

Semiotic Analysis of Body Shaming in *True Beauty* Series

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze signs using Roland Barthes' semiotics, and analyze the denotative and connotative meanings of Body Shaming signs contained in the "True Beauty" series. This study describes: (1) types of body shaming signs that appear in the True Beauty series. (2) the denotative and connotative meanings of each sign contained in the True Beauty series. The data source for this research is a popular Korean series directed by Kim Sang-hyub, and Yaongyi as the author of a webtoon entitled True Beauty which was adapted into a drama. The research is focused on the semiotics of body shaming contained in the "True beauty" series. Data analysis were: (1) Describing the denotation and connotation of body shaming for the main character in the "True Beauty" Series. (2) Drawing conclusion. The results of the study revealed that there are scenes of verbal and non-verbal body shaming/bullying in the Korean Drama "True Beauty" series. Verbal bullying is a form of humiliation that can be seen or heard by the senses marked by words and actions which in this drama are represented by cursing, laughing, shouting (Ugly Calling, Dumpling, Red face, Slapping, Dousing with dirty water, Throwing things). Meanwhile Non-verbal bullying is a form of humiliation that cannot be directly felt by the senses in this drama represented by a form of action (gaze, spreading embarrassing videos, crossing out facial posters).

Keywords: Semiotic; Body Shaming; True Beauty Series.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is known as mass communication, namely: communication is carried out through the media, both print media and electronic media. Drama is an audio-visual communication medium to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a certain place. In communication, signs or symbols are very important because they relate to meaning in semiotics and communication. Semiotics is the study of the process of signs and meaning making. All activities, behaviors, or processes involving signs can be studied semiotically. A sign is defined as something that communicates something, usually called meaning, to the recipient of the message.

According to Saussure (1916), Semiology would reveal what signs are and what rules control them. A sign in semiotics is anything that conveys a meaning to the interpretation of the sign that is not the sign itself. The meaning can be explicit meaning, such as when a word is said with a certain meaning, or implicit meaning. Semiotics can be found in a variety of places, including advertisement, movie, traffic signs, and symbols that are commonly found every day. Semiotics can also be found in a various meme that is circulating on the internet.

According to Barthes, by confessing to Saussure's influenced thinking, Barthes developed the idea of 2-stage signification (two orders of signification). These two stages refer to the terms denotation and connotation to indicate the level of meaning. The denotative meaning is the objective first-level meaning that can be given to symbols, namely by associating directly between the symbol and the indicated reality or symptom. Then connotative meanings are meanings that can be given to symbols by referring to cultural values and meeting feelings and emotions which are therefore at the second level. Barthes uses the theory of signified which is developed into a theory of denotation and connotation. The term signifiant becomes the expression and the signifie becomes the content. However, Barthes said that between the signified there must be a certain relationship, so that a sign is formed.

The message of the film as a medium of mass communication can take any form depending on the purpose of the film. However, with the rise and development of the drama, there are also elements that show non-exemplary scenes such as orgy, gender, crime, crime, violence, and humiliation. Body shaming is known as criticism, ridicule, and negative comments about the human body (body shape and size) and appearance. Negative expressions intended for someone will have a big impact on them. Victims feel uncomfortable and anxious because they tend to make fun of their appearance. Bona Sardo, M.Psi, a psychologist at the University of Indonesia at Bonassard, reported from DetikHealth.com that the psychological effects were very widespread, especially with reduced self-esteem. When someone gives a speech about their physical condition and they are not feeling well, they feel sick mentally.

In the drama, there are many scenes that include elements of body shaming. The topic of body shaming can also be one of the main themes of some produced films. One of them is the Korean movie *True Beauty*, directed by Kim Sang Hyub, released on June 21, 2021. The Korean drama *True Beauty* is the story of a high school girl named Lim Joo Kyung, who has low self-esteem in both face and appearance. Because he was considered ugly, he was constantly discriminated against by his family and bullied by his friends. Joo Kyung will then use makeup to change his appearance. As a result, research into the impact of movies on society has begun to surge.

The quest for a movie or other form of story that is audiovisual in nature can be carried out by selecting a particular semiotic analytical model. When analyzing body shaming in this movie, researchers use semiotic analysis to analyze body shaming. The researcher collected data by watching the *True Beauty* series repeatedly, taking screenshots, and identifying each sign in each scene. Starting from this background, the researcher is interested in studying the *True Beauty* series which has a body shaming scene with the research title "Semiotic Analysis of Body Shaming in *True Beauty* Series".

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant theories, definitions, and previous studies related to the research. One of the related theories discussed is semiotics, which is relevant to this analysis. The primary source of data for this research will be the Korean series entitled *True Beauty*, which will be obtained from the internet.

