



Domestication of Soap Opera Stories: The “Battle” of Habitus and Capital Indonesian Woman Scriptwriter

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Abstract. The stories built into soap operas are distinctive in that they are always related to (domestic) household problems and are full of emotional scenes (hate, longing, love, anger, laughter, etc.). The story is dense with patriarchal values, with women almost always cast as victims and oppressed groups. There are currently a lot of female soap opera scriptwriters. Indeed, many soap operas that are popular in the community have a female scriptwriter. However, story patterns that portray women as second-class citizens persist. Through their involvement in the production of soap opera stories, this study aims to see women as text makers. The main focus is on how to “battle” habitus and capital from female scriptwriters in Indonesian soap opera story construction. This study employs a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative descriptive approach. According to the findings of this study, female scriptwriters are powerless against the “pressure” of patriarchal values in the existing social system and thus fail to transform stories of equality between men and women. What happened was that female screenwriters helped to perpetuate women’s domestication.

Keywords: Habitus · Capital · Women · Scriptwriter · Domestication

1 Introduction

In Indonesia, soap operas (“sinetron” an acronym for electronic cinema) are popular television broadcast programs. Soap operas, like dramas, present fragments of everyday human life that are always colored by long-running conflicts. For the past two decades, the convoluted and colorful storylines that characterize soap operas have succeeded in attracting public attention in Indonesia. Soap operas, as an entertainment genre program, must appear attractive and appealing. This encourages production companies to compete to produce soap operas by creating interesting stories and presenting well-known artists. TV serials or soap operas always have the most viewers when compared to other program genres because they are always broadcast during primetime, even though the number of shows is only 10% of the total broadcast time.

One of the distinguishing features of Indonesian soap operas is that the plots are always based on (domestic) household problems with emotional scenes (hate, longing,

love, anger, laughter, etc.). These stories are dense with patriarchal values, with women always cast as victims and oppressed groups. Women are used as subjects and objects, but only in a small area. Women are only placed as subjects to a certain extent; for example, when playing the opposite role, women are placed more as objects, namely when women's attractiveness, particularly in relation to their sexuality, is displayed in this manner. So it's not surprising that women are always used dominantly in building stories in soap operas.

It must be admitted that media products are still very gender-biased - including in Indonesia [1]. Women are always portrayed as second-class citizens [2], with roles as housewives, maids, or simply to spice up the scene by emphasizing aspects of their sexuality. In Indonesian soap operas, women are always portrayed as parties who never outnumber men. Women are always thought to be more fussy, and talkative, like to chat, can't finish work quickly, are full of emotion, complicated with make-up, always glorify their feelings, and so on [3, 4]. Women are constantly cast in the shadow of men, being described as cold-hearted, emotional, and in need of a male role to support them [5]. This demonstrates that soap operas and films are still popular forms of culture that are always dominated by the male mainstream.

There are many female soap opera scriptwriters in Indonesia nowadays. A female scriptwriter is responsible for many of today's popular soap operas. However, story patterns that portray women as second-class citizens persist. Despite the fact that they are women, the stories they are shown do not place women in a "better" position than male scriptwriters.

According to Bourdieu [6], the feminine-masculine division of labour is always dominated by the masculine, where the division of labour includes areas of opposition (both inside and outside the home), work tools, and work time. As much responsibility as possible does not diminish society's view of men as superiors in society or the dominant group [7]. Men are always assigned to the side of everything that is visible, whereas women are assigned to the side that is hidden. All of the dirtiest, most monotonous, and most despicable jobs are held by women. The issue is that women agree with this unequal practice and allow symbolic violence to continue as if it were natural.

Bourdieu [3, 5] developed the concept of habitus to investigate practical actions that people are not always aware of. A habit is a social habit attached to a person in the form of an enduring disposition, or a trained capacity and structured tendency to think, feel, and act in a determinant manner, which then guides them. Because habitus is not a motor skill of the body, but a non-reflective cognitive sense that arises from consistent experience, it is best understood in terms of practical categories [8]. Habitus is typically manifested in beliefs, thoughts, and habits that occur without or with individual awareness [9].

Bourdieu [6] introduces capital in addition to the concept of habitus (capital). Capital is what allows us to take advantage of opportunities in life. Intellectual capital (education), economic capital (money), and cultural capital are all examples of capital (background and network). Capital can be obtained if people develop the right habits. The various types of capital include social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital.

Capital, as a class that distinguishes itself, plays a fairly central role in social power relations because it provides a means of non-economic dominance and hierarchies

[10, 11]. Capital is a symbol of societal inequality [12]. Where capital ownership stratifies society.

