

# SPA AS ARENA OF CAREER WOMAN RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCH DOMINATION<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the career women who use the habit of treating the body through the routine of coming to spas, which aims to overcome the dominance of patriarchy. This study uses several concepts. First, muted group theory, which states that woman, is the one that silenced; so to overcome this condition, women should perform self-transformation. The transformation is aligned with the second concept, feminist existentialist, which defines the transformation as the change of a woman concept from Other to Self. The transformation can be achieved not only by working outside the domestic sphere, but also supported by a good appearance through a complete body treatment. Grooming habits acquired through socialization that derived in woman since their childhood. The socialization is about how women as a person who is considered weak by the world of patriarchal domination using the power of their beauty to master, subdue, and break the domination in her life. Then, with their good appearance, woman can express their existence in everything that they do from object become subject. Spa and the whole result of the activities contained in it then consciously become a way of resistance that being used by the career woman against the domination of patriarchy which overshadowing their lives.*

**Keywords:** *spa, career women, patriarchy domination, feminism*

## ABSTRAK

*Artikel ini meneliti tentang wanita karir yang memiliki hobi merawat tubuhnya dengan mengunjungi spa secara rutin, yang ditujukan untuk mengatasi dominasi patriarki. Penelitian ini menggunakan beberapa konsep, seperti teori Kelompok yang Dibungkam, yang menyatakan bahwa wanita adalah yang dibungkam; karenanya untuk mengatasi hal itu, wanita menampilkan transformasi diri. Transformasi ini yang dihubungkan dengan konsep kedua, yaitu feminisme eksistensialis, yang berarti transformasi merupakan perubahan konsep wanita dari Other menjadi Self. Transformasi bisa didapatkan tidak hanya dari lingkungan di luar dirinya, tetapi juga didukung oleh penampilan menarik melalui perawatan tubuh. Sosialisasi ini berhubungan dengan bagaimana wanita sebagai personal, yang dianggap lemah oleh patriarki yang mendominasi, menggunakan kekuatan dari keindahan tubuhnya untuk menguasai, menaklukkan, dan memecahkan dominasi dari kehidupannya. Kemudian, dengan penampilan menarik, wanita bisa mengekspresikan eksistensinya dalam segala hal yang dilakukan sejak mereka sebagai objek menjadi subjek. Spa dan hasil keseluruhan dari aktivitas terkait kemudian menjadi sebuah resistensi yang digunakan wanita melawan dominasi patriarki yang membayangi kehidupan mereka.*

**Kata kunci:** *spa, wanita karir, dominasi patriarki, feminisme*

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## INTRODUCTION

Beauty and women are like two sides of the coin. Women are identical with complicated process of body care in order to maintain their beauty. Although the definition of ideal beauty is relative, many people portray the ideal figure of a beautiful woman is with a long-black-straight-shiny haired, or smooth skin without wrinkles; supported also by a proportionate body. Imaging makes a lot of women possess a big desire to fulfill the definition of such an ideal beauty. The phenomenon is then made many think about how miserable it must be to become a woman, because they were suppressed by a word: beauty. Beauty that shines, as a result of treatment, becomes a tool for women to enter the working world that in fact, dominated by men. This is consistent with the opinion of Wolf (2004: 43) when women began to enter the world of workforce, both men and women are used to judge beauty as capital. Both are prepared to face the current development of women demanding access to power. The power structure will use the beauty as a material to weaken the advancement of women.

Inequality position between men and woman are shaped by society dominated by patriarchal ideology, so men are always in a superior position. As individuals who are part of society, women do not realize that the justification for these positions is not something natural, but a formation of society dominated by patriarchal ideology. Women are defined as other, passive figure, and subordinate, bound in housework, husbands, and children. Creativity, activity, and individuality of women, particularly those related to work outside the house and public spaces are denied. (Barker, 2004: 308). Because of such thinking, it also formed the women's perception about herself, which was always to be protected, and without power. Women serve as only as a wife and mother, who's after getting married disappear into the world of her husband and children. Her desire is what her husband and children desired. Her dreams are dreams that are reflected in the eyes of her husband and children – many things are done based on her husband and children. Women no longer have her own name, the name changed to the name or the name of her husband and her son. But woman take all of it fairly, because she thought it was how things supposed to be.

