ABSTRACT

Gender is a social construction, that is, learned and perpetuated for people’s identity. In this sophisticated era, media become one of the most influential agents in perpetuating the idea of gender construction in society. For years media keep portraying women and men stereotypically and unequally. Women are portrayed with feminine traits such as affection, domestic, emotional, submissive, and weak. Then men are portrayed with masculine traits such as brave, dominant, rational, and strong. Masculine traits always have more positive description than feminine traits. Using content analysis this study analyzes one of Indonesian television program, Pilik-Pilih Mantu, and finds that this program still represents gender stereotypically. The frequency of the contestants’ representation on the traits which are stereotyped to their sexes is the highest. It affirms gender stereotype and leads to the reinforcement of patriarchy in the program.

Keywords: Femininity; Gender Stereotype; Masculinity; Patriarchy; Pilik-Pilih Mantu.

1. Introduction

‘One is not Born but rather Becomes, A Woman’ (Beauvoir 1953, p.273).

Beauvoir started her critical thinking in her book Second Sex that women become women as what society expects because they are taught to do so. Instead of a destiny, the idea of gender actually is the product of human civilization perpetuated in people’s life unconsciously and continuously during their lifetime. Gender is socially constructed, that is, learned and negotiated for people’s identity in the practices of everyday life. Becoming gendered is an ongoing social process which involves some instruments or agents to perpetuate this idea.

One of the agents in gender construction is media. Media becomes an instrument which has great ability to challenge people’s idea about gender. Moreover, media do not simply reflect the existing stereotypical images of gender which exist in society, but actively produce a symbolic form of feminine or masculine as gender identity which supports the ideology of ruling group. The mass culture exists in society today is the product of culture industry. Adorno in his book titled The Culture Industry said, ‘The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object’ (1991, p.99). Thus in media power concept, audiences are considered as passive object and media are the active subject which constructs particular idea, to perpetuate particular ideology and control the society.

2. Media Representation of Gender

For years, patriarchy, the ideology which keeps male in the higher position than other sex has become the ideology of ruling group to control the issue about gender over the world even though gender issue itself has been developing to be more complicated. Yet patriarchy is claimed by David Gauntlett in his book Media, Gender, and Identity not to dominate and have control to the gender representation in media anymore. He explains that the representation of gender in media has changed significantly, especially for men and women. Men and women are represented equally during the 1990s and the following new century, gender roles on television became increasingly equal and non-stereotyped (2008, p.58).

However it seems that there is difference between media in Western, Europe and America, and Eastern, Asia, in constructing gender. Douglas Rhein who does research in gender representation in Thai television advertisement shows that the portrayal of women’s roles in advertisement is improving, yet it is still inaccurate and these inaccuracies and discriminating characterizations of women are pervasive during prime time Thai television advertisement (2011). Rachma Ida who does research in media construction of female Indonesian celebrities finds that media still show those successful female Indonesian celebrities are tied to the domesticated position of women as mother and wife as expected by the cultural norms of Indonesia (2008). Both of the researches above show that gender representation in
Asia especially South East Asia is different from the gender representation in Europe and America. Gender representation in South East Asia media is still stereotyped and unequal.

Media representation in stereotyping gender unequally which positions women subordinate to men in Asian media, especially Indonesia media, can be found in one of reality show aired in one of national television channel, antv, named Pilih-Pilih Mantu. This reality show was aired in antv every Monday to Friday at 09.30 pm and Saturday at 09.00 pm. This program was aired from April to July 2012 and had 74 episodes. The contestants of the program were fourteen females, seven males and seven males’ mothers.

3. Gender Construction of Femininity and Masculinity

Beauvoir (1953) stated that the learning process about gender, femininity and masculinity, is undergone by both men and women from the childhood and continued into adulthood, the process happens for their whole life. In the childhood, men and women are taught about gender mostly from their parents, but in their adulthood they learn more from the environment such as society and media. Moreover in the adulthood, men and women become not only as the object who are taught but also as the agent who perpetuate the idea of gender to their children.

The effect of gender stereotype actually affects not only women but also men. For instance man in his childhood is taught to become strong and independence. As a child he passed a hard process in his childhood to learn the man’s stereotypes as a superior sex in the society. He suffers the same inconvenient phase that is also suffered by woman; but at least man is still able to express his self as he wants. The burden that society put on a man does not oppose his status as human being and his vocation as a man. Man is somewhat affected, but woman suffered much higher rates of injustice due to this gendered system. Therefore feminist critique is more developed than masculine critique.