The script becomes a very important and vital reference in the production of soap operas. A film cannot exist without a script, because the script serves as the foundation for what appears on the screen [13]. As a result, the presence of a scriptwriter is critical in determining the “colour” of the soap opera story [14]. In the battle between habitus and capital ownership of each individual involved in the production of soap operas, the role of a female scriptwriter (from identifying themes, and formulating ideas, to executing script writing), who has the opportunity to “fight” malestream, becomes important. The vital role and involvement of women in the creation of soap opera scripts (public domain) can serve as a foundation for women to be treated equally with men (and then be able to represent them in media texts). Unfortunately, female scriptwriters are never able to win the battle.

This fact piques the writer’s interest in delving deeper into how habitus and capital interact in the writing of a soap opera script. Researchers chose several Indonesian female scriptwriters from the PH Screenplay in Jakarta for this study.

2 Methodology

This study uses the phenomenological method. Maurice Merleau Ponty [15] says that phenomenology is a way that humans use to understand the world through direct experience. He argues that all knowledge of the world (including scientific knowledge) is acquired through some experience of the world. Phenomenological research is carried out in a natural situation (naturalist), so there are no limits to interpreting or understanding the phenomenon under study.

The author employs hermeneutics phenomenology (Martin Heidegger), which introduces ‘natural experience’ (natural experience) that simply occurs when people live in the world. For him, the reality of something cannot be known through careful analysis alone, but rather through natural experiences formed through the use of language in everyday life. What is experienced is something that is experienced through the natural use of language in context: things first come into being and are in word and language.

In this study, the unit of analysis is a female soap opera scriptwriter who works at a production house in Jakarta. The following is a list of respondents in this study. Despite the small number of respondents, the depth of the research data was highlighted in this study. This is consistent with the nature of qualitative research, which emphasizes depth and quality of research over quantity [16] (Table 1).

3 Result

3.1 Female Script Writer’s Habitus and Capital Struggle

The Struggle Habitus and the Capital of Female Screenwriters In its most basic form, habitus is defined as a set of dispositions (schemas of perceptions, thoughts, and actions that are acquired and persisted). Individual agents form these attitudes in response to the objective conditions they face. Bourdieu [17] invests in objective social structures through agents’ mental and subjective experiences. In this case, the agents under investigation are female soap opera scriptwriters.

Table 1. List of respondents

Name Initial	Description	Number Respondent
N. F.	Screen Play Scriptwriter	Respondent 1
Y. P.	Multivision Plus Scriptwriter	Respondent 2
D. R.	MNC Pictures Scriptwriter	Respondent 3
S. T.	Film Producer	Respondent 4

According to the researchers' interviews, soap opera scriptwriters generally see themselves as part of the industry. They perceive themselves to be a part of a working system in which they have little control over their own fate. They believe they are a part of the production process that must always be in line with the company's operations. As a system, it is regarded as an inseparable component of a manufacturing process that aids in the continuity of production.

Scriptwriters are typically educated people with higher education, so their knowledge and awareness of women are also quite high. Have a strong awareness of the position of women and frequently experience emotions as a result of the stereotype of Indonesian men toward women. However, deadlines, like other aspects of the television industry, are important considerations for scriptwriters. Every day, they face a tight deadline because soap operas are typically broadcasted in a striptease format (every day running). They must produce 50–60 pages of stories per day in order to complete the production process. Scriptwriters play an important role in the production of soap operas because the scenes that are recorded and broadcast are based on the script.

“It doesn't matter if it's a male or a female...if you're chasing a TV, you're chasing a deadline...especially for stripping shows...you have to make a script every day. One script is 50–60 pages long, and we must send each one to the producer. In any case, each day should be more productive.” (Respondent 1)

Even more astonishing, the scriptwriter believes that his idealism as a writer must be abandoned. By joining an “industry,” he must abandon his autonomous thoughts, which are usually wild, and base them on commercial values and public tastes. He must familiarize himself with the importance of keeping the rating at the center of all production activities.

“I believe that when you enter the industry, there is no idealism. You can't ... whatever your line of work is unless you have shares or money in it.” (Respondent 1)

Work is viewed as a blessing, whereas others do not always receive it. As a result, adhering to the game's rules and company policies is a natural thing to do. As an employee, you are not required to prioritize your personal goals over the interests of the company. His mere existence as a writer is enough to satisfy writers because their works can entertain the public.

"I'm happy if I can entertain people with my work." The point is that I simply want to entertain, so I follow the current trend." (Respondent 2)

The scriptwriter's perception, thought, and action scheme is solely based on pragmatic awareness as a television industry worker. There is no encouragement for them to fight for their idealistic views of women. As a result, ratings are the only reference for developing the story of the soap opera that is being written, just as they are for television in general. Topics that are currently trending and being discussed in the community are always used as reference material for scriptwriting. Despite the fact that these popular topics tend to "weaken" women (their own group), they remain a part of the stories they construct.

