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Abstract

This chapter will elaborate on the objectification and subjectification of women in the media. The dilemmatic situation between the process of objectification and subjectification of women in television dramas will have implications on women and ultimately on how society sees and positions women. One of the media realities in Indonesia, soap operas, has become a television product that is very popular, especially among women. Currently, soap operas generally occupy prime time which is owned by almost all televisions, therefore the advertising revenue from these shows is very tempting. A popular soap opera can reap advertisements in one episode up to billions of rupiah. Meanwhile, television viewers to date also occupy the largest audience percentage compared to other media. The question is what are the implications on the self-development of women's audiences and society's view of women. Based on that, this chapter will discuss an introduction to the subjectification and objectification of women in the media as a phenomenon, both conceptually and theoretically. Various realities of objectification and subjectification that occur in several media and will also be described, the last section will describe a critical study of the existing cases and how changes were made possible and by whom.

Keywords: subjectification, objectification, women, media, soap opera

1. Introduction

This article discusses the position and role of women in the media or specifically, discusses the representation of women’s positions and roles in soap operas produced and aired on Indonesian television. Soap operas in Indonesia are considered popular television programs and therefore generally become shows that occupy primetime television. At the beginning of its development, soap operas in Indonesia aired once a week, but later the most popular soap operas eventually broadcasted every day and are known as on-running soap operas. In addition, the duration of 1 hour per one broadcast would later eventually increase to 1.5 hours per one broadcast, which would be added up by the television station into 2 hours or even increased into 3.5 hours during special events such as New Year’s Eve in one broadcast. Television station's policy in extending broadcast hours can be accessed through news uploaded by online
media, with an additional note at the end of the news that said that “the program may change their broadcast hours according to the TV station’s policy” [1, 2].

The existence of soap operas which are quite intensive both in terms of duration and frequency affects the audience, who are generally women. This condition is assumed to have a significant effect on women as the audience. The representation of women in the media, which is continuously accepted by the audience, can eventually be considered as a true representation of the reality of women. This assumption is in line with one of Gerbner’s cultivation theory hypotheses which states that “the more time a person spends watching television, the stronger the tendency is for that person to equate television reality with social reality” [3–6].

In line with some of these views related to the reality and representation of gender in the media, Brodolini et al. draws the conclusion that although audiences have the option to either accept or reject content from media and the meaning of the content itself [7], the media system still has the power to own the decision of which gender would appear and be represented as role models. All media content eventually becomes an important source of information about a gender that imposes or challenges our own ideas in regard to said gender itself [8].

Meanwhile, other studies [9, 10] raised their findings of how media content shows or tells women could only offer their bodies or their faces, and in regards, women spend a lot of their time taking care of their physical appearances. In other words, the struggles of feminists who are trying to fight for gender equality are not only dealing with patriarchal culture and men’s perspectives, but also media content that subordinates, weakens, and objectifies women. Therefore, media content needs to be continuously criticized regarding the unfair representation of women’s values and how this representation is carried out.

In addition to raising the values of gender bias found in Indonesian soap operas, this paper will also reveal the involvement of women as subjects in making soap operas and how the position of women as subjects in stories actually plays a role in the construction of a representation of women and its perspective in the media. This discussion is important in reference to Gill Rosalind [11]’s findings and analysis which highlighted the occurrence of sexual subjectification among European women. According to Rosalind, sexual subjectification occurs when they observe the existence of women as a subject, through their appearance, consciously making themselves sexual objects within their own community.

Rosalind observes that one of the best-selling T-shirts from a British high-street fashion store French Connection which read “fcuk me,” taking inspiration from “fcuk football,” was a huge success. Said T-shirt is seen worn by young women everywhere, emblazoned on their chests, competing on the street, in the club, and on the tube with other similar T-shirts declaring their wearer a “babe,” a “porn star,” or “up for it,” or giving instructions to “touch me” or “squeeze here” [11]. According to Rosalind, this surprised him not only because of the sexual self-presentation the women offered but also how alienated these women actually were and how terms that objectified women developed. Only one generation before, women were fighting not to be objectified, not to be reduced to the size of their breasts, or not to be consumed as a mere sexual object; yet now the women paid a lot of money (the T-shirts are not cheap, with $30/£20 per use) to show their self this way [11].

In line with Rosalind’s view, this paper is also based on the idea that women’s involvement in the process of sexual subjectification is more worrying than women who are sexually objectified by other parties, whether it is by men or by culture. Efforts to encourage women to be more educated and have a variety of abilities that
are not inferior to men in the public sector are one of the hopes so that they are able to be the subject of their own lives. However, in line with the phenomenon observed by Rosalind, the women, who are positioned as subjects in several soap operas in Indonesia actually objectify other women or even themselves.