2.1 Semiotics

Roland Barthes developed two-tiered sign systems, called the denotation and connotation systems. The denotation system is a first level signification system, which consists of a chain of signifiers and signifieds, namely the relationship between the materiality of the signifier and the abstract concept behind it. According to Barthes, at the denotation level, language presents explicit social conventions or codes, namely codes whose sign meaning immediately appears on the surface based on the relationship between signifier and signified (Piliang, 2003). In this case the meaning of denotation is the meaning of what appears. For example, a photo of Jokowi's face means Jokowi's real face. Denotation is a sign whose marking has a high level of convention or agreement. On the other hand, in the connotation system or second level signifying system, language presents codes whose sign meaning is implicit, namely a code system whose signs contain hidden meanings. The connotation meaning is also uncertain and indirect, which means it is open to various possibilities. Apart from that, Barthes also saw meanings at a deeper level, but more conventional in nature, namely meanings related to myth. According to Barthes, myth is the encoding of meaning and social values. Myth is how culture explains or distorts several aspects of reality or natural phenomena. In Umar Yunus' view, myths are not formed through investigation, but through assumptions based on rough observations that are generalized and therefore live more in society (Wibowo, 2011). This myth causes us to have certain prejudices about something stated in the myth.

2.2 Body Shaming

Body shaming is a comment, criticism or someone's assessment of another person's body that is not ideal so that it has a bad impact on that person. Body shaming arises because of a person's perception of beauty standards that are formed in their environment. Forms of body shaming are like criticizing a person's body shape, comparing a person's physique with others to vilify a person's appearance. This action occurred because of the beauty standards embedded in society. Body shaming makes a woman feel less confident about her body and the woman even considers her body embarrassing.

As a result of body shaming, victims feel that they are worthless and if this continues, the victim will become hopeless and may commit suicide. The impact of body shaming on perpetrators can be subject to the electronic information and transactions law (UU ITE). As reported on Kompas.com, acts of body shaming on social media can be punished by criminal law under Article 27 paragraph (1) of Law

no. 11/2008 states that body shaming can be categorized as an act that violates morality. Meanwhile, the punishment in the body shaming law stated in Article 45 paragraphs (1) and (3) states that uploaders of content that violate decency can be jailed for a maximum of 6 years and/or a fine of up to IDR 1 billion.

There are two forms of body shaming (Yarni, 2019: 18), namely:

1. Verbal

Forms of body shaming verbally or through speech are:

a) *Fat Shaming*

It is a form of negative comment towards people who have fat bodies.

b) *Skinny/Thin Shaming*

It is a negative comment towards people who are thin or too thin.

c) *Body Hair/Body hairy shaming*

This form of body shaming usually insults someone who has excessive hair on their body, such as on their arms or legs.

d) *Shaming skin color*

This form of body shaming usually insults skin color, such as being too dark or too pale.

e) *Body shape and size shaming*

This form usually insults people who have strange body shapes, such as dwarves or tall people who are too tall.

2. Non Verbal

Non-verbal communication is carried out such as body movements, eye movements, or voice quality. These codes can only provide messages when they occur. The tone of voice can also indicate a person's attitude. Body shaming often occurs in the form of unpleasant actions towards other people. Like someone who has a fat body riding a bicycle and when he rides a flat tire on his bicycle, suddenly the people around him laugh at him.

2.3 Previous Study

The two theses discussed the semiotics of Body Shaming. The first is a thesis written by Zuraidah Sahputri Dalimunthe with the entitle "Analisis Semiotika Body Shaming dalam Film Imperfect" (Dalimunthe, 2020). The study used Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. The results and findings obtained by the researchers indicate that the purpose of this study is to determine the semiotic analysis of Body Shaming in the film Imperfect. And this research provides information about the film Imperfect where women are the main objects in stories that get a good or bad image. The second is a thesis written by Desvy Yarni entitled "Semiotic Analysis Of Body Shaming In Film The Greatest Showman" (Yarni, 2019). The study used Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. The results and findings obtained by the researcher indicate that the purpose of this study was to determine the semiotic analysis of Body Shaming in The Greatest Showman film. And this research provides information about the film The Greatest Showman where the journey of forming a circus for the first time uses humans to become actors in the circus show.

From the two studies above, there are similarities and differences with this research. In terms of themes, the two studies above have similarities with this research.

In terms of theory, this research has similarities with the research of Zuraidah Sahputri Dalimunthe (2020) and Desvy Yarni (2019) who use Roland Barthes' Semiotics theory. This study uses primary data in the form of the *True Beauty* series which is different from the two studies above. This study wants to provide an analysis of the signs and meanings of messages in the *True Beauty* series, where this series consists of several episodes. By using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, it is hoped that the process of analyzing the meaning of these signs will provide a more in-depth analysis.

3. METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research that collects and analyzes data in the form of words (spoken and written) and human actions. Qualitative analysis, including semiotic research, is systematic and analytical but not as rigorous as in quantitative content analysis (Wahjuwibowo, 2013). This research uses Korean series entitled *True Beauty* as the main data, which is analyzed using Roland Barthes semiotic framework to classify signs. The data used in this study consisted of visual and verbal data, which were obtained from *True Beauty* series and then taken several scenes which became the unit of analysis. The selected scenes are scenes that contain the body shaming sign. In qualitative research, data collection is a crucial process to gather and analyze data. The data collection technique used in this research is documentation, where the *True Beauty* series is taken from Internet. To collect the data, the researcher searched for True Beauty series and downloaded the video. Then, the researcher watched the video and selected scenes that are directly related to body shaming, whether in visual, sentences, or sound, and screenshot them. After selecting the scenes, the researcher coded them with a specific code for easy reference. Data analysis is an important part of the research process, which involves collecting, modeling, and analyzing data to find the necessary information. In this research, the data analysis technique used is documentation, specifically Roland Bearthes semiotic theory in finding and classifying signs. The researcher classifies the signs based on the theory's objects. The data is displayed in the form of screenshots in the series entitled *True Beauty*.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher focuses on the classification of signs based on Barthes's theory. The researcher collected 11 scenes from one series and explained the results of his study in detail.



Picture 1

Denotation: Insinuating the meaning that expresses something like reproach, criticism, ridicule indirectly. At her old school, Jukyung was called dumpling by Semi and other friends because they always ordered Jukyung to buy dumplings during recess and called her an errand girl. Apart from that, they also threw paper at Jukyung's head to make Jukyung stare at Se-Mi.

Connotation: "Dumplings, errand girl". Verbal bullying, which is represented by jokes that lead to insults such as the nickname "Dumplings, errand girl". During recess, Semi walked to the locker at the back of the classroom to dress up, at that time she saw Jukyung shaking her head while listening to music through a headset "Very sad" she muttered. Semi then called Jukyung "Hey dumplings!" for many times but because Jukyung didn't hear, one of his friends threw a pile of paper until it hit Jukyung's head.



Picture 2

Denotation: Berate means the meaning of issuing words that are not polite or reproachful. Jukyung expressed his feelings for Hyunbin, the school canteen guard, but Hyunbin rejected him and cursed him. On the other hand, Semi and her three friends recorded the incident.

Connotation: Physical bullying in this drama is represented by throwing objects. Semi recorded Jukyung expressing her feelings for Hyunbin, the handsome school canteen guard. Hyunbin rejected Jukyung by saying "I'm friendly because I feel sorry for you

because you're an outcast. But what? If you don't have looks, at least have intelligence. Are you that stupid? I'm Hyunbin, Hwang Hyunbin!"



Picture 3

Denotation: Pushing head means hitting with the hand and so on. Semi approached Jukyung while recording and berating her, not only that they also pushed Jukyung to the ground and threw him with the contents of the gift that Jukyung brought, Semi hit Jukyung's head with her finger while calling her ugly.

Connotation: Physical bullying in this play is represented by pushing the head. Semi and her gang friends came, still recording Jukyung and said "Unfortunate. The ugliest girl in our school confessed feelings to a boy." While turning on Jukyung. It didn't stop there, Semi uploaded the video to the school's online site which attracted a lot of bad comments that made Jukyung despair and had time to think about ending her life.



Picture 4

Denotation: Cheering means cheering against or to someone. Jukyung entered the classroom and Semi called him a community star because he spread the video he recorded on online sites, then they all cheered on Jukyung as ugly and showed the video on the class television screen.

Connotation: Verbal bullying represented by jokes that lead to insults such as shouting ugly. Jukyung entered the class, then Semi shouted “Attention everyone! These are the stars of our community.” And the whole class laughed at Jukyung while shouting at him “Ugly! Ugly!” then showing the video when Jukyung was rejected by Hyunbin and his classmates laughed again and said “Ugly! Ugly!”



Picture 5

Denotation: Staring strangely/cynically means looking at or paying attention to objects carefully and for a rather long duration in a mocking or contemptuous manner. Jukyung gets strange looks from the whole school and ridicule from her classmates because of the makeup she uses.

Connotation: Direct non-verbal bullying, represented by giving a cynical look and/or condescending expression. Jukyung, who at that time was wearing strange makeup, white face and round red cheeks and black eye lines, was walking down the hall to her classroom, the people there looked at Jukyung strangely and some people swore in surprise. Arriving at class, Semi and the gang laugh at Jukyung and photograph it. Semi said "Didn't your parents say anything when you left the house?", another friend shouted "It's amazing, she's so confident" while continuing to take pictures of her.



