

**Critical Phenomenology : The Essence of @Tarabasro Instagram Followers Experience  
about Beauty Standards**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to find the essence of @tarabasro instagram followers' experience about beauty standards using a critical phenomenology approach. Beauty standards are one of the social issues that are happening in today's society and have impacted many women. In Indonesia, beauty standards have been constructed since the colonial era and the understanding of beauty in Indonesia still looked up to the western standards. The method used in this research is using a qualitative approach using Clark Moustakas theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology to assist a step-by-step process of conducting a phenomenological study with the object of women who follow Tara Basro between the age of 18 to 34 years old. The primary data used through an in-depth interview from four informants and relevant journals. The key findings of this research is that the informants are experiencing the negative effect of beauty standards in Indonesia, resulting in body dysmorphia, eating disorders and lack of self- acceptance. After finding Tara Basro's Instagram page the informants have a new perspective in how they see beauty standards which inspires them to love herself and embrace their natural appearance without having to meet beauty standards in Indonesia and thus in Indonesia it need more representation from actresses or influencer who have big following to not pushing the agenda of beauty standards rather that to spread the awareness of the importance to love their body without limits.

**Key Words: beauty standards, social media, essence of experience**

**INTRODUCTION**

Beauty standards have been a social issue faced by women since a long time ago, as women are faced with certain criteria in order for them to be justified as beautiful in society. Women have been a minority group for a long time. Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958) describe a minority group as distinguished by four characteristics as (1)

discrimination and a lack of control over their lives, (2) distinct physical or cultural characteristics, (3) membership in an organization against one's will and (4) consciousness of subordination. Above all the characteristics, women still fell into all characteristics given. In the society itself, women are seen as a second class citizen as

every language and culture tends to be male dominated and this debate traced back to biblical time.

Societal expectations are based on one's biological gender, and because women live in a men-dominated world, the way women should behave and look is defined by the men's perspective of ideal, including the perfect way to behave and look like. This results in women having to live in a world where the male point of view is the norm for them, and the beauty standard is one of many views that men set. Women's magazines had ten and a half times more advertisements and articles advocating weight reduction than men's publications, according to a study that was published in the journal *Portrayal of Women in Media* (2015) by DR. Deepenjali Mishra. This research was published in 2015. The importance of a woman's having a slender figure as a proxy for her value is driven home even further by television and the film industry. Over three quarters of female characters in television are underweight, and just one out of twenty are over the normal size. Overweight actresses are likely to receive unfavorable remarks from a man about their bodies, and underweight actresses prefer to receive positive compliments about their bodies.

The entertainment business in Indonesia has set a norm for the ideal sort of women by creating a beauty standard in Indonesia, it can be seen in many advertisements for beauty products in Indonesia and the most common is a product that can claim to make your skin appear brighter. As the technology changes and now the accessibility of the internet is inevitable, the rise of social media is at its peak and the use of social media in Indonesia continues to increase, impacting the good and also the bad to the society and social media has fallen into a description of new media which describe as a set of communication technology that share certain features apart from being new, made possible by digitalization and being widely available for personal use as a communication device (Dennis McQuaill, 1986:136).

By extending the divide between private and public life, new media have a variety of consequences on social integration in today's network society. This gap may also widen due to the new electronic highway and new media's direct influence on individual life projects (Rasmussen, 2000:160). Social media that are frequently used are WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Telegram, Twitter, FaceBook Messenger, Line and Pinterest.. Since there are so many

active Instagram users as well as advances in photo editing and reshaping technology, the unrealistic beauty standards about the ideal body and appearance have been created and the negative influence on women, which is also strongly influenced by celebrities and also models who use Instagram and use photo enhancement and retouching techniques and normalize the unrealistic beauty standard. As mentioned in the article "Instagram users in Indonesia are dominated by women and the millennial generation," (Mustafa Iman, 2020) the use of social media Instagram in Indonesia is heavily dominated by women.