This condition challenges the women’s movement in making various efforts to re-strengthen women’s awareness that their ability or inability is not determined by their gender. To complete the data related to subjectification and objectification through the media, this research will focus its observations on two popular soap operas in Indonesia, namely soap operas titled *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*. These two soap operas are assumed to contain contents that represent not only the objectification but also the subjectification of women.

Observations were made on the two operas from November to December 2022. During this period, the researcher chose 3 episodes of the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* (episodes 896, 897, and 898) and the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta* (episodes 257, 262, 263). Episode selection was carried out qualitatively based on the data needed to get an overview of the subjectivity and objectivity issues of the two soap operas.

Referring to the narrative aspects of the film included plot, premise, characters, and conflict [12]. The data for the three elements were obtained from the scripts of the two soap operas studied. A script is a story evolved through pictures. It has a subject, usually the main character, happened in a place, while doing their thing which is called action [13]. To understand the narrative of a story, Branigan [14] claimed that there are two different sources. The first source is diegetic or information that can be accessed easily by the characters in the story. Information is available in the narration. The second source is non-diegetic or information that can be accessed directly by the audience. In other words, the narrative of a film, in this case a soap opera, provides a way for the audience to feel certain emotions and the audience can choose to accept or reject them [14]. Therefore, to obtain an overview of the attitude of the audience towards the two soap operas, interviews were conducted with six viewers. To get an overview of the context of the audience, the informants were selected with different gender, ages, and work backgrounds.

2. Subjectification and objectification

This theoretical framework places the body and position of women in the family and the community based on the sociocultural context with the aim of explaining the position of women in the media and the objectification of women in the media. Based on the theory of objectification, the main meaning of objectification refers to the attitude of men who explicitly make sexual innuendo or comments focusing on women’s bodies. Usually, the objectification of women is related to their sexual objectification, which arises when a woman’s body is considered separated from herself as a human being and the woman is seen as a physical object of male desire [15].

The objectification of women makes them vulnerable to experiencing oppression or violence regarding sexual harassment. However, in general, women are not aware of objectification towards themselves because culturally, women are constructed to see the world through a man’s point of view. Objectification theory also suggests that many women are sexually objectified and treated as an object which is judged on the basis of their usefulness to others [15]. In general, objectification theory assumes that the objectification of women affects how women see themselves.
Objectification experienced by women can occur directly or indirectly. When this happens indirectly, it will involve the internalization of women’s experience of objectification, which then turns into self-objectification [9]. Self-objectification makes women see themselves only as a body and not as whole human beings [16].

The objectification of women arises because of patriarchal habits and culture which consider women as weak creatures so that they are objects that can be controlled by men. According to Nussbaum, there are seven indicators involved in treating an object: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity [17]. Women unconsciously develop behaviors that tend to obey and support self-objectification as a result of patriarchal culture. This behavior is known as self-objectification. Calogero [18] explains that self-objectification arises when an objectifying view develops among women themselves so that they see themselves through the point of view of those who supervise or control them and women participate in supervising themselves to be in accordance with said parties’ perspectives itself. Sexual objectification produces self-objectification, which then turns into self-surveillance, and causes psychological and mental health consequences that threaten the [9].

Self-objectification affects how women live and interact socially. According to Saguy et al. [19], objectified women tend to limit their presence in social interactions by speaking less when the other person is a man. Women who are influenced by an ideology, for instance, a sexist attitude, will increase their level of self-objectification [20]. Self-objectification can be considered as a consequence of an ideological pattern that justifies and preserves the status quo socially [21]. Other research has shown that the more materialistic women are, the more likely they are to adopt an objective view of themselves and monitor their bodies more closely [22].

Sexual objectification based on the female body is considered to be the most common and obvious form of patriarchy and sexism. Sexual objectification of women appears as a fragmentation of a sexual nature so that women are only seen apart from their physical appearance and separate from their personality. According to Ref. [23], women internalize messages that are objectified and make themselves an object to be seen and assessed based on all attributes that are not competency-based. The other concept is sexual subjectification which occurs when the existence of women as a subject, through their appearance, consciously makes themselves sexual objects within their own community [11].

