling, while C. S. Lewis (1966) suggested that literature enhances life by nurturing the emotional and intellectual capacities required for everyday living. The close relationship between literature and film provides fertile ground for academic exploration. Films often adapt or reinterpret literary themes, turning written narratives into visual storytelling. Stam (2000) observes that this process of adaptation allows filmmakers to reimagine the essence of literary works in new forms. Hutcheon (2006) argues that adaptation is a creative act that brings fresh meaning to existing stories, making them more accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

One of the most significant areas of study in modern film is the portrayal of gender roles, especially the representation of women. The media plays a powerful role in shaping public

attitudes toward gender and often reflects broader societal norms. In many earlier films, female characters were frequently portrayed as dependent, passive, or secondary to male figures. However, recent developments in cinema have presented more complex and empowered female roles. *Birds of Prey* (2020), directed by Cathy Yan, represents a clear shift in this direction. The film centers on four women: Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya each of whom navigates her struggles and transformations. These characters begin in states of dependence, marginalization, or emotional pain, but gradually gain strength, independence, and solidarity. Rather than relying on male protection or approval, they take control of their own lives and work together to confront shared challenges.

This journey aligns with Naila Kabeer's (1999) theory of women's empowerment, which frames empowerment as a dynamic process involving three core elements: resources, agency, and achievements. Kabeer explains that resources refer to access to tools for example, knowledge, and networks that enable action, in *Birds of Prey* Harley Quinn's PhD and street smarts are examples of resources that help her survive and rebuild her identity after leaving the Joker, agency refers to the capacity to make meaningful decisions and act on them for example in *Birds of Prey* When Black Canary decides to stop working for the villain Roman Sionis and secretly helps another woman, she is exercising agency. She chooses to stand up for what is right, even though it puts her at risk, and achievements are the outcomes that result from applying one's agency and resources for example, in *Birds of Prey*, Renee Montoya achieves empowerment when she quits the corrupt police force and helps create a new women-led justice group. It's a real-world change that shows growth and success. Using this model, *Birds of Prey* presents empowerment as a gradual and collective process, rather than a single moment of triumph. Each female character in the film represents a different but connected path toward empowerment. Harley Quinn breaks free from her toxic relationship with the Joker and starts building her own identity. Black Canary transitions from being used by others to using her power to protect and support women around her. Huntress, who was shaped by trauma and revenge, eventually chooses to trust and collaborate. Renee Montoya leaves an institution that failed her and joins a team where her voice and skills are recognized. Their experiences show how empowerment occurs through both internal transformation and external action.

This study seeks to answer the following research question: *How does Birds of Prey* (2020) portray women's empowerment through the character development of Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya, as framed by Naila Kabeer's empowerment model, while previous research has addressed the representation of female protagonists in film, few studies have analyzed how multiple female characters within a single narrative collectively illustrate the process of empowerment. Additionally, there has been limited application of Kabeer's multidimensional framework, originally developed in the context of development studies, to the superhero genre in contemporary cinema. By examining *Birds of Prey*, this research fills that gap by offering a new perspective on how empowerment can be expressed through character transformation, interpersonal relationships, and resistance to systemic constraints. Through a close reading of character arcs, dialogue, and plot structure, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of gender representation in popular film and highlights how cinema can reflect and influence evolving conceptions of female strength, agency, and solidarity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in Superhero Films

Superhero movies are now one of the most popular genres in today's film industry. These stories usually focus on heroes with special powers who protect people and fight against evil. In the past, most superhero films were led by male characters, and women were often given supporting roles like girlfriends, sidekicks, or victims. Recently, this has started to change. More superhero films now feature women as the main characters, strong, smart, and able to lead their own stories.

Today's female superheroes are shown as independent, brave, and complex. They are not just fighters; they also deal with emotions, challenges, and personal growth. Brown (2011) explains that modern superhero women have more depth. They are no longer just part of the background; they are at the center of the action. Movies like *Wonder Woman* (2017), *Captain Marvel* (2019), *Black Widow* (2021), and *Birds of Prey* (2020) show women as heroes who make important decisions, lead others, and fight for what they believe in. Tasker (1993) points out that this helps change the idea that only men can be leaders or action heroes.