There were 69.2 million active Instagram users in Indonesia from January to May 2020, according to data from Napoleon Cat. This number jumped to 62.47 million in February, 64 million in March, and 69.2 million by May. Tara Basro is an Indonesian actress born in Jakarta, June 11 1990. She's an actress known for multiple films which are *Impetigore* (2019), *A Copy of My Mind* (2015), and *Satan's Slaves* (2017). Tara Basro has 662k Followers on Instagram and there she speaks about body positivity with her post on Instagram on March 3, 2020. In her post, she posted two pictures showcasing her body with the caption post " Dari dulu yang selalu gue denger dari orang adalah hal

jelek tentang tubuh mereka, akhirnya gue pun terbiasa ngelakuin hal yang sama.. Mengkritik dan menjelek2kan. Andaikah kita lebih terbiasa untuk melihat hal yang baik dan positif, bersyukur dengan apa yang kita miliki dan make the best out of it daripada fokus dengan apa yang kita tidak miliki. Setelah perjalanan yang panjang gue bisa bilang kalau gue cinta sama tubuh gue dan gue bangga akan itu. Let yourself bloom." Which got a lot of support from her followers in her comment section. According to Kompas.com in the article of "Lelah Ikuti Standar Kecantikan, Tara Basro Unggah Foto Curvy" written by Dian Reinis Kumampung published on March 4 2020 quoted Tara replied to one of comments in her IG post asking what happened to her body as previously she's known for always exercising and eating healthy and she replied to " in the past i always pushed my body beyond the limit, the important thing was to fit in to beauty standard that was in my head, but after learned how to listen to what your body needs and wants. You can be wiser and happier" she wrote. Many women feel empowered by her post because many actresses in Indonesia are rarely ever talked about representing natural beauty to their audiences. Many of her audiences feel represented by Her because women in

Indonesia come with different shades of skin color, different body type and the media in Indonesia rarely represents other types of beauty there. Other than her first post showing off her curvy body, she's also actively posting photos that empower natural, unfilter face and body and thus, the object of this research is an account on Instagram of @Tarabasro who are Indonesia actress with 662k followers on Instagram who are actively spread body positivity message through her social media and this research is to know how Tara Basro Instagram followers understand what is beauty standard after following Tara Basro and if they are more likely to leave the perception of old stigma of beauty standard in Indonesia which are namely having a fair skin tone and slim body towards beauty standard that empowers natural beauty and referencing to the Tara Basro Instagram post between her first body positivity movement on March 2020 to Tara Basro post February of 2022.

With the speed of information that can be conveyed through social media Instagram, which is a new media that uses digital technology and describes available content using various forms of electronic communication made possible through the use of computer technology, Instagram and

the Instagram account @Tarabasro become objects of how someone's followers can follow. who have a big influence on their followers interpret the issue of beauty standards that exist in society in the midst of modernization and digital era.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Standpoint Theory**

Sandra Harding and Patricia Hill Collins developed the notion of point of view. Later, Julia Wood and Marsha Houston applied this idea to the study of scientific communication. The idea of the point of view of evaluating how the conditions of an individual's existence impact the behavior of individuals in comprehending and influencing the social environment (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008:135). Standpoint theory examines how a person's experiences shape their conceptions of the social world and the people in it. An individual's perspective is influenced by his or her social and political experiences, according to standpoint theory's most fundamental premise.

The concept of layered understandings is central to Standpoint theory. These include intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality as well as many other aspects of

our identity from our own unique perspective. Women's dynamics can be better understood through the lens provided by standpoint theory. System power can be better understood with the help of standpoint theory. Everyday people's experiences form the foundation of this style, consumers of one's own reality, each person is a significant source of knowledge about one's own experiences. Due to the fact that the viewpoint of people who lack authority will be more objective than that of those in power. (Griffin,2006:483). If it is related to the issue of feminism, standpoint theory can be seen through the thoughts of Nancy Hartsock in 1983. This theory claims that experience, knowledge and behavior communication is formed in large parts of the social group to which they belong. Theory Standpoint does critical advocacy regarding the status quo because of the structure dominating power (West and Turner, 2011: 502. Standpoint theory put forward Hartsock has five assumptions regarding social life, namely (West & Turner, 2011 505). a.) Material life, class position will shape and limit understanding of social relations b.) The view of the group that power will form a relationship where all groups are forced to participate c.) The view of the suppressed group represents the