Generally the purpose of feminist criticisms is to reveal that discrimination in gender portrayal in media still exists so take it for granted the notion about gender from media is a fault and feminist criticism tries to make people realize about this phenomena. Gender leads society to build positive stereotypes for man which is the opposite of woman’s stereotype. In social construction ‘He is the Subject, he is the ‘Absolute’ - she is the ‘Other’ ’ (Beauvoir 1953, p.15). The category of the ‘Subject’ makes man is regarded as part of universality and ‘Other’ makes woman is defined by feminine traits ‘against culture, society and rationality and so on are constructed’ (Abbott, Wallace & Tyler 2005, p.5). Thus, the terms masculine and feminine are like two electrical poles which define each other by the opposite characteristics in which masculinity always has more positive traits than femininity.

4. Gender Construction in Indonesia

Different cultures might expect different personality traits and characteristics of gender even though there are still some stereotypes that are universally expected by world citizens. Thus in analyzing gender issue in the reality show Pilih-Pilih Mantu it is important to use not only general theory of gender which mostly arranged by Western theorists but also gender theory which relates to Indonesian culture because this reality show is aired in Indonesian television channel. Suryakusuma (2011), one of feminists who concern with gender system in Indonesia, explains that Indonesian women are firstly identified by the notion ‘wives’ to enforce the subordination of women to men. Secondly women are identified by the notion ‘mother’ to enforce the concept of domestication. Therefore a hierarchy gender was constructed.

In addition gender construction in Indonesian culture cannot be separated from gender construction in Islam since Islam is a religion adhered by majority of Indonesian (Robinson 2009). In Islamic perspective women and men are equal but when it relates to the issue of leadership, such as become the leader of community and make an important decision for a country, men have higher position than women. Unfortunately this exception, Islam perspective about the position of men and women in leadership issue, is frequently used as incorrect justification for all issues about the inequality of men and women. Furthermore, gender construction in Indonesia is also influenced by adat especially from Javanese culture since most of Indonesian population is from Java ethnic (Arimbi 2009, Suryakusuma 2011). In Javanese culture the role of women are reflected in three prominent beliefs: konco wingking, suargo nunut neraka nunut, and manak, masak, macak.
Furthermore, the inequality in gender construction in Indonesian culture especially the subordination of Indonesian women is also imposed by the concept of *kodrat* that is related to biological destiny. The concept of *kodrat* limits Indonesian women movement outside the household life. Term *kodrat*, in Indonesian language, means ‘the unalterable nature one is born with, or predetermined’ (Arimbi 2009, p.57), really supports the concept of domesticity by stating that it is natural for women to serve their family, submissive to the husbands and nurture the children. Family needs are considered more important than women’s because women’s existences are appraised by their success in managing their family lives. When their families are happy, they are considered as successful women.

Thus, generally, gender constructions in Indonesian culture are not much different from gender characteristics in global construction. Women are placed underneath men; subordinated. It does not happen naturally but due to social constructions.

5. Methodology

In reading a television program before the researcher is able to get what ideology is constructed in the program, it is important to carefully notice what is going on the screen, how the actors or actress speak, behave and respond in front of the camera and others detail things such as gender, occupation, family and education background, etc. which are looked simple but actually important. From those simple things portrayed on the screen, it will lead the researcher to decide the ideology constructed since those details are systematically formed to support particularly ideology. Thus, the reading of television must progress from ‘the manifest content to the latent content, and very few analysts have begun to tread this path’ (Fiske and Hartley 2003, p.8). This sort of study can provide useful data about the content of television output as a complete message system.

This study uses content analysis as a method to find out the representation of gender stereotypes portrayed by male and female contestants in the reality show *Pilih-Pilih Mantu*. Content analysis is ‘a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from texts, or other meaningful matter, to the contexts of their use’ (Krippendorff 2004, p.18). In this study content analysis provides some statistical data that allow the researcher to make inferences about overall content of the reality show *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* and answer the research questions about how gender stereotypes and reinforcement of patriarchy are constructed in this reality show. There are five feminine traits and four masculine traits coded. Those feminine traits are affection, weak, submissive, domestic and emotional. Then the masculine traits coded are brave, dominant, strong, and rational.

From the population of 74 episodes of *Pilih-Pilih Mantu*, the researcher applies convenient sampling method and decrease the sample for 20 episodes. Convenient sample has obvious limitation when used to infer to a larger population, but this sampling method can be justified under some conditions, one of them is when the material being studied must be difficult to obtain (Riffe 2005, p. 100).

6. Discussion

The finding of the content analysis in this study reports that the frequency of the contestants on the traits which are stereotyped to their sexes is the highest. Male and female contestants are portrayed performing all of the feminine and masculine traits coded. Yet, male contestants’ mothers are not portrayed in some of masculine traits coded. They are absence in performing ‘brave’ and ‘strong’ traits.