Empowerment in these films goes beyond being physically strong. It includes emotional strength, confidence, and the power to make one's own choices. McCaughey and King (2001) argue that showing women as heroes helps challenge old ideas about gender roles. These characters give viewers, especially girls and women, examples of courage, leadership, and independence.

Recent developments in popular cinema show a shift in the portrayal of female characters from passive figures to independent individuals who take control of their lives. Genz and Brabon (2009) argue that contemporary films often depict women as active agents who solve problems, assert their identities, and challenge social norms. This trend is evident in *Birds of Prey* (2020), where Harley Quinn, after separating from the Joker, begins a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. Her transformation from a dependent partner to a self-reliant individual reflects the broader theme of female autonomy.

Other central characters in the film—Huntress, Black Canary, and Renee Montoya—likewise exhibit forms of independence. Each woman faces personal and systemic challenges but ultimately makes empowered choices that reflect emotional resilience, self-worth, and a refusal to remain controlled by oppressive forces. As Kabeer (1999) emphasizes, empowerment involves the ability to make purposeful decisions and to act on them meaningfully. In this sense, the film not only highlights physical strength but also explores emotional and psychological independence as core components of empowerment.

Understanding Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is about helping women gain the power to make their own choices and take control of their lives. This process often involves changing systems that have treated women unfairly, such as limiting their access to education, jobs, or leadership roles. Empowerment means building confidence, gaining access to resources, and acting. It also connects to larger ideas like justice and equal rights. Empowerment is not the same for every woman. Some may begin by getting an education or work experience, while others may start by speaking up or standing against unfair treatment. It is a personal journey, shaped by culture, background, and experience. What is common in all cases is the idea that women begin to take action to change their lives and their communities.

Naila Kabeer's Empowerment Theory

This study adopts Naila Kabeer's empowerment framework because it offers a comprehensive, flexible model suited to analyzing character development in film. Her theory defines empowerment through three interconnected components: resources, agency, and achievements. Kabeer's framework captures both personal decision-making and the external conditions that shape it. This makes it especially effective for exploring how the female characters in *Birds of Prey* navigate structural barriers and achieve empowerment through both individual and collective transformation. Resources are the starting point. These include things like education, money, health, skills, or support from others. Without these, it is hard to make choices or take action. Agency is about having the ability to make decisions and act on them. This might include speaking up, making life choices, or standing up for oneself. It is about acting with purpose and direction. Achievements are the results of using resources and agency. These could be better living conditions, greater respect, personal growth, or stronger roles in society. Achievements show that empowerment has led to real change in a woman's life.

These three parts are connected. First, a woman needs access to tools and support. Then, she needs the confidence and freedom to make choices. Finally, we can see the results in her improved life or in the lives of those around her.

Story and Characters in *Birds of Prey*

The film *Birds of Prey*, directed by Cathy Yan, follows Harley Quinn's journey after she ends her relationship with the Joker. No longer under his protection, Harley becomes a target, prompting her to form unexpected alliances with other women: Cassandra Cain, Renee Montoya, Dinah Lance, and Helena Bertinelli. As the story unfolds, each of these characters navigates their form of empowerment. Their development can be analyzed using Naila Kabeer's (1999) framework of resources, agency, and achievements.

In terms of resources, each woman begins with different forms of support or skill. Harley has her academic background, street knowledge, and combat skills. Dinah possesses her powerful voice and fighting abilities. Helena, trained as an assassin, has both wealth and physical strength. Renee brings legal knowledge and investigative experience, though she is dismissed in her workplace. These resources give each character the foundation to eventually act.

Agency is shown in the choices they make. Harley reclaims control of her life, symbolized by destroying the chemical plant that tied her to the Joker. Dinah chooses to protect others, no longer serving corrupt leaders. Helena moves beyond revenge and begins to trust and collaborate. Renee leaves a broken institution to fight for justice on her terms. These decisions reflect their ability to act intentionally and reshape their lives.

