

Women and gender stereotyping in media from the point of view of structuration theory

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Abstract

This research is a thought process on social structure that is not understood as the consequence of human repetitive action. This has become folkways, causing gender stereotyping of women even more perpetuated by media's various narrations. This research aims to describe gender stereotyping of women in Indonesian television media. This was done by analyzing the broadcasting shows by using Gidden's theory of structuration. This descriptive research is a literary study that includes books, journals, researches and websites as the data. The collected data then analyzed by using Giddens' structuration theory. This article began with the review on structuration theory. Next is a review on structuration theory from the point of view of communication study. The gender stereotyping of women case in the media was then broken down and analyzed by using structuration theory. The result showed that the agent's action and the structure are inseparable, in harmony with Gidden's concept of duality. In fact, many women have put up a fight against this gender stereotyping

through social-feminist movements. On the other hand, they actually do follow the existing structure both unconsciously and consciously. This structure, however, is still growing among the people of modern society.

Keywords: *Structuration, Stereotyping, Gender, Women, Media*

Introduction

Never have it crossed most of people's mind that, in fact, everything in this life is about consequences to their own actions. Human is described as the agent who takes an action according to a structure or norm that limits his/her behaviour. Agent and structure are considered as two intertwined elements. They exist in order to complete and also "destroy" each other. A sociological concept believed that each agent behave to follow the applied structure. The structure exists and alive due to the agent's behaviour. Thus, structuration theory emerged as an answer to the problem of agen-structure integration.

Structure is formed by agent's repetitive habit that it became folkways. This habit does not all turn to be a good one, but harmful or bad ones for some parties. This is an exact description of social structure that is formed as gender stereotyping, happening to both man and woman. Social structure on men is when they are considered as strong, brave and dependable individual that crying is strongly forbidden for them. To be found crying triggered shame, for they do not want to be seen as weak and emotionally driven as women are. This is why men are used to not crying and, each time, supressing their feelings as a habit. It has deeply rooted in their consciousness and simply be the social structure. This structure aside, both man and woman crying when they could not help to do so is a normal and healthy reaction, not a sign of weakness. Many people think that crying is something that men should avoid because crying is a female trait, this statement also invites depression for men because they cannot and are restrained from expressing their feelings (Branney & White, 2008).

The same thing happened to woman, a case that this research focused on. Repetitive behaviour or habit performed by woman, such as doing all domestic work, taking care of children, educating children at home, etc, has turned natural and believed to be obligatory for women. Women who deviates from the existing structure behaviour will be labeled as devious and immoral that they deserve punishment and violence. Especially in married life where the religious norm brings it to the next level. The norm stated that a husband

may hit his *nusyuz* (disobeying) wife and for her to obey her husband (Harnoko, 2010). This creates a social reality that violence on women comes natural and even permitted, as women deviate from the long-formed social structure (Sakina & A., 2017). And marriage also in fact does not protect women from sexual violence and diseases (Kay, 2008).

This gender stereotyping has grown even imperishable with the existence of media. Not to mention that digital media with all its conveniences has helped institutionalize the gender stereotypes that existed in this decade with a vulnerable youth audience (ter Bogt et al., 2010). Moreover, in Indonesia, television has always been loved by many as media of entertainment and information. This opportunity has been utilized by the industry players to competitively market their products. In this case, various television shows are the product, namely soap opera, reality show and more (Abdullah & Puspitasari, 2018). Now, what is the actual problem? Television shows mentioned, even the commercial breaks could not be separated from the social culture and structure that demonstrate gender stereotyping, focusing on the gender stereotyping of women.

A soap opera titled *Tukang Ojek Pengkolan* demonstrated how women are active domestically in the household only, serving the husband needs, shopping, and taking care of the children. Commercial advertisements in between the shows also play its part in internalizing structure that form gender stereotype. *Sari Wangi Tea* advertisement displays a wife who immediately served hot tea for her husband who just got home. It has an implicit message that a wife is expected to be ready and available at home. Even if a wife has work outside, she is expected to be home early to prepare meals for her husband and family. This has put limitation to women activity to self-actualize and caused them a feeling of being trapped in serving and making her husband happy, in order to become what a woman is expected to do.