struggle d.) Understanding oppressed groups about injustice in relationships between groups will lead to a better "world" e.) They occupy places different in the social hierarchy. The five assumptions reveal that the material life that composes and limits understanding of social relations, is experiencing structure in two opposite ways. When there is a dominating group and a subordinate group, the dominant group's understanding will be limited and destructive. In addition to dominating group mentality, i.e. the man who dominates the current situation and state of society. The use of Standpoint theory in this research is to know the position of an oppressed group which in this research is women in how they see and face social issues that have been constructed by man. How a woman even in the era of technology is still faced with the social issue of beauty standards, to see from women experiences how they are still being oppressed by the dominant group and the dominant point of view in how they should look like and behave.

### **Radical Feminism Stream**

A radical feminist is one who argues the sex/gender system is the root of women's oppression and can be viewed as (Tong, 1998:69):

1. That women's were historically the first oppressed group
2. That women's oppression is the most widespread, existing in virtually ever known
3. That women's oppression is the deepest in that is the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be removed by other social changes such as the abolition society class
4. That women's oppression causes the most suffering to its victim, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, although the suffering may often go unrecognized because of the sexist prejudices of both from the oppressor and the victim
5. That women's oppression provides a conceptual model for understanding to all form of oppression

Women's subjugation has its roots in the deeply patriarchal sex or gender system, according to Kate Millet's sexual politics book from 1970, since the male and female relationship serves as an example for all other power relationships, she maintained that sex is political in the first place. If women are to be freed from patriarchy, male control must be eradicated from both the public and private spheres. Biological differences between men and women,

according to Millet (1970), are a hallmark of patriarchal ideologies that place males in positions of power and place women in a subordinate position. Even the very women they mistreat appear to be on board with their oppressors' oppression because of the strength of this ideology. The used of radical feminism stream in this research is to add resources of where women oppression is rooted in the patriarchal believes system and to understand more about the dynamics of power relations between man and women as women oppression is not only in political, social life but also in how a concept of beauty being oppressed by the definition created by man point of views.

### **New Media Theory**

Traditional media is distinct from new media. Printing media and broadcasting models enable simultaneous communication between individuals, the modification and dissemination of cultural items, and the connection of people from all over the world. In comparison to traditional media, new media has the power to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. Traditional media have a predisposition toward one-way communication in all processes, which means that messages communicated via traditional media have particular qualities that are concentrated from a single source to

the mass, or what is commonly referred to as audience. In contrast to new media, which places a premium on user-author interaction in order to promote mutual respect. Additionally, in new media, what are considered to be audiences (in traditional media) may act as both message supplier and consumer (Nasrullah, 2016; 14). As a result, contemporary media is more diverse in its sources and more interactive. In Indonesia, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are all popular types of social media. Boyd (2009) defines social media as a collection of software applications that enable users to engage, share information, and collaborate. On social media, user-generated content (UGC) is created by users, not editors (Nasrullah, 2016:11).

The use of new media theory in this research is to give an explanation in how new media shifted the new way of communication thus influencing how a message can be received by the audience and social media as a new platform in media used to deliver contents and make it possible for the sender to give content that can be accessible for people around the world without any barriers.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach, as according to Guba and Lincoln a qualitative

research is a multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials –case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts –that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals lives. (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:2) The type of research used is descriptive. The purpose of this kind of study is to compile a comprehensive, factual, and correct description of the traits and facts pertaining to a specific population or thing. Researchers already have concepts and conceptual framework, the following is a conceptual definition of the subject to be researched. This research will describe the essence of Tara Basro (@Tarabasro) followers about beauty standards as this approach will describe how her followers of this account will or will not push women into becoming beautiful physically. Using critical phenomenology design by meditating on the semi social structures that

enable and meaningfully influence our view of the world, critical phenomenology transcends conventional phenomenology.