The film ends with clear achievements for each woman. Harley starts her own business and builds a new sense of self. Dinah becomes a core member of a justice-seeking team. Helena transforms from a loner into a cooperative ally. Renee finds purpose in helping lead a new, women-centered group. Their journeys show that empowerment involves more than strength, but it includes self-discovery, ethical action, and solidarity.

Review of Previous Studies

Recent academic studies have increasingly focused on the representation of women's empowerment in film, particularly through feminist perspectives. One such study by Pratiwi Samad and colleagues (2024) examined the film *Little Women* (2019), highlighting how the female characters navigate social expectations and strive to take control of their lives. This focus on personal agency connects with one element of Kabeer's empowerment theory. However, that research is grounded in a historical drama, while the current study investigates a modern, action-oriented film where empowerment unfolds in more physically and socially intense circumstances.

Another relevant study is presented by Citra Junia Nur and her co-authors (2024), who explored the film *Colette*. Their analysis centers on how the protagonist resists gender-based control and asserts her rights. While this theme is comparable to what is portrayed in *Birds of Prey*, *Colette* emphasizes the transformation of a single character. In contrast, the film analyzed in this study presents multiple female characters who grow by working together and supporting one another, providing a more collective view of empowerment.

Ramadhan (2024) conducted an analysis of the film *Barbie*, using Jo Rowlands' theory of empowerment to explore how the protagonist's increasing self-confidence influences those around her. Although this study also addresses women's empowerment, it focuses on one central character. The present research, on the other hand, applies Kabeer's multidimensional framework to examine the individual and collective growth of four different women within the same narrative.

Another study by Haerani and colleagues (2022) analyzed *Enola Holmes*, showing how the lead character becomes empowered by rejecting traditional gender roles. While that study illustrates personal empowerment through defiance and independence, it focuses on a single character's journey. In comparison, *Birds of Prey* presents a group of women who experience empowerment together by making difficult decisions and challenging oppressive systems within a dangerous urban environment.

These earlier studies reflect a broader trend of exploring gender and power in film. However, most concentrate on individual characters and do not fully examine how female protagonists empower each other within shared narratives. In addition, Kabeer's empowerment framework has not been widely applied to ensemble cast films in the superhero genre. This study addresses those gaps by exploring how resources, agency, and achievements are presented through the character development of Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya in *Birds of Prey* (2020).

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative method with a thematic analysis approach to study how women's empowerment is shown in the movie *Birds of Prey* (2020). A qualitative method is chosen because it helps the researcher understand the meaning behind characters, actions, and dialogue in the film. According to Bryman (2016), qualitative research is useful when studying how people make sense of their world, which fits the goal of this research to explore how women are represented in the movie.

Thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning, often referred to as themes, within a dataset. In this context, patterns refer to repeated ideas, actions, or meanings that appear across different parts of the data. These may include recurring words, topics, behaviors, or expressions found in film dialogue, narration, or character development. Themes, on the other hand, are broader interpretations that organize those patterns into meaningful categories. They reflect significant ideas or messages that help explain how certain concepts, such as empowerment, resistance, or independence, are represented. This method is often used to study media because it helps uncover deeper messages within stories. In this research, thematic analysis is used to examine scenes, conversations, and character actions in *Birds of Prey*, using Naila Kabeer's theory of empowerment as a guide. The analysis focuses on three themes: resources, agency, and achievements.

Data and Source of Data

The primary data for this study is *Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)*, directed by Cathy Yan and released by Warner Bros. Pictures in 2020 (Yan, 2020).. The film runs for 109 minutes and was released by Warner Bros. Pictures. It is available on platforms such as Netflix.

This study uses both verbal and visual data. Verbal data includes dialogues spoken by the characters that show empowerment. Visual data includes scenes, body language, and interactions between characters that relate to empowerment. This study also draws on supporting sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and scholarly essays. These secondary sources are essential for several reasons. First, they provide theoretical foundations that help guide the interpretation of key concepts such as empowerment, gender representation, and narrative structure. For example, works by Kabeer (1999, 2005) clarify the dimensions of empowerment resources, agency, and achievements, offering a clear framework through which to interpret character development in the film.