Picture 6

Denotation: Watering **has** the denotative meaning of pouring water or pouring water on something. Jukyung meets again with Semi, a bully from her old school while at the shopping center, Jukyung returns to remembering her past when she was bullied, she runs away to avoid Semi even though Semi doesn't recognize Jukyung's face who was wearing makeup at that time.

Connotation: Physical bullying in this drama is represented by pouring dirty water. Jukyung is choosing make-up tools in a shop, suddenly from afar you see Semi and her gang walking towards the shop where Jukyung is, Jukyung immediately freezes in fear and remembers when she was a victim of body shaming by Semi and her gang. At that time Jukyung who was in the school toilet cubicle was doused with a bucket of dirty water, then when Jukyung came out of the toilet cubicle Semi and his gang laughed at him while clapping their hands and saying "So dirty! Look at this face" everyone laughed with satisfaction, Jukyung could only chuckle when Semi replied "Just kidding" while hitting Jukyung's shoulder lightly.



Picture 7

Denotation: Grabbing means pulling hair. Jukyung accidentally runs into Semi and the gang at a restaurant, making Jukyung scared. They again harassed Jukyung by calling Jukyung until it made Jukyung fall to the floor.

Connotation: Physical bullying in this drama is represented by Grabbing. Jukyung was waiting for an order at a fast food restaurant, they collided accidentally because they were focused on each other's cellphones. Semi recognized Jukyung and asked how she was doing, when Jukyung was about to leave, Semi stretched out her leg so that Jukyung fell to the floor "Oh no, that must hurt" Semi said, followed by the laughter of the three. Semi asked for Jukyung's cell phone number, so Jukyung ran out of there first.



Picture 8

Denotation: Backbiting means talking about other people's shortcomings, swear, slander. Video of Jukyung being bullied at her old school spreads on the school's online site, Jukyung's face without make-up is finally revealed which makes Jukyung bullied again.

Connotation: Verbal bullying represented by jokes that lead to insults such as backbiting. Jukyung was walking down the hall to her class, all the students stared cynically at Jukyung and some of them even whispered to each other. Jukyung accidentally bumped into a student, instead of apologizing, the student said "Goddess, what is it." while laughing lightly at Jukyung. Arriving at class, Jukyung's friends stared at Jukyung with strange looks. Jukyung cried and ran out of the classroom.



Picture 9

Denotation: Dragging means pulling clothes, forced to follow, pulled by force. A group of schoolgirls dragged Jukyung into the toilet, they cursed Jukyung and forcibly removed Jukyung's makeup.

Connotation: Physical bullying in this drama is represented by dragging and pushing. While running to leave school, Jukyung was stopped by a group of girls from another class "What? A goddess? What a joke. Take him" he said, they then dragged Jukyung into the toilet and cornered her against the wall.



Picture 10

Denotation: Insinuating the meaning of the denotation expresses something like reproach, criticism, ridicule indirectly. The school poster with Ju Kyung's face crossed out and drawn in foul language.

Connotation: Indirect non-verbal bullying is represented by crossing out and writing dirty words on the poster with Jukyung's face. School posters with Jukyung's portrait pasted up along the school hallways were crossed out and drawn by some irresponsible students, some of whom even wrote dirty words. Suho and Seojun removed all the posters.



Picture 11

Denotation: Backbiting means talking about other people's shortcomings, swear, slander. A group of girls gossip about Jukyung coming to school without makeup, not knowing Jukyung is behind the door hearing everything.

Connotation: Verbal bullying represented by jokes that lead to deviations such as backbiting. Jukyung who was in the toilet cubicle, heard a voice from outside "I heard Jukyung came to school without makeup" Said one of the girls, "But do you really think she's dating So Ho?" Saut another student. "I saw her without makeup before, and she's uglier than in photos", "I'm sure they broke up after she saw her real face.

Who would date a girl like her?" then they laughed without realizing that Jukyung was in the same place as them.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the researcher describes body shaming in the *True Beauty* series, namely, humiliation of physical appearance, comparison with narrow beauty standards, stigma against real appearance, and body shaming in social interactions. This act of body shaming contributes to a negative atmosphere reinforcing beauty standards, and promotes the idea that one's natural appearance is not acceptable enough.

Moreover, research on the *True Beauty* series using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis with a focus on research on body shaming scenes in the "True Beauty" series, which goes through denotation and connotation stages, it can be concluded that there are several verbal body shaming scenes, namely: **nicknames:** *Dumpling; the errand girl, red face, shouting ugly, gossiping, Berate, Cheering, Insinuating, humiliate, Traduce*. Non-verbal body shaming in the *True Beauty* series, example: *laughs, pushing, grabbing, throwing things, pointing at the head, pouring dirty water, Berate, grabbed, drag*.

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