Years of imprisoned in certain mainstream ideologies would unwittingly shape a person thinking when they grows up. Stuart Hall said that one's thoughts do not occur naturally, but is formed by the influence of significant others that infuses values, meanings, and symbols of the culture in which a person's growth. According to Hall, the most influential significant others in the formation of one's thoughts is the family. From the family, a person learns through praise, punishment, imitation, and language, about how one should live life in a social environment. (Barker, 2004: 224)

Families will also introduce ways to body care, and that care for the body will affect the appearance. Appearance is a magnet or one's attractiveness in the eyes of others. Keating purposed (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007: 201); that the power of communication to draw others near or to drive them away derives as much from how we appear as from the language we deploy. One's appearance is important to set his existence in society. Self-groomed appearance is a representation of the perfection of beauty, one of which can be obtained through holistic body treatments, namely SPA. Therefore, body care routine in the SPA as improving the appearance of women's is an activity that is important, because the groomed appearance is an asset that must be maintained in order to continue to declare personal existence. SPA is a place of body care that much different from beauty salons in general, although can be combined into one, in practice, because the SPA is not a mere beauty salon. SPA deliberately creating an atmosphere and a comfortable atmosphere, with the concept of holistic care.

SPA is the place to bring and restore all the positive energy that evaporates from someone when overwhelmed by anxiety and fatigue. Initially, SPA is a bathing facility for the Roman soldiers that are tired, sick, and hurt. The bathing facility is then called *aquae*. The healing bath treatment that they have then called SPA - *Sanus per Aquam* or *Solus per Aqua* - (Aura, 2007).

SPA and all things related to body treatments, then become identical to the world of women. Caring for the body in the SPA will support women's overall appearance, especially in the role of women in modern society it is today, not only as a wife and mother, but extends to the role as career woman. Women began to shift from traditional roles to the role of career, income, freedom, and can achieve their own happiness. Women today are more concentrated on the role of self-actualization and existence. Career woman tries to make herself not only exist in the eyes of the family but also in the public eye.

Oppression of career women's does not look real if we did not observe any deeper. A career woman needs to declare her existence and strength as women in various contexts of life. The first context in which the woman must declare its existence is in front of his family. Women also need to declare its existence in the professional world where she worked. Not to mention in her social environment outside the professional world. A career woman needs to declare its existence so that she considered as the subject, as "Self" not as objects or "others" as is widely accepted by women for centuries.

One efforts that woman can do to become "Self" is to use her beauty. It is wrong to read beauty as a form of oppression. Woman maintaining their beauty in SPA is not a sacrifice to please men and strengthen their domination. Instead, beauty treatments at the SPA makes women can express themselves as they wish, regardless of the mainstream that there is about a woman the community, and also a tool for women to become Self and out of male domination. The concept of beauty is a concept formulated by the ideology of patriarchal domination. In order to exist, woman must be beautiful, because than beauty can be used as a resistance.

This research aims to uncover reality behind the habits of the career women in their routine beauty care in the SPA; studying more deeply about how these women express their own in the workplace, and shows the use of SPA as a resistance to patriarchal domination that has been constructing their ways of thinking. All of this is inseparable from the struggle of women, especially career women in the resistance to the patriarchy domination, because she is a complete person who has a life of its own, free to determine their thoughts and desires. That brings us to the question; on how does a career woman express herself through body and beauty treatments at the SPA, so that her beauty is a means of resistance to the domination of patriarchy?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Oppression of career women in a world dominated by patriarchal domination can be explained using the Muted Group Theory, which emphasizes that women are muffled not only from the outside, but also from within. This theory focuses on the existence of minority or subordinate groups that silenced, cannot voicing their interests because they are neglected and even considered not exist. This group did not have power, because power is held by the dominant group. In the midst of the domination of the ruling class, this group chose to remain silent or silenced, so that they become neglected and unseen.

Cheris Kramarae stated that in some particular culture, a group is silenced due to the language structures that do not provide equal opportunity for all speakers to contribute to the formulation of words and norms. Woman is one of the groups that did not get that opportunity, because the language was created by men.

Shirley Ardener (West & Turner, 2004: 478) states that the silence of women is the result of man's deafness. Although women spoke, her words hit a deaf ear. As a result, woman are finally gave up and started to stop voicing their vote, even begin to stop as well to think that they definitely have the right to issue opinions.

One of the efforts to overcome woman imbalances in the world of men is to use beauty. Some feminist activists argue that the myth of beauty in the world is to believe this man actually provide benefits for women to be able to make women not as "others" but rather as "Self". Women can use beauty to dominate men through a dynamic spirit, and receive men's admiration with pride, so woman don't have to feel like a prey in the arms of men. (Beauvoir, 2003: 202)

In all aspects women must become like men, compete like men, and think like a man. But in order to be heard and no longer silenced, women must first give in to win, she must transform herself in accordance with the wishes of patriarchal domination; be desired by men as the perfect self, and thus women proceed gradually become self. Being no longer underestimated, but transformed into a figure that will be loved and needed by all parties.