Gender stereotyping of women, women subordination and women behaviour controlling, even further, it is also about women's freedom in contraception issue. The existing social structure, through media, has perpetuated the KB (family planning/Keluarga Berencana) sterilization program that is intended only for women. Again, women lost their freedom in deciding what to do about herself and again, women have to follow the existing structure. Rather than abruptly, contraception side effects, in fact, may really be threatening women's health. KB Injection, a form of contraception from a years ago, affects menstrual cycle of women in its usage (Lesmana et al., 2012)

This program is a big campaigned issue in mass media, in a form of repetitive public service advertisement. It ingrained an idea that KB is the only contraception tool married couple should use or consider. If a woman was found not following KB program and got pregnant, many questions would have put women into tough spot for not joining the KB program. In fact, this phenomena is also about men or husbands who are not very well-committed. Instead, women still got cornered with various questions and be blamed for not following the social structure. KB Sterilization is also a form of abuse against women that the society do not aware of (Harnoko, 2010).

From all these, this article wanted to find out how gender stereotyping of women in the media happened and analyzed it by using Giddens' structuration theory. It began with the literary review on structuration theory. Next is a review on structuration theory from the view of communication study. Furthermore, case study of gender stereotyping of women in the media is then analyzed.

Literature Review

Stereotypes in Television Commercials

Advertising as a means of various information media in the form of videos, images, and even billboards (An Nur et al., 2020). In this case, the advertisements used are advertisements on television. The gender stereotype of women in the media is very striking in the advertisements that are displayed. This can happen because advertising is a reflection of the state of a society which believes that women must be feminine and men must be masculine. Astuti (2016), through his previous research, found the existence of female gender stereotypes in television commercials. Lux soap ad features a beautiful, self-care and white woman. This advertisement shows how the public's perception of women who must be beautiful, smart to take care of themselves, and is recognized as beautiful if they are white. The surf detergent ad features a mother who takes care of all the housework on her own. This emphasizes the role and obligation of women to take care of the house while men have absolutely no obligation to do this. Homoviton ads are increasingly displaying gender stereotypes of women in a striking way. The flow of this supplement ad for men shows how a woman is made an object to fulfill a man's desire (Astuti, 2016). This stereotype also shows how the public expects a certain group which in this case is male and women (Riggio, 2020).

Different literature shows that there are cases that contradict what Astuti

has found. Sanjaya, through his research on Kecap Sedaap advertising (2010) found that there is no gender stereotype of women. This ad is different and dares to come out of the reflection of a patriarchal society. In the Kecap Sedaap ad (2010), it shows a father who is active in the domestic sphere, namely the kitchen, which is very close to women in society's view. If it is reviewed in the Marxist theory where men are the owners of capital while women are workers, it is not found in this advertisement.

Women Image

Image as a picture of someone about his personality (Juanda & Azis, 2018). The author tries to dig deeper into the phenomenon of gender stereotyping of women in other media, namely written media in the form of short story. Juanda and Azis (2018) reveal the veil of gender stereotypes that exist in short stories. This literature shows the existence of massive gender stereotypes in short stories. The short story entitled *Menyiksa Mata* tells of a woman who is helpless, has no power over herself, and describes a woman who depends her life on a man she calls her husband. The short story *Tahi Lalat* is even bolder in telling gender stereotypes of women which raises the storyline by making women as servants of their husbands.

Gender Injustice

Gender stereotypes that are constructed through the media not only create public views on the behavior of men that must be masculine and women who are feminine, but also give rise to gender injustice, especially for women (An Nur et al., 2020). Nur et al carefully observe this phenomenon in the Indosiar soap opera which massively shows how a woman only lives in the domestic sphere. This shows clearly how injustice befell women. Women are not given the opportunity to share the same feelings as what men can do such as working in the public sector, occupying high positions, and also the division of labor in taking care of the house, often women have to do it themselves. A similar phenomenon is also found in the film *Athirah*. A woman, especially a mother, is seen as an individual who is full of tenderness, affection, and ability to take care of housework (Yoshina Siautta et al., 2020).

In a different case, it is also found how gender stereotyping creates injustice for men . Not all men are strong and willing to work rough. Some of them also have talent or potential in areas close to gentleness and caring, such as being a nurse. Unfortunately, this institutionalized stereotype also presents discrimination that is also felt by men who work in a female-dominated sector.