When the rating is good and the audience likes it (even if it occasionally contains elements of women's harassment), they continue to raise the trend. There is no longer any thought of opposing the current rating calculations because the rating is considered the only "legal guideline" to maintain the show's continuity.

"If the story that is raised receives a high rating, we will try to reproduce or repeat it in order to keep the rating." (Respondent 3)

It appears that the media industry has succeeded in instilling in scriptwriters the belief that the success or failure of a soap opera is solely determined by the size of the rating. Despite the fact that it is acknowledged that it does not dominate, the rating is still used as a guide for soap opera productions. Even in script production, the main consideration is rating.

"Rating isn't dominant... but it's our reference, and we don't have an opinion because rating is the result of our story."

There is a shared understanding among media workers (including these women) that high ratings will be obtained if they can create stories that the public enjoys. In fact, these stories are completely uneducated and heavily skewed toward women.

"We already know that plot A has gone a long way with a high rating... well, this plot A is what we're doing... right, this rating is just low... but it doesn't tell you what's going to be high in the future... so it comes back to us... so the results of this rating are used as a guide for us." (Respondent 4)

Despite the fact that they intuitively understood the types of stories that Indonesian television viewers preferred, ratings seemed to provide just that their instincts were correct. Ratings serve as both a justification and a guide for Indonesian soap opera scriptwriters. Although this is not a new development, it demonstrates that in this capitalist era, the rating truly "masters" all production lines of television broadcast programs. Even when such a high rating is contrary to conscience or idealism, the scriptwriters appear helpless to deal with it.

Workers' awareness as members of the industry place the position of workers on those who do not have bargaining positions. If you've been assigned to write a script, it's nearly impossible to refuse or choose, especially when it comes to presenting stories that put women in positions that are no longer marginalized. They recognize that they have

difficulty moving freely in the entertainment industry and incorporate their idealism in “women positioning.”

3.2 Abide by the Structure

Female scriptwriters situate themselves within a capitalistic main structure that provides descriptions of logic or jargon that discuss logical consequences as workers. They sacrificed their ideals and dreams to fight for women. In fact, society (audience) prefers women who are oppressed, marginalized, lack independence, are emotional, and always rely on feelings.

This awareness of his position as a worker suppresses workers' discursive awareness, allowing them to voluntarily engage in social reproduction. This occurs because the main structure (capitalist) eventually becomes a central understanding in generating and regulating the practices that shape their social life to always believe that a good soap opera story is the story that the audience likes the most. It is not surprising, then, that scriptwriters are sometimes willing to set aside their ideals as women in order to show stories that place marginalized women and are consistent with stereotypes of Indonesian men against women, including duplicating or following programs from other television programs for rating purposes.

“... If the producer says there is already a concept for it, I am asked to continue it or please develop it because there is a slot available.” Yes, because there is already a slot, it has been run. But if I'm still looking for a gathering, I'll pass. I have to follow their rules because I have a contract with them. I have to do it when they are ready. But I've never been so pushy before.” (Respondent 2)

When women's domestic issues are popular in the market, these women writers reproduce the themes that raise women's domestic issues. Their capital as highly educated women with high social awareness do not stop the flow of domestication of Indonesian soap opera stories. When the market expects women to be fussy, willing, angry, overly reliant on feelings, and irrational, these female screenwriters have no choice but to refuse or simply turn the story around.

It is extremely rare to find stories that deviate from the personal experience of a scriptwriter because it is an industry. This is very different from film production, which is usually based on the author's true story or the true stories of specific characters.

“As far as I can tell, today's writers, particularly those interested in stripping, appear unlikely to present their life stories or experiences, let alone fight for their ideals.” (respondent 1)

Most opera soap stories are fictional, with plots and storylines that are highly dependent on the audience's height. The broadcast pattern of soap operas is usually stripping (every day), and there is usually an outline of the story that has been approved by the production house (PH) and the TV station as the buyer who will broadcast. So the story's direction is already established. Plus a rating that changes every day. Usually, scriptwriters know which references to make and which to avoid when it comes to these two.

3.3 Discussion

Female scriptwriters are trapped in a work habit that restricts and dominates their lives. In the television industry, the rating is the only way to assess the success of a broadcast program. Ratings are the only thing that can have such an impact on broadcast content, including soap operas. As a result, the rating has become a sort of credo or a large “entertainment industry” narrative that cannot be discounted.

As the party who should have the opportunity to change the course of the story or the main message being told, the female scriptwriters actually submit to this credo. With family capital that is free of opinion and high educational capital, female scriptwriters are not able to change the habitus that lives and continues to be reproduced in the television world. They continuously reproduce the domestication of Indonesian soap opera stories, which ideally can be changed by the scriptwriters.