Cupo [24] introduces “women subjectivity,” an analysis that explains how women’s subjectivity removes the subject status out of women’s bodies. They argue that the female body is a subjectification because the female body is a manifestation of male power in a patriarchal culture. Women, in women’s subjectivity theory, cannot be fully said to be oppressed because they can be involved in the pressure, inequality, and exploitation that occurs to themselves. Women can position themselves as a subject who consciously participates in this inequality. Women also have the opportunity as subjects who consciously make themselves subjects even though they are aware of the pressure and exploitation that occurs.

Based on the theories and various concepts that have been developed, the reality and representation of women include the process of subjectification and objectification. This process is a challenge for feminism which seeks to improve the position and role of women, or even otherwise support patriarchy and male perspectives that weaken and harass women.
3. Soap operas and their development in Indonesia

The dynamics of the development of Indonesian soap operas began with the creativity and needs of media practitioners to develop media content both as works of art and as commodities in the media industry. This section will describe the development of soap operas in Indonesia and two soap operas that have been very popular in Indonesia for the past 2 years, titled *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*.

3.1 The development of soap operas in Indonesia

Soap operas are called electronic cinema, or Sinema Elektronik (Sinetron), in Indonesia, a term coined by Sumarjo, one of the founders of Jakarta Institute of Art (Institut Kesenian Jakarta-IKJ). It refers to a series of cinematic broadcasts that can be watched through electronic media (television). This term is then used to call serial drama broadcasted on American television, known as soap operas. Soap opera first appeared in 1930 in the form of a serial drama broadcast on American Radio. At that time, the drama series was very popular among housewives who liked to listen to the radio in their spare time or while doing household chores. Referring to this phenomenon, this drama series program promoted a golden opportunity for companies whose target market is housewives to advertise various soap products, namely laundry soap and bath soap, and this led to the term ‘soap opera’. Around 1940, serial drama or soap opera which was originally broadcasted on the radio then switched to color television created by Peter Goldmark. In Spain, soap operas are also developing and are known as telenovelas [25].

The development of soap operas in Indonesia began with the broadcast of a television series called *Losmen* on TVRI Indonesia, which was produced by senior Indonesian theater players at that time, Tatiek Maliyati and Wahyu Sihombing. As a television series, *Losmen* was taken very seriously, supported by well-known artists at that time such as Mieke Wijaya, Mathias Muchus, Dewi Yull, August Melasz, and Ida Leman. This series tells the Life of Mrs. Broto who manages an inn (in Indonesia called losmen) with her family and the various attitudes and behaviors of the inn tenants. Mrs. Broto’s family as the inn manager is shown as a family that has a harmonious relationship with their tenants. The simplicity shown by *Losmen* and its ability to present the daily life of Indonesian people very well made *Losmen* one of the most popular events at that time [26].

Entering 1995 to 1998, many private broadcast stations were produced and existed at that time. Accordingly, the theme of the soap operas on private television slightly shifted in terms of story ideas, taking and adapting stories from feature films of the 80s instead of doing original work, such as *Lupus, Olga*, and *Catatan si Boy*. Then in 1998, Multivision Plus, one of the film-making companies in Indonesia, made the soap opera *Tersanjung*. This soap opera is the longest-running soap opera in 1998, consisting of 356 episodes which are divided into several seasons [25]. In line with the rating system that has become a reference for television producers for advertising purposes, the presence of soap operas is increasingly associated with obtaining ratings issued by the AC Nielsen rating agency. Ida Farida, one of the Indonesian women filmmakers, decided to move to the television industry after filmmaking activities in Indonesia declined in the 1990s. She wrote and directed soap operas for television and thus marking the start of the production of soap operas by women.
This consideration resulted in soap operas that were very different from the soap opera *Losmen*, both in terms of story ideas, filmmakers, and the artists who became the main characters. In addition, the soap opera production system that succeeded in attracting the audience’s attention shifted from weekly broadcasts into daily broadcasts, then known as on-running broadcasts. In such a production process, the actors are forced to memorize the scenarios and understand the story as fast as possible. There is little to no opportunity to explore the characters or the situation and context of each scene.

In this context, acting is merely a technical work for the actors so that they can appear and speak as written in the scenario. There is very little chance that every scene contains some kind of depth of acting from the actors. Because of this, some female actors do not even have the opportunity to understand how women are positioned or identified in soap operas that involve themselves as women.

### 3.2 Popular soap opera: Ikatan Cinta and Cinta Setelah Cinta

This section is based on a narrative analysis of the content of two popular Indonesian soap operas and interviews with female viewers of the two soap operas. The soap operas studied are *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, which are two soap operas that are currently very popular in Indonesia.