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male Contestants</th>
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<td>Affection</td>
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The table shows that female contestants (107 times) are the most frequent characters representing stereotyped traits in this reality show. Then followed by male contestants (69 times) and the last are male’s mothers (34 times). The highest frequency of female contestants in representing the traits in this reality show indicates that in social life women are more demanded than men to perform gender stereotypes.

6.1 Affection

In affection-scenes female contestants are depicted performing this trait for 50% means half of affection scenes are performed by female contestants. The second characters portrayed performing this trait frequently are male contestants for 26.5% and the contestants who perform the least affection scenes are male contestants’ mother for 23.5%.

Affection is a trait which is often associated to women instead of men and this stereotype is also reflected in *Pilih-Pilih Mantu*. Even male contestants are positioned in the second place of characters who perform affection, above their mother, but generally the total number of affection scenes are performed by women contestant who consist of female contestants and male contestants’ mother.

6.2 Domestic

Female contestants are portrayed 61.2% of doing domestic activities and followed by male contestants’ mothers for 27.7% and the least is male contestants, 11.1%. Scenes which portray female contestants in domestic life are the scenes when they are doing household activity or playing games which relate to household and nurturing activity.

The intense frequency of domestic-scenes performed by women confirms traditional gender stereotypes which explain that domestic area is belong to women rather than men. Friedan stated that ‘women could identify with nothing beyond the home unless it could be approached through female experience as a wife or mother or translated into domestic detail’ (1963, p.4). Even most of the games for female contestants in *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* relate to household chores and nurturing activity. Female contestants are portrayed performing domestic trait not only in the games which they play but also when they do ‘real’ household chores in their daily activities.

In domestic-scenes sometimes male contestants’ mothers are portrayed teaching the female contestants how to do the household chores correctly. These activities show one of mothers’ functions in this program that is as agents who cultivate the feminine traits to the female contestants. In gender learning process, becoming men and women is constructed by society and parents are one of the most influential agents. Parents who have the same sex with the children will teach their children to have the same feminine or masculine trait like them. When a girl comes under their care, women apply themselves to changing her into a woman like themselves as a rule think that it is wiser to make a ‘true woman’ of her, since society will more readily accept her if this done (Beauvoir, 1953, p.285-286). A mother invests a lot of emotional value and energy into peripheral objects and activities – houseplants, cooking, pictures – at the expense of her children (Madsen 2000, p.207).

6.3 Emotional

Emotionality is a psychological trait which is often associated to women. The dissemination of this stereotyped characteristic to women is also influenced by the development of medical science which relates the emotionality in women with the hormonal and nervous system though ‘the analysis of medical textbooks shows that they include ‘facts’ about women that are little more than prejudices’ (Abbott, Wallace & Tyler 2005, p.183). In *Pilih-Pilih Mantu*, female contestants are portrayed performing emotional scenes more frequently than other group of characters, 65.7%. They easily get angry when facing problems during the show or when having misunderstanding with other contestants. Instead of trying to discuss it, they express their anger by shouting, doing debate with a harsh word choice or even making physical actions such as slapping. Male contestants and their mothers are portrayed representing this trait for 20.6% and 13.7%, respectively. The significant gap of frequency in emotional trait between male and female contestants affirms traditional gender stereotype in the society that ‘men are rational and analytic, whilst women are emotional and talk a lot’ (Gauntlett 2002, p.242).
6.4 Submissive

The fact that *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* perpetuate gender stereotype and reinforce patriarchy is reflected by the finding showing that most of the scenes portraying submissiveness is performed by women-group, female contestants 73.8% and male contestants’ mothers 15.7%. On the contrary male contestants who represent men-group only perform this trait for 10.5%. Female contestants perform submissiveness toward male contestants and their mothers. Yet, male contestants only perform their submissiveness to their mothers and vice versa. Thus in this hierarchy female contestants are in the lowest position under male contestants and their mothers. In family life the highest position is occupied by men who become husband or father then followed by women who become wife and mother. Parents are in higher position than children and men are in higher position than women. Thus in her life ‘the young girl becoming absolutely passive; she is married, given in marriage by her parents. Boys marry; they take a wife’ (Beauvoir 1953, p.509).

6.5 Weak

Weakness is one of stereotyped trait that strengthens the subordinate position of women in social construction. Biologically men and women are different so it also influences their physical power. However the concept about ‘weakness’ for women in society is more than the concept of physical power, it includes mental power. Weakness for women is associated with their ‘sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view’ (Giligan in Madsen p.101). Thus women are stereotyped as mentally powerless human.