This cannot be separated from the fact that within the female scriptwriters, a perception scheme developed which was indeed developed by capitalists. This perception scheme is in the form of awareness that they work in an “industry”, where soap operas (films) are placed as commodities (products) that are continuously produced with the aim of being “sold” for profit, and market acceptance is placed as the main component that measures the success of a product. For this reason, a thought scheme has grown that places rating as the main reference, giving rise to a credo stating that when you enter the industry, idealism is lost. Idealism is not the main measure of the success of a soap opera. As in capitalism, the performance of soap operas in the market is the main measure of their success of soap operas.

In the scheme of action, this is translated by producing stories that are liked by the public, including stories that place women who are marginalized. They continue to reproduce stories that always become victims or highlight the work of women as people who are responsible for food, house cleaning, and bed matters. These female scriptwriters are like male scriptwriters who place women as the party who is always humiliated, harassed, humiliated, and subjected to acts of violence. The fact that they are women does not seem to be able to change the storyline which tends to bring women to the domestic area and are not the same class as men.

Female scriptwriters are powerless against the “pressure” of patriarchal values in the existing social system. In fact, he is in a position (having the opportunity) to change the existing order through the story he builds [18]. They fail to transform stories of equality between women and men; although the opportunity is there. On the other hand, the female scriptwriters still portrayed women as good housekeepers with shiny laundry, nurses for sick family members (husband and children), providers of delicious food or drinks, and people who are always shackled by “power”. Emotions and become “victims” of feelings. Meanwhile, when juxtaposed with men, women are more exposed to their sensuality, such as body beauty, beauty, and all other ideal images with roles as a complement to men’s success, seducers, distractions, and others.

This condition cannot be separated from Indonesia’s social system which places women as unequal to men. Women are subordinate to men in various aspects of life [19]. From the private sphere to the public sphere, inequalities between men and women in Indonesia always occur, thus making women’s positions marginalized. Values about the position of men who are superordinate and women who are subordinated, even

internalized in the family area, playmates to the area of education (schools), are inherited among family members and are considered true from time to time [20]. The media is also a very effective agent of socialization.

Women are placed in a limited area of the household that is private when it comes to the area of expertise (domestic). Even if there is a visualization of a woman pursuing a specific career (public sector), she is always depicted as “taking up” her time for household chores such as making family breakfast, caring for children, cooking for her husband, and so on. Male figures will not be depicted in this dualistic manner. When the story is about men who participate in the public sphere, it is uncommon for men to be depicted as dizzy with domestic matters, such as childcare. Even when men are shown assisting their wives in domestic matters, they are always depicted in a grey area (not having masculine or feminist characteristics, such as accompanying children to study, taking children to school, washing motorbikes, and others).

Social capital and education of female scriptwriters are not empowered and eroded by Doxa or the big discourse of the television industry which is basically a product of habitus. The female scriptwriters completely forgot their awareness of their identity as women and their gender struggle [21]. Even though they are women, the stories that are shown still don't put women in a “better” position than male scriptwriters. They still adhere to the malestream that admires men as people who have superiority. The language they choose to build the story is still the language of men. This cannot be separated from the fact that so far the language of the media has been the language of men [22].

It is hoped that the findings of this study will raise media actors' awareness of the importance of not always domesticating stories in media content, particularly soap operas. This is significant because the women themselves (who are involved in story production) are also frustrated by their inability to change story standards that have placed women in an unfavorable position. Because of their significant role in society and culture, media actors must take on even more responsibility to position themselves proportionally as promoters of gender equality.

4 Conclusion

Seeing the phenomenon of soap operas in Indonesia which continues to domesticate stories by placing women as the center of stories with negative connotations and marginalization shows that female scriptwriters are powerless against the “pressure” of patriarchal values in the existing social system. With a position that actually has the opportunity to change the existing order through the stories they build, these female scriptwriters actually submit to the habitus of the television industry which places ratings at the center of the media industry. The female scriptwriters live in a work habitus that restrains and dominates their lives. So they voluntarily gave up idealism and replaced it by placing the rating as the only guide to measure the success of a program.

They fail to transform stories of equality between women and men. On the other hand, the female scriptwriters still portrayed women as good housekeepers with shiny laundry, nurses for sick family members (husband and children), providers of delicious food or drinks, and people who are always shackled by “power”. Emotions and become “victims” of feelings. They lose awareness of their identity as women and their gender

struggle. The female scriptwriters failed to empower their social and educational capital and were instead eroded by Doxa or the big discourse of the television industry which is basically a product of habitus.

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