*Ikatan Cinta* is currently being aired daily on RCTI (Rajawali Citra Television) at 20.00 (GMT + 7). It first aired on 19th October 2020 and has 1.025 episodes as of now (22 January 2023). *Ikatan Cinta* is telling the story of Andin and Elsa, two sisters who like the same man named Nino. Their relationship got worse when Elsa knows that Nino will be married to Andin. Elsa slandered Andin and said that Andin is getting pregnant with another man’s child. She also said that Andin has killed the man. Because of Elsa’s words, Andin got jailed and Nino did not want to admit that Andin is indeed pregnant with his child. After Andin got out of jail, she met with Aldebaran, Roy’s brother, who seeks revenge. However, Aldebaran fell in love with Andin and decided to adopt Andin’s child, thinking that the child is Roy’s child.

The duration per episode is variative, between 60 to 120 minutes. Five days after its first being aired on television, *Ikatan Cinta* got the highest rating for the program that aired on prime time. Museum Rekor Dunia Indonesia (Indonesia Museum of World Record) named *Ikatan Cinta* as a prime-time soap opera that has the biggest national audience share. It broke the record to have more than 40 percent of the audience share in 100 days constantly. It also got a lot of awards, both domestic and international awards. One of the biggest awards that it has achieved is the award from the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy as the best creative economy creation with the highest audience share. But *Ikatan Cinta* was losing its audience when Arya Saloka, the main actor in the soap opera, got into a scandal and needed to leave the soap opera. However, because of the demand of the audiences, Arya got cast again and *Ikatan Cinta* now has a stable rating again. Not only because of the change of the main character, but *Ikatan Cinta* also lost most of its audience share because of the new soap opera aired by the rival television channel.

*Cinta Setelah Cinta* is a soap opera that airs on SCTV (Suryacitra Television) every day at 19.00 (GMT + 7). Because it airs in prime time, *Cinta Setelah Cinta* is one of the biggest rivals of *Ikatan Cinta*. The story goes with Starla and Niko that are happily married to each other. They have a daughter and a son together and everyone thinks that they are the perfect family. Little did they know, Niko is having an affair with Ayu, their old friend from high school. Ayu’s husband knew about their affair.
and tried to catch them but he, Ayu, and Niko got into an accident. Ayu's husband is declared brain dead and he donated his heart to Niko. Being thankful to Ayu, Starla never suspected Ayu and Niko's relationship. When Starla found out about the affair, she asked Niko to divorce her but Niko insisted that he will never leave Starla.

*Cinta Setelah Cinta* first aired on 16th May 2022 and now it has 360 episodes (22 January 2023) with a duration of about 60 to 100 minutes per episode. It was nominated as the most popular primetime program at Indonesian Television Awards 2022. Their main actor and actress also got nominated at the same event. The program itself is not only being aired on television, but also on the VOD platform called Vidio.

The reason why we chose these two soap operas is that *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta* are two primetime programs that have a high audience share. The scriptwriters for these two soap operas are also women. They also have the same stories that revolve around women and their struggles in married life. The women characters got betrayed by their husbands but they still need men to continue with their life. These two soap operas showed women's subjectivity as being the subject of patriarchy. Despite the same main theme of the stories, their audience shares are still higher than any other programs that air at primetime.

4. Women in Indonesian soap operas

Based on the narrative analysis carried out on the two soap operas *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, there are various visualizations, symbols, and dialogs that weaken and marginalize women and position them as subordinate to men. In addition, it was found that several women who acted as subjects objectified women as well. The objectification of women in this study is interpreted as a process of degradation of women's roles and abilities.

4.1 Women in Indonesian soap operas

The decline in Indonesian local film production in the 1990s made many filmmakers turn to soap operas, and women filmmakers were no exception. One of them is Ida Farida, who made her debut as a soap opera writer and director in the 1990s [27]. This marked the beginning of the emergence of many female filmmakers in the television industry.

The director in *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta* development is a male director, but the screenwriters for the two soap operas are women. The screenwriter for *Ikatan Cinta* is Donna Rosamayna, who uses a pen name Theresia Fransisca. The development of *Cinta Setelah Cinta* also involved a woman screenwriter, Serena Luna.

In the textual system, it is assumed that content created by women usually constructs a narrative motif based on women's wishes and processes what is received by the audience based on women's point of view [28]. However, based on an analysis of the content of the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, the storyline and characterizations of female subjects still reflect women's views that are in line with men's perspectives as well as gender-biased patriarchal values. The storyline and the characterization of female subjects in the soap opera contain various objectification of women.

