

Representation of Women's Autonomy in Decision-Making in the Film *The Day Before the Wedding*

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Abstract. In the modern era, films are often a visual force representing women and their struggles in realizing gender equality. The battle for gender equality aims to address the injustices faced by women in various aspects of life. Despite significant progress in achieving gender equality, women still often face challenges in gaining full autonomy over their lives due to male dominance. This research aims to analyze the representation of women's autonomy in decision-making and life choices in the film *The Day Before The Wedding*. This research is a descriptive qualitative research using a feminist approach. The study found that female characters in *The Day Before the Wedding* showed significant female autonomy. These characters are portrayed as having the strength and courage to challenge patriarchal norms and fight for their rights. This research enriches the literature on women's representation in the media, particularly in film. Thus, this research not only adds insight into literary criticism and feminist theory but also paves the way for further research on gender representation in the media.

Keywords: representation, women's autonomy, existential feminism.

1 Introduction

The film, as a visual narrative media, not only functions as a means of entertainment but also has symbolic power and profound meaning to represent various social realities in society [1]. Representation produces and exchanges meaning using images, symbols, and language [2]. One of the social realities that is often a theme in films is the stigma against women in the social sphere, such as gender stereotypes, restrictions on women's roles, and the challenges women face in fighting for their right to autonomy. The feminist issue of particular concern in film and gender studies is existentialist feminism. Existentialist feminism, rooted in Simone de Beauvoir's thoughts in her book *The Second Sex*, emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and women's autonomy in facing restrictive patriarchal structures.[3],[4].

The film "The Day Before Wedding" by Razka Robby Ertanto is a film that can represent feminist issues, especially regarding women's autonomy. The film uses narrative and symbolism to highlight women's struggle to gain freedom and the right to determine their destiny despite social pressures and expectations. Through its characters, this film shows how the strength of women can face and fight stigma and achieve independence and autonomy. This research aims to analyze the representation of women's autonomy in the film *The Day Before Wedding* and examine how this film contributes to the discourse of existentialist feminism. Thus, it is hoped that this

research can make a valuable contribution to film studies and gender studies, as well as offering a new perspective on the representation of women in contemporary cinema. The present study contributes to the existing body of research on the film *The Day Before the Wedding* from the perspective of existentialist feminism. This research addresses a gap in the existing literature by examining Jakarta women's efforts to achieve autonomy in decision-making processes as depicted in the film.

2 Methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, with the research data source being the film *The Day Before Wedding*. Data was collected using Capturing the Phenomenon. The first step is to collect audio-visual data from the film, then analyze it regarding structure, language, and its correlation to existentialist feminism. The classified data was analyzed using critical discourse methods with Simon de Beauvoir's concept of existential feminism. The representation of autonomous women will be shown through characters, dialogue, and visual symbolism in the film, which has the meaning of conveying the struggle of female characters to achieve independence and freedom over their rights to life.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Women's Autonomy Over Career Aspirations in the Film *The Day Before the Wedding*

Women are considered to be in a lower position than men and, therefore, subject to restrictions in pursuing career aspirations [5],[6]. Career aspirations are an individual's desire or ambition to obtain a job that suits their interests, goals, and skills[7]. The film "The Day Before the Wedding" provides a new view by depicting the struggle of Clara, a wedding dress cosplayer who continues to fight for her dream of becoming a flight attendant even though her parents hinder her.



Figure 1. Clara undergoes a flight attendant test.
(Source: *The Day Before the Wedding*, Time Code: 00:25:30).

In this scene, Clara appears confidently to represent how women can have autonomy in determining and pursuing the career they want, regardless of the obstacles. Clara's struggle to become a flight attendant symbolizes women's courage in fighting for the rights to freedom and independence that they want to achieve in achieving their professional dreams and goals in the future. The strength of this woman's principles can also be seen in her refusal to return to her hometown and stay in the village, as advised by her parents. He remained steadfast in fighting for his ideals even though he faced various difficulties, especially amidst the lack of income and support from his family.



Figure 2. Notification of the announcement of Clara's selection results.
(Source: The Day Before the Wedding, Time Code: 00:26:35).

Visual images contain coded representations of reality that can reach many social segments[8]. The visual includes a message about Clara's achievement for her hard work. The announcement of the selection results was a significant turning point in Clara's journey and proved that her hard work and determination had paid off. This moment strengthens the theme of women's autonomy in the film, showing that with dedication and courage, women can overcome the limitations imposed by society on women's career aspirations.

3.2 Women's Autonomy over Marriage in the Film The Day Before the Wedding

The film "The Day Before the Wedding" also represents how women take control of their lives, especially in friendship and family relationships. The critical decisions taken by the main character, Clara, represent women's autonomy in choosing their path in life.



Figure 3. Clara and Kinan are on their way home.
(Source: The Day Before the Wedding, Time Code: 01:06:20).

Views in the social norms of a patriarchal society often assume that a woman's ideal life is determined more by the presence of men, especially in marriage[9]. The main female character in this film dares to decide not to be dependent on men financially and in status. They dared to go home to their families to report an out-of-wedlock pregnancy that they had not previously expected. This courage is not about daring to justify pregnancies outside of marriage but about how women dare to speak out and continue living with their own choices amidst the challenges they face. Humans are free to make any judgment and are not guided by values constructed by previous society[3].



Picture 3. Clara and Kinan are apologizing to each other and hugging each other.
(Source: The Day Before the Wedding, Time Code: 01:05:20).

Friendship is a relationship in which two people spend time together, interact in various situations, and provide each other with emotional support[10]. In the film "The Day Before the Wedding," Clara and Kinan represent how friendship from women can be a source of strength and support in facing life's challenges. Research indicates that support among women often provides high intimacy and emotional support. This stems from women's tendency to be more open in sharing their feelings and personal experiences and their ability to offer empathy and attentive listening. This support provides emotional comfort and strengthens resilience in facing challenges.

4 Conclusion

This research shows that the film *The Day Before Wedding* can represent women's autonomy in decision-making. This film depicts a woman who fights for her right to career autonomy despite opposition from her parents and dares to become a single parent. Every scene in the movie successfully represents women's courage in fighting patriarchal norms. This film emphasizes the importance of women's freedom and independence in determining the direction of their own lives.

In addition, this film also highlights the power of friendship between women as a significant source of emotional support. This film shows that solid friendships between women can overcome social and personal challenges. This research enriches the literature on the representation of women in the media, especially films, and makes an essential contribution to the existentialist feminist discourse.

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