Data Collection Procedures

The process of data collection began with multiple viewings of *Birds of Prey* to gain a comprehensive understanding of its narrative, characters, and themes. The researcher then reviewed the official English transcript of the film to closely examine the dialogue for significant expressions of empowerment. Specific scenes, lines, and character interactions were identified and annotated based on their relevance to empowerment. These instances were then analyzed through the lens of Naila Kabeer's framework, focusing on the concepts of resources, agency, and achievements. After the relevant data were collected, they were organized thematically to prepare

for in-depth analysis. Finally, the collected material was synthesized to form the foundation for concluding how empowerment is represented in the film.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher began by immersing themselves in the content through repeated viewings of the film and careful reading of the transcript to gain familiarity with the material. Key scenes and dialogue that illustrated moments of empowerment were identified and coded. These codes were then grouped into thematic categories corresponding to Kabeer's concepts of empowerment: resources, agency, and achievements. The themes were refined to ensure that they accurately captured the patterns present in the data. Each theme was then clearly defined and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework, focusing on how the characters' experiences reflected different dimensions of empowerment. This approach allowed for a nuanced interpretation of how the film portrays the journey of female characters as they gain strength, autonomy, and solidarity.

To strengthen the validity of the findings, this study incorporated relevant secondary literature to contextualize and cross-check interpretations. The researcher also kept detailed notes to track coding decisions and thematic shifts, thereby ensuring consistency and transparency in the analysis process. Although the research was conducted independently, steps were taken to remain reflexive and mindful of potential bias. The researcher acknowledged personal background and interpretive lens throughout the process to remain critical of subjective influence. While no inter-coder reliability was used due to the study's solo nature, feedback from academic peers helped in evaluating and refining the thematic structure.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis is based on data taken from *Birds of Prey (2020)*, a film directed by Cathy Yan (Yan, 2020), which serves as the main source for dialogue, character development, and visual representation using Naila Kabeer's (1999) empowerment framework, which includes three key dimensions: resources, agency, and achieved outcomes. Each of the four main female characters in the film demonstrates a unique journey toward empowerment through personal growth, strategic action, and collective transformation.

Harley Quinn

Harley Quinn's journey toward empowerment begins with the resources she already possesses, including her educational background, combat skills, street experience, and the new relationships she forms. These align with the concept of "resources" in Naila Kabeer's empowerment framework, where access to knowledge and support systems provides the basis for making meaningful choices. Through these tools, Harley begins to reshape her identity after ending her relationship with the Joker. The story is told from her perspective, with narration and non-linear visuals that emphasize her psychological state and self-awareness. Unlike her previous portrayals that focused on her appearance, the film presents her as the narrator and central agent of her story.

Her ability to make decisions, a key part of agency in Kabeer's theory, is demonstrated through her deliberate rejection of the Joker's control. A significant moment in the film shows Harley destroying the ACE Chemicals plant, which visually marks her break from the past and her decision to start anew. Additionally, her initiative to join forces with other women shows that she is not only reclaiming her independence but also using her leadership skills for shared goals.

Harley's accomplishments go beyond personal growth. She frees herself emotionally, begins her own business, and plays a role in forming a women-led group. These outcomes represent the "achievements" dimension in Kabeer's model and highlight how personal transformation can lead to broader empowerment and collaboration.

Dinah Lance / Black Canary

Dinah's progression toward empowerment begins internally. Her superhuman vocal ability, known as the Canary Cry, is both a physical strength and a symbol of suppressed power waiting to be expressed. Alongside this, her growing discomfort with her role in Roman Sionis's criminal network reveals her moral sensitivity. These elements reflect the "resource" stage in Kabeer's model, where personal strength and awareness provide the capacity to change one's circumstances.