The female screenwriters in the two soap operas are subjects who have the power to make powerful stories, but instead, they create storytelling that weakens and demeans women. The objectification carried out by female screenwriters also
produces female characters who, as subjects, are also involved in objectifying women. There is a scene in the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* that depicts a female entrepreneur declaring her resignation as the head of the company because she thinks that a man, her son-in-law, is a more suitable person to become a company leader. The built-up story does not present scenes related to aspects of competence for someone who deserves to be a company leader, only that he is a man of the family and he is the one who has the right and ability to be a leader. Another scene reveals the thoughts of a woman who is able to work professionally so that she has a higher career position than her male partner, but then thinks that her success is the reason for her partner leaving her. In addition, in *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, there is a scene that represents a wife who at first dares to express her life choices but ultimately chooses to remain silent when forced to comply with her husband’s decision, even though it differs from her wishes and/or life choices.

Referring to these findings, women screenwriters as subjects actually objectify women. In addition, the representation of the main female character in the storyline of the soap operas they wrote also objectifies women themselves. The perspective of women in soap operas, instead of giving views that are unique to women and siding with women, reinforces men’s perspectives and existing patriarchal values. The existence of women writers as subjects actually become a subject that perpetuates women’s unconsciousness toward the objectification of themselves. The audience is only seen as a segmentation that needs to fulfill their desires or be supported by their way of thinking (even if it harms them) so that soap operas can be easily accepted and enjoyed by many women [28].

In the end, media content is in line with the media agenda, which prioritizes its interests to have high-rating soap operas. In other words, female screenwriters play a more important role in maintaining the audience segmentation of soap operas as a market and the high rating obtained becomes a reference. When the storyline and characterizations of the characters in a soap opera produce high ratings, no changes are deemed necessary. Therefore, the existence of women writers as subjects of power in writing soap opera scripts has not been able to produce various alternative thoughts to make women respect themselves more and have more confidence in their own abilities.

Based on several descriptions of the content of the two soap operas analyzed, it can be said that a woman who makes up a story in a film is not necessarily able and aware that, as a subject, she can produce images of women who are not gender biased or objectify women. In other ways, a story about feminists is not always determined by a female writer or director, but by whether gender-biased values and the process of objectifying women are contained therein or not [29].

Encouraging and supporting women to act as subjects in the media industry is not enough to influence media content or soap opera stories that are pro-women. However, efforts are needed to build awareness about women’s perspectives on women as subjects who can be involved in producing content that are more pro-women by not demeaning women and subordinating women to men.

### 4.2 Narrative analysis of women in soap operas

Subjectification in soap operas occurs when women have a position as a subject, either as a screenwriter or a female character in the story, which will still represent objectification to herself, or a woman who does not fit her position as an autonomous subject. Meanwhile, objectification occurs through thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors
that demean women both in terms of weakness, incompetence, and inappropriateness in their position as autonomous subjects.

The soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta* present women as the main characters that construct reality both about themselves and about other people. The depiction of women shown as subjects in both soap operas is deemed quite interesting, in which there are women as wives who are described as having independent characteristics and able to survive when their husbands are not around. Apart from that, there are women who succeeded in their careers, women who are mistresses, and women who are cheated by their husbands.

Based on the narrative analysis of the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, this study examines four elements of narrative which include the plot, premise, characters (characterizations), and the conflict that occurs [12, 13]. Through this narrative analysis, the objectification of women will be revealed in the content of soap operas whose scripts are written by women, meaning that as a screenwriter, she has a position as a subject.

### 4.2.1 Storylines that subordinate women

Based on the analysis of the storyline, it was found that the plot that directs the women's lives tends to be very dependent on men and even becomes subordinate to men. The storyline of *Ikatan Cinta* follows how Andin, as the main female character, has to go through various trials and sufferings caused by the struggle between a man and her sister, Elsa. Her sister even slandered Andin in order to get the man she wanted resulting in the destruction of Andin's household and Andin had to be imprisoned.

Even though the plot of *Ikatan Cinta* develops and Andin later finds her happiness with another man, Andin is still placed in a subordinated position. Andin still places herself as a woman who depends on men, in this case, her own husband. In episode 397, Andin said that she was very grateful that her husband had returned because the integrity of the family was in her husband's hands. In episode 398 Andin also said that she was sure she would be fine because her husband would take care of her when she was sick.

This is reinforced by the meaning created by the audience who say that the title literally means “bonds of love.” The use of the word ‘bond’ becomes the main thread that there is an understanding that both parties are bound to each other, in this case, the main character involved. However, when the “bond” is associated with the word “love,” the meaning of women and men becomes different. Culturally, the bond of love that occurs between a man and a woman will make a woman an unequal partner regarding the continuity of the bond of love. In a romantic relationship, culturally, Indonesian society tends to place women as the party responsible for its continuity. Therefore, women must place themselves lower, be more patient, or be more supportive of men or their partners because if the bond of love cannot be maintained, the woman tends to be blamed. Even women feel they have no right to sue their partners when they are unfaithful.