They are ridiculed and considered unmanly by society (Kouta & Kaite, 2011). This view has prevented women from even being allowed to work or continue their studies. This injustice is covered by a sense of obedience to her husband and family. With a variety of existing literature, it encourages the author to observe firsthand how female gender stereotypes occur in the media from the point of view of Giddens' structuration theory.

Methods

This article is a qualitative descriptive research that explains gender stereotyping of women in the media. Descriptive research describes how phenomena occur either in an individual or a group by observing and describing naturally what happens (Nassaji, 2015). Qualitative research observes the behavior of individuals and groups which then produces data that is presented descriptively in written form (Bogdan, 1992). From this statement, it can be concluded that this journal observes the phenomenon of gender stereotyping of women in the media and presents the data in a written descriptive manner according to the data obtained.

The researcher analyzed the gender stereotyping of women cases by using Giddens' structuration theory. This article elaborates data reference and phenomena that refer to how women and gender stereotypes in media. The references used as materials are those with the following categorization, such as: discussing issues regarding stereotypes, women in media discourse and Anthony Giddens theoretical framework on structuration. These references are obtained by the author through social phenomena on media, reading materials from books to journals that can be accessed online or offline. Regarding the phenomena being analyzed, the problems of women and gender stereotyping in the media in general, then analyzed by researchers using Anthony Giddens' structuration theory framework.

Results and Discussion

Structuration Theory

Anthony Giddens, a sociologist from England who analyzed phenomena in modern society, as well as the father of structuration theory. Structuration is the most influential theory in seeing social life culture, both in micro and macro field. Though agent is generally refers in micro level, human actors could

also refer to the macro level when collectives are making moves (Ritzer, 2012). Micro here meant the structure of culture believed by the agents. From macro level, however, structure is meant to be a social structure used by the agents in their lives. Aside from the micro and macro level from the agent's point of view and the structure, this theory emphasizes the role of interpretation and meaning system within human (Sutrisno, 2005). Every agent is considered capable to give the structure a meaning, where each may own different meaning. It depends on how the agent utilizes their own resources in order to interpret the structure.

Other than understanding meaning process within an agent, the interesting part of structuration theory is the concept of structure duality. Structure duality is the relationship between structure and agent's action. Here, the structure and the action are dependent to each other. The structure is described as rules and resources running through the agent's action in social interaction process. This social interaction process does not occur only between agents, but also in greater interaction scope, that is between an agent and many agents. Structure alone could not be understood as an obstacle from an action, but instead, a facility and an action result. Giddens also contributed in identifying structure as a action media, while at the same time, structure could only be reproduced through that very action (Munti, 2005).

Furthermore, Giddens's structure duality explained through social and political analysis. It is where a country as the structure and the society as the agent are in dialectic concept of duality (Moesa, 2007). For example, in modern society, there are four forming elements, that are capitalism, industrialism, supervision and militarism. These four elements are inseparable as they have reciprocal effect to the country adhering this system. Giddens defined that the country is in position to facilitate the four modern dimensions, causing serious problem in society level. This means, society is indirectly subject to the country's modernity. On the other hand, society as the active agent could avoid the structure authority because it has reflective ability to apply the owned life rights (Moesa, 2007).

This dualism concept by Giddens is the critic proposed to Parsonian view of functionalism (Tilaar, 2003). Parson's functionalism ideas in considering agent being unfit to the reality of modern society. Giddens in this dualism put emphasize on the difference between agents and social structure where the agents live their lives. For Giddens, the truth is the relationship formed between structure and agent as one inseparable entity. Social structure is a repetitive

behaviour turning into habit performed by the agent (Priyono, 2002). Structure is divided into three forms, that are symbolic, domination and legitimation (Dault, 2012).

As previously mentioned that action forms a structure and structure is a media for agent to take action, some structuration thoughts in sociology study also has similar sustainable relationship between structure and action. One of them is Jonathan H. Turner, a sociologist who believed that agent is actively taking action by using social structure, with the intention to reproduce the very structure. Agent is the active and creative subject. Agent may independently move and adapt, so that they are not as simple “object” created by the structure. By taking the structure duality concept, the society as active agent are capable of putting a fight with the country. This action is of social movements, such as democratisation, labor movement and peace movement (Moesa, 2007).