Dinah's agency becomes clear when she chooses to leave her position under Roman's authority and support the women opposing him. This decision reflects her willingness to take risks for justice and solidarity. Her quiet resistance at first, followed by public action later, demonstrates how agency can evolve from internal conflict to outward change.

Her final achievement is her membership in the all-female group that works to protect Gotham. Through this role, she shifts from being a background character to an empowered protector. Her transformation fits Kabeer's idea of empowerment as a process that leads to real-life outcomes through the use of one's resources and ability to act.

Helena Bertinelli / Huntress

Helena begins her arc with material resources such as wealth, specialized training, and a powerful sense of purpose stemming from past trauma. These assets represent the foundational stage of empowerment in Kabeer's theory. Although she initially acts alone and is driven by revenge, the film avoids glorifying violence and instead shows her emotional struggle, highlighting her humanity.

Her agency is seen in her choice to use her abilities for justice. As her interactions with others increase, she transitions from isolation to cautious teamwork. Kabeer emphasizes that agency involves the ability to make meaningful decisions even in challenging situations, and Helena's shift toward collaboration reflects this transformation.

Ultimately, Helena achieves both personal and social empowerment. She completes her revenge mission, reclaims her family legacy, and chooses to be part of a group with a shared purpose. These changes reflect the "achievement" aspect of empowerment, showing her evolution from a lone survivor to a contributor in collective action.

Renee Montoya

Renee's empowerment comes from her knowledge of law enforcement, experience in investigating crime, and moral clarity. As someone who faces systemic discrimination and exclusion, her resources—defined by Kabeer as skills and access to social networks—are critical for maintaining her ethical stance. Her identity as a queer Latina detective adds complexity to her character and highlights her resilience.

Her agency is evident in her decision to leave the corrupt police force in order to pursue justice on her own terms. This moment marks a turning point where she refuses to stay complicit in a broken institution. According to Kabeer, agency means being able to make decisions that matter, even when faced with resistance, and Renee's choice fits this definition.

Her achievements include helping defeat a major criminal and co-founding a new justice-focused group with other women. These results demonstrate that empowerment can be both personal and collective, as she not only reclaims her autonomy but also works toward building a more ethical and inclusive environment.

Table 1. Harley Quinn's Empowerment According to Kabeer's Framework

Aspect	Dialogue / Visual	Context	Empowerment Insight
Resources	"Call me dumb. I have a PhD" (00:04:19)	Harley defends her intelligence when mocked.	<i>Human resource</i> (education, knowledge)
	"I know the east end better than anybody" (00:44:09)	Her street knowledge keeps her safe and self-reliant	<i>Experiential resource</i> (real-life survival skills)
Agency	"I'm the one they should be scared of, not you and not Mr. J." (01:36:00)	Chooses to build a new identity based on her own strength.	<i>Transformative agency</i> (rejecting male power)
	"I got an idea. We team up!" (01:25:00)	She initiates teamwork, showing confidence and decision-making.	<i>Strategic agency</i> (collaboration, leadership)
Achieved Outcomes	"A chance to be my own woman." (00:07:40)	Marks emotional and symbolic freedom from Joker	<i>Personal achievement</i> (emotional closure)
	(No line) Harley kills Sionis with a grenade (01:37:05)	Uses skills and courage to end violence, showing growth	<i>Collective achievement</i> (safety for others)

Table 2. Black Canary's Empowerment

Aspect	Dialogue / Visual	Context	Empowerment Insight
Resources	"Cover your ears! You better get her back." (01:31:01)	She uses her Canary Cry for the first time in battle. Shows hidden internal strength	Personal/internal resource (innate power)
	"I can't keep working for that psycho." (00:46:00)	Signals moral awareness and the beginning of personal resistance.	Moral agency (questioning unjust authority)
Agency	Uses Canary Cry to save team (01:31:13)	Her decision reflects care, courage, and leadership.	Strategic agency (choosing action for a greater cause)
	Secretly helps Montoya (00:46:39)	Quiet resistance shows internal strength and careful action.	Silent agency (covert resistance)
Achieved Outcomes	Joins women's team (01:23:10)	Breaks free from control and finds belonging.	Personal and collective achievement