One of these thoughts is manifested in the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, which tells the story of the struggle to get a man between the female characters in this soap opera. In the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, two women who are bound by a debt of gratitude fight over one man who then brings a lot of problems in everyone's life. Starla, the main female character, has to accept her destiny of losing her husband, who in the story is taken by another woman. The soap opera also creates a storyline
that places Starla as a woman who feels that she cannot fight or defend her marriage. This happens a lot because the woman thinks it is her fault or she does not feel worthy of demanding her husband respect her marriage.

It's not enough to place Starla as a woman who cannot do anything when her husband treats her badly, this soap opera also creates a storyline that depicts Starla's husband considering Starla a lowly woman because she cannot do anything about his affair. Then his partner not only has an affair but marries his mistress even though he has not divorced Starla. The storyline seems to place Starla as a weak person, causing her husband to marry another woman, showing that again the woman is blamed.

Even when a woman does not feel guilty for breaking up their relationship because a man or his partner broke or weakened the bond of love between them, she will look for other women to blame instead of blaming the man or her partner. This happened with the emergence of the term “pelakor” (mistress) in the soap opera. In episode 262, Starla and her husband argue about her husband's affair. Starla then said the term “pelakor” toward the woman who is having an affair with her husband. The term “pelakor” among Indonesian women refers to the abbreviation of the phrase “perebut laki orang” (taking other’s men) which means that it is the mistress themselves who seize married men or not because the men are unfaithful or even like to chase other women who do not like the man at first or do not want to accept the man. Even though there is a possibility that the mistress may seduce others' husbands, as a man, he also has a responsibility to avoid these temptations and commit himself to the bond of love with the woman he has chosen as a lover or wife. The word “pelakor” does not see that possibility or does not think in that way, the term represents the way of thinking that women are wrong and they should be responsible for supporting men so that they can become good men. They have to be there to please and support men even when they hurt them.

Referring to the discussion above, the title of the bond of love (Ikatan Cinta) in terms of the storyline has directed to a story that places women as the subordinate of men, especially in their love relationships. Meanwhile, the issue of infidelity and the term “pelakor” in the soap opera Cinta Setelah Cinta emphasizes that a woman's job is to support a man and must try to prevent a man from making a mistake. Therefore, wives and women who are seduced by men must be able to act to make the man a loyal husband. It is the wife's fault if her husband has an affair with another woman. It is the woman's fault if a man is tempted by her, but if a man seduces a woman, then it is the woman's fault if she is tempted. Therefore, the existence of women is for the benefit of men and makes men become respectable or good figures even though women have to make sacrifices to achieve this. If it does not work then as a woman, she is a failure, as a wife, she deserves to be betrayed, as a woman who has an affair deserves to be blasphemed as a seducer of married men (pelakor).

4.2.2 Men in Women's life

The premise is important in the narrative analysis of a film because the premise contained in a film will color the entire storyline. Through the premise of women, the soap operas Ikatan Cinta and Cinta Setelah Cinta build storylines about the female characters in the two soap operas. The question that arises is what kind of premise does to the story of Ikatan Cinta and Cinta Setelah Cinta have or is based on.

Based on an analysis of the soap opera Ikatan Cinta through the life stories of its female characters (Andin & Elsa), a conflict is presented between the two women
because they love the same man, Nino. Nino, as Andin's husband, also secretly accepts Elsa's presence as his life partner. This situation led to various conflicts in the lives of women so it became an obstacle to the happiness of the two women. A woman's life is centered on a man as a partner or a person who is loved by both women. The happiness of women and their sadness too originate from men. In other words, this soap opera turns women whose roles are protagonists into subjects who, through their choices, then objectify themselves by making a man who is unfaithful to their marriage as a subject that determines their happiness.

The premise that men are the determining subject of happiness in a woman's life even though the man hurts her is also reflected in the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta*. In the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, there is a woman named Starla, whose life seems perfect, but later her husband commits an affair and marries another woman without her knowledge. Starla's life then becomes full of suffering because she has to accept her husband's infidelity in her marriage.