Female contestants are portrayed in 81.9% from all of scenes indicating weaknesses. Male contestants’ mothers portrayed in 13.6% and male contestants 4.5%. Both of female and male contestants’ mothers are portrayed performing weakness when they cry and fear, relates to mental weakness. Yet, male contestants are portrayed performing weakness when they are sick. They perform the literal meaning of ‘weak’, lack of physical strength. Thus there are differences between weakness for men and women portrayed in this program. For women, it relates to mental stage and for men it relates to physical stage.

6.6 Brave

In bravery scenes, male contestants are portrayed for 54.6% and female contestant for 45.4%. Yet, male mothers’ contestants are absence in these scenes. The insignificant gap of percentage between male and female contestants in this trait indicates that *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* takes men and women quite equally in the level of bravery. Bravery is no longer considering only belongs to men anymore but also women who have started having this characteristic. There is an improvement in representing gender identity in mass media today as what Gauntlett said that ‘representations of gender today are more complex, and less stereotyped, than in the past’ (2002, p.90). Even though the improvement itself is only a slight and does not bring many significance effects over all of gender stereotypes which have been developing and spreading greatly in social lives for years. Patriarchy, ‘A form of social organization in which men are dominant and the central institutions of society are controlled by men and/or organized in their interests’ (Boyle 2005, p.205), still becoming the dominant ideology in constructing the concept of gender in mass media, including *Pilih-Pilih Mantu*.

6.7 Dominant

Dominant-trait which is associated to men rather than women is represented more by male contestants 53%. Female contestants and male contestants’ mothers as the representation of women group, only perform for 34.3% and 12.5%, respectively. If the frequency of female and male mothers’ contestants are added the result is still less than the percentage of male contestants. The dominant-trait is coded in many situations and one of them is in elimination night which is called *Malam Penolakan*. As stated by the writer previously about the rule of elimination night in *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* that all of contestants, female, male and male’s mothers, are given some chances to eliminate the contestant. In this program male contestants totally have 12 chances to eliminate female contestant, female contestants have 8 chances and male mothers’ contestants only have 6 chances.

The male’s mothers are the contestants who are given the least chances to eliminate the female contestants though the title of the program is *Pilih-Pilih Mantu* which means a mother who look for a
wife for her son. The writer finds that there is irrelevancy between the title of the show and the concepts. However, back to the previous discussion about dominant-trait, the content analysis of 20 sample episodes finds that program Pilih-Pilih Mantu affirms the traditional gender stereotype that men are more dominant than women.

6.8 Rational

Male contestants are portrayed performing this trait for 53.3% then followed by female contestants for 26.7% and the last is male contestants’ mothers for 20%. Rationality relates to individual ability to think logically. In traditional gender system, rationality is often associated to men rather than women. Men are depicted more rational in facing the problem in their live.

In Pilih-Pilih Mantu, the contestants are quarantined for almost four months. There they face many problems mostly because of misunderstanding and jealousy between the contestants. Male contestants are portrayed to be more rational in facing the problems, almost twice of the percentage of rationality trait is performed by male contestants. This statistic data is affirming that men are more rational than women.

However the rationality-scenes performed by male contestants’ mothers depict the function of a mother in parents-children relationship in which the older is the wiser. In Pilih-Pilih Mantu if there is a misunderstanding or problem among male contestants, reconciliation or discussion will be done by themselves. Yet if there is a misunderstanding among female contestants, the discussion or reconciliation is only applied when there is male contestants’ mother as the mediator. Male’s mothers are shown more mature and rational than female contestants.

6.9 Strong

The last masculine trait coded is physical power or strength. There is significant gap between male and female contestants in performing strong-scenes. As stated in previous paragraph strong-scenes are portrayed mostly in games scenes. Games scenes can be used as indicators of two traits, domestic-feminine trait, and strong-masculine trait. When games for male contestants require a lot of physical strength, then games for female contestant are dominated with games of household skill. However male contestants are portrayed almost twice more frequent, 75%, than female contestants, 25%, in strong-scenes. Male contestants’ mothers are absent in this strong-scenes because they are never portrayed doing activities which require a lot of physical power. The absent of male contestants’ mothers in two of four masculine-trait scenes represents the notion that woman who have married are becoming more feminine so their representation in some traits which perform masculinity are considered inappropriate. However the highest percentage of male contestants in ‘strong’ scenes affirms the traditional gender stereotype that men are stronger than women.