With the research subject are women who used Instagram and followed Tara Basro between the age of 18 to 34 and used in-depth interview as data collection technique and later be processed with Clark Moustakas theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology to assist a step-by-step process of conducting a phenomenological study. It is from this free perspective where hypotheses and preconception phenomenological research methods are helpful in putting forth the individual's perceptions and experiences at very manipulating and questioning structural assumptions (Moustakas, 1994:12).

Data analysis used in this research is using the Van Kaam method (Moustaka, 2013:100).

## **DISCLOSURE**

### **Conclusion**

This research uses in- depth interview techniques to gain information from the four informants in regards to the essence of @tarabasro instagram followers about beauty standards. As the information is gained based on the interview, it then processes to be analyzed based on the

critical paradigm that challenges the status quo to relations with gender, class, education, economy, race, that contribute to a social system (Asghar, 2013: 3123) .

Based on the conceptual operationalization of this research, it follows three guidelines which are 1) beauty standards, 2) the essence of followers' experience and 3) beauty standards in Indonesia. The four informants describe the beauty standards in Indonesia as a standardization that exists in Indonesia's society to determine if a person is considered beautiful or not according to the Indonesia standards of beauty. Based on the information provided, the concept of Indonesian beauty standards comes from several factors, but the main root is happening since the colonial time where white and western beauty is seen as superior. Even beauty can be described by many definitions, but one prominent conclusion based on the four informants is the importance of having fair skin and a slim body.

The four informants are Tara Basro followers on Instagram as they are aware about the feminist movement done by her. They stated that they receive a new understanding about beauty and self appreciation through Tara Basro feminism movement on Instagram. They describe their



experience as a new way to see and appreciate beauty that comes not only by the society standards but in how they appreciate and embrace themselves without wanting to change their appearances. They also stated that by following Tara Basro, it gave them an inspiration for them to be more brave and inspired by what Tara Basro is doing which is not following the social standards and creating one's value that can make them happy in their own body. The four informants feel connected to Tara Basro Instagram because they feel Instagram is a type of social media where it is very easy for them to compare themselves to others and to other influencers and by following Tara Basro, they receive a sense of similarity because Tara Basro is a big name actresses that mostly in Indonesia, there are not many of actresses or influencer that are not supporting the beauty standards. Usually most of these actresses accept an endorsement type of content and it is not rare to see that they are promoting whitening products or slimming products to their audience and by seeing Tara Basro content that are not supporting the idea of having to be white and skinny or changing the natural appearance of their body is refreshing for the to see. They also stated that in Indonesia, it needs more of this type of influencer that

is similar to what Tara Basro did so that the audience is not caught on the beauty standards. Beauty standards in Indonesia, according to what the four informants have stated, are considered white, slim, tall, pointy nose, smooth face, no acne, no body hair and straight hair. This all criteria is what all the four informants internalize of what is considered beauty in Indonesia. Because of this criteria on beauty standards, it has impacted them in many ways including pressure from a male, family, friends and even pressure from social media. The four informants have received negative impressions of how beauty standards have affected them and resulted in physical and mental consequences like having an eating disorder, anxiety to participate in the society and questioning one's self worth. They also stated that this is worsened by the advertisement of products they saw on TV where many products in Indonesia are selling whitening and slimming products so that their consumers can feel more beautiful. They don't feel represented by it and therefore they receive bad consequences because of the beauty standards.

### **Limitation**

Based on the findings from this research, researchers find a limitation when doing this research in how informants try to change

their perceptions in how they look up Tara Basro body positivity movements. The limitations if find on the third informants where she's stated that even she feel inspire to be brave as Tara Basro, she stated in her interviews that she is trying to change her perspective about beauty standards that is being presented in the media but she feels like it is still hard for her to be as brave as her and she believes she still in the process of trying to overcome her old believes about beauty standards. Other limitations i have found is based on the second informants

'where because her family also close peers is the one that promote the old believes of beauty standards, she finds it even when she have her own believes and thought, being constantly with someone who still endures the concept of beauty standards because she still in the same environments, from the interviews it can shows her struggle how to overcome the believe that she need to change her appearances through plastic surgery and owning to herself and loving her natural appearances.

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