The two soap operas with hundreds of episodes continue to extend the story to tell the story of a woman's struggle to get happiness from the man she loves even though he has betrayed her. Some of the good scenes in *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta* even suggest that women chosen as the mistress only have a negative impression. There are efforts to make men as parties who actually become victims of the women they are having an affair with. Meanwhile, the female antagonist in this soap opera also ends up regretting all of her actions. She feels that she is living uncomfortably after getting the man she originally wanted because the man is not what she expected. In other words, men are again positioned as the center of women's lives.

In addition, although Andin as the main character is a woman who works as a lecturer, the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* emphasizes Andin's role as a wife. As a woman, her role as a wife is more dominant. She does not forget her main duties as a wife and as a mother who continues to take care of her child while her husband focuses on his career. Other women in the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* are also described as women who have power and appear actively in public spaces such as working and having high positions in a company, but they still place themselves under the power of men. In episode 896, Andin's mother says that Andin's husband is now responsible for all company decisions. Even though the owner of the company is Andin's mother, she still gives full power to men, in this case, her son-in-law or Andin's husband.

4.2.3 Women and femininity

Feminine or femininity should be understood as the attitude or behavior shown by someone [30] both male and female. However, feminine characteristics are then better known as attitudes and behaviors attached to women. Research reveals that when women confirm feminine values in themselves, this will affect their attitudes and behavior [31].

The female characters in both soap operas, namely Andin (*Ikatan Cinta*) and Starla (*Cinta Setelah Cinta*) are described as independent women but still spoiled. She is also an obedient figure to her husband who is a perfect embodiment of a wife in a patriarchal view. This view was received by the audience who revealed in the interview that Andin is a pious wife because she obeys her husband's words. In episode 397 there is a scene showing Andin trying to serve her husband in the car by providing him with a drink and asking if his husband wants a massage.

Besides that, the spoiled nature that is attached to women also appeared in episode 896 which was shown in the scene at the hospital, when Andin said that she could
only fall asleep if her husband came to sleep with her because she was sick. This
dialog provides a view that women feel weak and need protection from men who are
considered stronger.

The female characters in *Cinta Setelah Cinta* are described as women who have
problems with their household life. Starla as the main female character has a character
that tries to look tough but the soap opera, through its narrative, also shows that Starla
feels weak. The character Sukma in episode 167 also describes a woman who accepts
all the circumstances and problems she faces as a form of women's responsibility that
must be able to save their own household life. When they cannot overcome problems
in their marriage, they think they have to accept this fact and keep it to themselves.
Because as a woman, Sukma understands that the failure of her marriage will be
judged by society because she cannot become an ideal woman with the feminine
values she should have had.

4.2.4 Women's conflict as the Core of the story

In general, the conflicts presented in the soap operas *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta
Setelah Cinta* are conflicts between women and themselves and other women who
both make men the center of their lives. Men, with all their betrayal toward women,
are still considered as a source of women's happiness in these two soap operas. Women
must fight so that in the end it is her who is finally chosen by men in their life.

In the soap opera *Ikatan Cinta*, the female characters Andin and Elsa experience
conflict because they want the same man, Nino. When Nino became Andin's husband,
Elsa had a personal conflict with her feelings of jealousy. The conflict developed into
an open conflict against Andin when Elsa slandered Andin to destroy her household.

In the soap opera *Cinta Setelah Cinta*, the main conflict that occurs is the affair
committed by Starla's husband. This conflict becomes the culmination of various
problems that occur in the lives of the female characters. Starla must be faced with her
husband's infidelity and their divorce. The female character named Ayu is a woman
who is involved in an affair with Starla's husband and gets bad views from those
around her with the nickname *pelakor* (a woman who takes another's husband). This
means that Ayu is considered to be the person responsible for the affair itself.

The female characters in these soap operas are generally involved in various
conflicts motivated by their dependence on men. The conflicts they experience with
themselves or other women are generally due to men's attitudes and behavior that
do not align with their expectations. The interesting thing is that these soap operas
emphasize the open conflict between women rather than the open conflict between
women and men.

5. Discussion

In soap operas, the presence of women is represented in two modes of existence,
namely discursive and material [24]. They are represented in a discursive fashion
through images, symbolic systems, and language. In the material mode, women are
represented as they really are through their physical appearance, physical strength,
and ability to speak and act. Both of these modes are present simultaneously in the
female characters depicted in the two soap operas analyzed in this study; women,
both as screenwriters and their works as well as female characters in the various
characteristics and roles that exist in said soap operas.
The presence of women as screenwriters, independent wives, and entrepreneurs or professionals who are successful in their careers is the material presence of women which provides an alternative to the image of women that are considered as mere objects. However, discursively in the dialog that occurs or in the narration of the thoughts of the female characters presented in the soap operas as material subjects, they still represent women as objects or subjectification. These women present ways of thinking which are represented in various visualizations and dialogs both symbolically and narratively in various storylines.