7. Intertextualizing Pilih-Pilih Mantu and Gender Construction in Indonesia

One of popular Indonesian feminists, Julia Suryakusuma who introduces the term State Ibuism, explains that Indonesian women are subordinated because they are associated with some particular terms such as wife and mother which limit their movement and chain them mostly in domestic area. As in Ibuism, ‘women were expected to serve their men, children, the family, the community, and the state’; as in housewifization, ‘women were expected to provide their labor freely, without any expectation of real prestige or power’ (Suryakusuma 2011, p. 105). Both of housewifization and Priyayi Ibuism are the basic elements which construct the ideology State Ibuism. The basic level of subordination of Indonesian women is from the family level in which women are taught that their main role in family is placed in domestic area. In Pilih-Pilih Mantu the ‘housewifization’ and ‘Ibuism’ are portrayed by the frequent representation of female and male contestants’ mothers in all feminine traits scene.

Furthermore in Pilih-Pilih Mantu there are three beliefs of women in Javanese culture that are affirmed by the representation of female and male contestants’ mothers. First belief, konco wingking, is affirmed in Pilih-Pilih Mantu by portraying female contestants and male contestants’ mothers frequently in domestic scene while male contestants are only portrayed very few in this scene. The second belief suargo nunut neraka katut is affirmed by the high frequency of women group in submissive and emotional scene and low frequency in dominant scene. Then the last belief manak, masak, and macak are affirmed by reality show Pilih-Pilih Mantu by portraying female contestants and male contestants’ mothers in high
frequency of affection and domestic scenes for instance when they are cooking, washing, and cleaning house.

In addition, one of the reasons why all of that subordination and discrimination suffered by Indonesian women is still going on because Indonesia women are taught that become mothers and wives are their kodrat. In Indonesian family life ‘the conception of kodrat, requires women, especially mothers, to be submissive and sacrifice for the good of all family members’ (Arimbi 2009, p.121). Women sacrifice their own passion in public area and prefer doing domestic things such as doing household chores, nurturing the children and families as an effort to fulfill Indonesian social construction of ‘good wife’ and ‘good mother’. Thus by the notion of kodrat Indonesian women are passively accept the traditional gender roles in family life. In ‘New Order ideology, kodrat wanita can be glossed as ‘woman’s social role that is preordained by her biological (especially reproductive) capacities (Robinson 2009, p. 10).

Actually the concept of kodrat also covers men. As stated by Nilan that ‘the cultural diversity of indigenous gender orders in the archipelago was homogenized into a nationally-promoted binary of masculinity and femininity: kodrat pria and kodrat wanita’ (2009). In Indonesia the concept of kodrat pria is relevant with the concept of hegemonic masculinity that is ‘the configuration of gender practice at a given point in time that shores up the legitimacy of patriarchy’ (Connel cited in Nilan 2009). Thus based on kodrat pria, it is natural for men to have more authority and power then become the leader in society to control their family and even their country. The notion of hegemonic masculinity held in kodrat pria is reflected in term Bapak which more popular and strengthen men’s superiority after Soeharto called himself as Bapak Pembangunan.

The last reinforcement of patriarchy in this reality show is also reflected in the irrelevancy between the concept and the title of the program. Since this program is produced and aired in Indonesia so it is made by adopting some Indonesian culture in which the family hierarchy is not only between men and women but also between parents and children. Thus the contestants in Pilih-Pilih Mantu do not only consist of single men and women but also the male’s mothers as the part of the contestants. Based on the finding of study, the male contestants’ mothers are the characters who least perform dominant-scenes represented by the frequency of acts related to decision making. Though the title of this program is Pilih-Pilih Mantu which means the male’s mothers should be the one who have the greatest power to decide who will be their future daughter in law, yet the fact in the program is the male contestants themselves who take the major decision who will be their future wives. The hierarchical structure between parents and children are absence. The only hierarchical concept appearing is the superiority of men to women. Thus the irrelevancy of the concept and the title in Pilih-Pilih Mantu actually indicates that this reality show affirms the traditional gender stereotypes that women are subordinate to men and reinforce patriarchy as the ideology constructing this television program.

8. Conclusion

Generally the study finds that reality show Pilih-Pilih Mantu portrays that men and women can perform both masculine and feminine trait. It is less stereotypical than some decades ago in which men only perform masculine traits and women only perform the feminine traits. Nevertheless, the intensity of the performance of each sex is still gendered, meaning that male contestants are always portrayed as the characters who perform the most frequent masculine-trait and female contestants are the characters who perform the most frequent feminine trait. Thus the writer concludes that Pilih-Pilih Mantu still affirms the traditional gender stereotype and reinforces patriarchy in society since the ideology behind the inequality of gender stereotype always gives advantages to men instead of women.

9. References