This structure exists outside the agent and could contain rules and resources owned by the agent through socialisation process (Sutrisno, 2005). Each agent certainly have different resources, such as knowledge, ability and skill. Without resources, the agent could not take action. This action then resulting on a structure. This is due to the wide culture pattern and it being reproduced as it is used. The existence of structuration theory has become “fresh air” to the study on social life image as reciprocal process of individual action, in this case referred as agent and social authority that rules it.

Structuration from the Point of View of Communication Study

Strukturasi theory was truly born from the root of sociology, but it is also necessary to be reminded on a saying, “*no communication, no society*”. This statement exist to answer a question on why structuration emerged in communication, another study of social science. It is that the social life will not exist when the people, or agents, are not communicating with each other.

In communication study, Giddens stated that interaction is an important element from the creation of meaningful and resourceful communication process from the agent’s action. Giddens also divided social interaction into three forms, namely communication, authority and morality (Haryatmoko, 2010). Communication is used as a method for agent to reflect themselves with other agents, while authority is the result of the performed actions. However, on the other hand, structuration sees social interaction in a form of morality. Agent’s every action is performed at the thought of moral or norm that rule it.

Communication is a part of the creation of meaning behind the actions.

Thus, Giddens included communication as an element on working system of structure duality in modern society. The following is the interaction scheme of structure duality:

Interaction	Communication	Authority	Sanction
Modality	Framework Interpretation	FACILITY (economy, culture, political ideology, physical, social)	NORM (rule, law, religion, custom, habit)
Structure	Meaning	Domination	Legitimation

Table 1: Anthony Giddens' Structural Duality
(Giddens, 1993)

Interaction and communication are placed in different column, yet both are dependent to each other. Agent will use resources they own to interact with other agents. On the other hand, interaction also produces structure that is formed by the agent's behaviour. In the scond table, communication is depicted as the framwork of the next interpretation that produces interpretation of meaning by each agent. Similar to the previous explanation, the concept of structure duality does not place agent and structure as two separate element. Both are intertwined through continuous interaction process.

Observed from the point of view of communication study, structure duality is a concept where social structure is the purpose or the result of patterned and continuous interaction. At the same time, however, social structure should also work as suggestion that conditioned the actions (Haryatmoko, 2010).

On the other hand, structure duality cannot be separated from authority and sanction. It positioned agent as the one who govern and being regulated. In the context of modern society, it is natural to perform dominating act in taking control of the structure. Duality happened when the agent are made "busy" with their activity to perform oppression and be oppressed. However, behind the agent's freedom in taking action and dominating other agent, structure duality concept explains that there is sanction in a form of social norm that the agent will receive. This norm, in the structuration context, is known as structure.

Case Study: Women Gender Stereotyping in Media

"Women as a figure who is always oppressed by men in every aspect of life, whether it is in life reality and representation served by the media...".

This statement is the opening to the birth of feminism as a movement of the oppression of women stereotype in the eyes of society (Siregar, 2001). Women are considered an “object” whose body, personality, and behaviour is exploited as a symbolic object, not as a subject (Widyatama, 2007). In the context of behaviour, women are seen as “the oppressed”. On top of that, the media does not hesitate to broadcast violent action against women in almost in every served contents, especially the entertainment world contents, including entertainment, movie and television series.

Stereotype is the biggest influence on women’s weak and easy-to-oppress image. From cultural side, stereotype is understood as the image determining factor that divert individual cognitive and perspective about the world. Even today, sterotype is still considered as a process that distort the reality (The First LSPR Communication Research Conference, 2010). Stereotype is a phenomena that is always found among the modern society. The growing asumption is how each active agent interpret the meaning of action and structure-forming in life (Hartlep, 2015).

Sunarto, a lecturer from Postgraduate Program in Universitas Diponegoro Semarang in his research “Stereotipisasi Peran Gender Wanita dalam Program Televisi Anak di Indonesia” tried to elaborate the phenomena of gender stereotyping of women in the media borrowing Anthony Giddens’ strcuturation theory (The First LSPR Communication Research Conference, 2010). Giddens explained stereotype thought and its relation with prejudice. According to Giddens, structuration theory is suitable for analyzing stereotype. This is because all of the thoughts involve categories used by agents to classify their thoughts.