A female screenwriter has a position as a subject who has access and power to represent women in a way that is different from the male point of view, both from the discursive and material existence of women. However, access and power are not enough to make a female subject able to become one that is not gender biased or different from the male perspective towards women. A female screenwriter as a female subject can also objectify women or self-objectify in accordance with the perspective of men who objectify women. Referring to the involvement of women in the process of objectifying women in soap operas, a narrative analysis of soap operas as media content is needed. Based on the narrative analysis which includes the storyline, premise, characters, and conflicts, there are important things that can be understood in the two soap operas studied.

The storyline of soap opera *Ikatan Cinta* and *Cinta Setelah Cinta* is an illustration that serves as an example of self-objectification by female screenwriters and the characters she created. What the female subject does, as a screenwriter, makes women, in this case female characters and female audiences, participate in positioning or accepting the role of women as objects.

This situation makes women increasingly alienated from their subjectivity as Rosalind has observed towards women in Europe who presented themselves as objects [11]. This is also in line with the idea that states that the results of self-objectification make women more vulnerable in fighting against an unjust gender status quo and also in their participation in collective action aimed at fighting the status quo itself [20]. The storylines and female characters in the two soap operas studied cannot be separated from their underlying premises. Both soap operas were built on the premise that men are the center of women’s lives and also the main source of women’s happiness.

Women who are involved in objectifying women, either themselves or other women, ultimately place themselves as a powerless woman. Loughnan et al. [32] also found that women who recalled situations that involved themselves objectifying other women led them to see their own as inhumane and immoral. Therefore, the consequence of self-objectification experienced by women is a change in their personal free will, including the perception of their right to make their choices freely and consciously [33]. Referring to the soap operas studied, the conflicts that arise describe more conflicts created by women, both conflicts within themselves (internal conflicts) and conflicts with other women (external conflicts). There is a tendency that the conflicts that arise are conflicts based on women’s choices to make men the source of their happiness and think that this is what they have to fight for, even though the men ignore or hurt them.

The analysis of the soap operas studied show that media content still reinforces the power of patriarchal culture and the male perspective on women, which makes women as objects that are degraded, marginalized, and oppressed in their life or social relations by men. Female audiences are convinced by the soap opera that a wife is very dependent on her husband, a woman is not worthy to be a leader, or a woman who is successful in her career or has a higher position than her partner will be abandoned by her partner.
The findings above are in line with other research regarding the representation of women's images in the media, the media constructs women as a form of fulfillment of the gender dichotomy. Women still have an image that reinforces masculine hegemony in media [34]. More specifically, the results of this study are in line with Supratman [34]'s research which also confirms Chesney-Lind's argument, that the image of women is shown through female characters that are dependent, friendly, fragile in relationships, and submissive in their domestic life. This image is considered as an answer to discriminatory practices against women. This is also the reason why women are often portrayed as victims while men are portrayed as perpetrators in the media. The media's construction of women's images is still considered as fulfilling the institutional system of gender and women's subordination because the media's image of women is still in the character of being dependent on men, resigned to life, taking care of children, or fragile in maintaining relationships [34].

6. Conclusion

The feminist movement, especially those that focus on the influence of the media on gender-biased or unfair social constructions towards women, still has big challenges. The first conference of the Council of Europe Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality [35] concluded that the media's treatment of women and the reproduction of female stereotypes are related to violence against women in everyday life. Stereotypes and sexist representations affect women as citizens and violate their human rights. It should also be noted that all the processes that occur in the media today do not only make men as subjects who objectify women but also actively involve women in objectifying women.

Further studies are needed on media content related to stereotypes and sexism, freedom of expression and gender equality, the position of women in the media, and new media as a tool for positive change. Referring to the study conducted on soap operas in Indonesia, the Indonesian government needs to encourage the inclusion of gender issues in the education curriculum from an early age so that a perspective that is not gender biased can be built from the start. The government must also push for the enactment of the Broadcasting Conduct Guidelines and Broadcasting Standard Guidelines which prohibit the publication of content that objectifies women, contains sexist values and is gender biased in broadcast media, especially television, without violating freedom of expression in the media.

Feminists must work together with independent groups regarding control of media content, whether with academia, women's groups, or an alliance of media professionals to develop awareness regarding the influence of media on audiences. In addition, cooperation is also needed in an effort to develop awareness about gender values that are fair to women and women's perspectives that are different from men's perspectives on women.

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