Table 3. Renee Montoya's Empowerment

Aspect	Dialogue / Visual	Context	Empowerment Insight
Resources	"I think it's the Bertinelli diamond." (00:19:31)	Uses investigative skill and deep crime knowledge to build her case.	<i>Human resource</i> (intelligence, experience)

Agency	“I’ve been building this case for months...” (00:19:10)	Highlights her perseverance, legal skill, and dedication.	<i>Human resource</i> (professional competence)
	“I’ve been working on this for six months.” (00:20:50)	She stands up for herself and her work, refusing to stay silent.	<i>Vocal agency</i> (asserting justice and worth)
	“We gotta clean this city from the inside out.” (01:38:51)	A bold rejection of a corrupt system; creates a new path.	<i>Transformative agency</i> (shaping a new future)
Achieved Outcomes	Helps build new team (01:40:26)	Shows full empowerment by creating a just, inclusive force.	<i>Social achievement</i> (women-led movement)

Table 4. Huuntress’s Empowerment

Aspect	Dialogue / Visual	Context	Empowerment Insight
Resources	Enemies: “The crossbow killer?” (01:04:07)	Her mysterious and deadly reputation provides social influence.	<i>Social resource</i> (reputation, fear-based power)
	“Uses crossbow to kill her family’s murderers (01:20:56)	The crossbow symbolizes her independence, precision, and preparation.	<i>Material resource</i> (tools that enhance her agency)
Agency	“They call me the Crossbow Killer.” (01:20:34)	Shows she acts on her own values, outside male-dominated systems.	<i>Individual agency</i> (self-directed justice)
	Huntress: “I spent the next 15 years thinking only of revenge.” (01:03:20)	She makes conscious, strategic choices to act on her trauma.	<i>Goal-setting agency</i> (purposeful life path)
Achieved Outcomes	Huntress: “The Bertinelli family. That’s me.” (00:47:15)	Completes her revenge arc and reclaims her name and legacy.	<i>Personal achievement</i> (closure, self-definition)
	Joins Montoya and Dinah (01:39:25)	Chooses to use her power for collective good, not just personal revenge.	<i>Social achievement</i> (solidarity, new purpose)

CONCLUSIONS

This research explored how female empowerment is portrayed in the film *Birds of Prey* (2020), using Naila Kabeer’s theoretical model, which includes the dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements. The study showed that the main characters Harley Quinn, Black Canary, Huntress, and Renee Montoya each follow different but interconnected paths toward gaining independence and control over their lives. Their growth reflects the idea that empowerment is not instantaneous, but develops gradually through personal decision-making, access to support, and the ability to bring about change. The film presents a shift from traditional gender roles by centering on women’s perspectives and collective strength.

Despite these findings, the study has certain limitations. Much of the analysis involves interpreting visual and symbolic elements such as camera angles, color schemes, and non-verbal cues, which can be highly subjective. These visual details do not have fixed meanings and may be understood differently by different viewers. Therefore, while this analysis applies a consistent

framework, the conclusions are influenced by the researcher's perspective and may not represent all possible interpretations. In addition, the film's stylized and unconventional storytelling may limit how broadly the findings can be applied to other superhero narratives.

Further research could build on these insights by comparing *Birds of Prey* with other films that feature female leads in superhero roles, such as *Wonder Woman* or *Captain Marvel*. A comparative approach could help determine whether similar patterns of empowerment appear in different cinematic contexts or if each film follows its own trajectory based on cultural and narrative differences. Researchers might also consider analyzing audience responses to examine how viewers perceive female empowerment in these films and whether such portrayals influence public understanding of gender roles.

To conclude, *Birds of Prey* provides a compelling example of how women's empowerment can be expressed through emotional resilience, strategic choices, and collective support. The characters' transformations reflect the principles in Kabeer's framework and suggest that empowerment is not limited to physical strength but also involves reclaiming identity, forming alliances, and challenging systems of control.

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