Gender stereotype is the most applicable when it comes to understanding how structuration theory is applied. Unger and Crawford stated that stereotype happened when the agent or an individual are categorized by other individual of similar (The First LSPR Communication Research Conference, 2010). Characteristic similarities between agents is what makes them a group of agent with certain category. Stereotype then arise in people’s mind. For example, a stereotype that “women are capable of housework, while men are capable of being a worker”. This stereotype born from the repetitive action that women figure have been continuously doing in real life and as protrayed in the media.

As previously mentioned, action of women as the agent who continuously performing what is expected from them, made it a “habit” that is seen as natural within human agent. This fact fits structuration theory, explaining that a habit

could definitely be understood as a structure. Out of discussion on whether the structure is true or wrong, everything went back to how the agent represent them. Also, Gidden claimed that the agent's action will affect the structure. From here on, the agent "violence against women" will change and reproduce the structure, which is the very women stereotype itself.

So how is the true form of structuration image of woman facilitated by media? The First LSPR Communication Research Conference (2010) confirmed that the research by Sunarto on women stereotype in television, especially on children television program in Indonesia, shared their findings in television role in strengthening gender role of women. Gender in this case is regarded as an agent acting as a figure with social role as housewife, social position as men's partner, passive, submissive and emotionally driven individual. This structure is formed on how women's agent behave as if they are what the structure says about them. However, in reality, some women do behave similarly, while the others do not.

Furthermore, structuration analysis found in gender stereotyping of women phenomena could also be seen from "the agent's collective unconsciousness". Other agent, that is the audience, unconsciously gives women meaning exactly how the content of the show wanted to depict them. Mythology and religion are structure formed within the self of the agent (The First LSPR Communication Research Conference, 2010). Agent, in this matter, experiencing collective unconsciousness. They then understand gender, just according to the spreading myth that women are household worker. From religious point of view, women are understood as a figure who obeys the husband, never questions things and tends to be "submissive".

Analysis on structuration theory could be seen from how structural violence happened to woman agents. Structural violence is a form of indirect violence (cannot be found in the text) and performed by the perpetrator figure (Sunarto, 2009). The perpetrator may be an individual, or possibly abstract matters, such as norm, system and value (Sunarto, 2009). In this stereotyping case, women are susceptible to harsh treatment from men, the opposite gender. Violence against women is considered a structure. Back to the assumption proposed from structuration theory that the structure alone could not be understood as obstacles to an action, but more of a facility and action result (Beilharz, 2002), that violence is regarded as a natural action. Thus, it makes sense that in modern society era, violence against women is found here and there and is slowly becoming an understandable act in society. Though, as an

active agent, women can put up a fight against the formed structure.

Basically, gender stereotyping of women that happened in reality also happened in the media. In Indonesia, media contributes fairly to structure forming in society, performed by the agent. However, as Giddens claimed about structuration, even though women as agent have the right to put up a fight actively against this stereotype structure, the structure will always be there to control their behaviour. Stereotype structure exists to limit agent's behaviour. Structure exists because of the presence of women who behave as women should. On the contrary, gender exist and alive as a result to stereotype grown in the society.

Conclusion

Through this research, it can be explained that the issue of women and gender stereotyping in media is one of a communication science problem. The media become spaces that show how women are positioned as agents whom deceived in patriarchal system. The structuration theory is considered relevant in observing modern society phenomena, especially with the presence of women role stereotyping. To put it simply, women as agent is regarded to behave according to the already shackling structure. Similar with Giddens's structure duality concept where agent's behaviour and the structure are two inseparable matters.

The easiest mapping of structuration theory in analyzing women stereotyping in the media is by putting woman as agent, and stereotype as the structure. Indeed, in fact, these women have tried their best to take action against the structure that binds them. For example actions as in social feminism movements, gender inequality, and so on. Aside from this, the fact shows that these agents are both consciously and unconsciously following the existing structure. What is more is the stereotype has seemingly turned women into "the victim", which the society still following religiously among the modern society, especially in Indonesia. For further research that can be developed from this study is to elaborate more specifically on the media as an object of future research. It becomes important to provide a more specific mapping on how women and gender stereotypes content in Anthony Giddens structuration theory perspective.

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