For Sartre (Tong, 2004: 256) existence precedes essence. In other words, we exist only as a living organism that amorphous (not having a steady shape), until we create a separate identity for ourselves through conscious action, through the choices and decisions, reaffirmed the goals and establish new goals and projects. By adopting the language of the ontological and ethical language of existentialism, Beauvoir argued that men called the "Self", and women named "other". If others are a threat to the Self, then woman is a threat to men. Therefore, if the man wanted to remain free, then he should be able to subordinate women.

If woman wants to stop her condition as the second sex or other, then woman should be able to overcome the forces of the environment. Women should have an opinion like men. In the process towards transcendence, according to Beauvoir (Tong, 2004: 274) there are three strategies that can be done by women. **First**, women must work. Beauvoir realizes that working in a patriarchal capitalism is oppressive and exploitative, but no matter how hard and tiring the work is, it will provide woman with opportunities and possibilities. By working outside the home with men, then women can reclaim her. Women will affirm their status as subjects, as someone who actively determine the direction of her fate. **Secondly**, women can become an intellectual. Intellectual activity is an activity when a person thinks, see and define, not vice versa. **Third**, women can work to achieve the socialist transformation of society. One key to the women liberation is economic strength, a point of emphasis in any discussion about independent women. Environment will certainly limit their efforts to define themselves, so if women want to get all that she wants, she must create a society which will provide material support to transcend the limits that they have now.

Work place, according to Beauvoir (2003: 499) is a world that full with cues, a world that was essentially masculine. But in this world that is, women would step her foot more deeply on the side of reality, because women who work are a tangible personality.

Woman to be reckoned with, which is seen as self, is a person who is able to be superwoman, not only succeed and win the struggle in the workplace, but also managed to become a queen in the household, the family environment. (Beauvoir, 2003: 588).

Woman perceiving themselves as other, are the result of patriarchal ideology induction on women's thoughts. Patriarchal ideology is an ideology of male authority which oppresses women through social institutions, political, and economic; gender dominance of men over women that had reigned in our thinking for years. (Humm, 2007: 332). In the patriarchy ideology, women are shackled to a particular imaging, where the ideal female figure is the figure of a woman who is described as a domestic worker and sexual objects for men only. Woman should only take care of household work, caring for children, and serve their husbands. While the husband is described as a figure who has power over his wife, who also control the public sphere, as well as a figure who does not take care of domestic affairs of the household (Handayani & Novianto, 2004: 162).

This research celebrated feminist extensialist thinking, where a career woman who performs routinely body treatments at the SPA are categorized as a superwoman, who can succeeded both in her home life as well as in building a great career in the workplace that in fact dominated by patriarchal domination.

## METHODS

In this study, the critical paradigm are used because researcher want to make people notice that SPA is an arena used by career women, independent women, women who are proud to be women, women who break the limit to become a woman like she wants; that perfect look is not suppression, but the tools to become more advanced.

The sample used was purposeful sampling, with the type of chain referral samples or commonly known as the snowball. Snowball method is a way in which researcher will select one key informant as a starting point for their research and subsequent informant, thus further. (Patton, 2002: 237)

Informants in this study are at the individual level or agency. There were five people informant with the following characteristics:

**Informant 1:** 40 years, comes from Acehnese and Javanese ethnicity, married, and had one daughter. Informant works in mass media, the Public Relations division. Now she also actively manages an EO (Event Organizer).

**Informant 2:** 49 years old, come from Padang and Palembang ethnicity, already married, have three children, two female and one male. Former Member of Parliament, now working as a consultant, and lecturer at one of state university in Jakarta.

**Informant 3:** 36 years old, came from Padang and Javanese ethnicity, not yet married. She is working for one of private television station, as the news producer. She also teaches at one of private university in Jakarta.

**Informant 4:** 48 years old, came from Batak and Javanese ethnicity, married, have three children, two boys (18 and 14 years), and one girl (15 years). She is an entrepreneur who has been in the business for 20 years.

**Informant 5:** 45 years old, Sundanese ethnicity, married, have two children, one girl (20 years), and one boy (17 years). She is a beauty specialist at a cosmetics company.

The method used in this research is critical ethnography. This critical ethnographic method used the angle of a carrier woman. The assumption of critical ethnography is that there are parties who subordinated by the other party. In this case, we were looking on how the working woman struggling to resist patriarchal domination , so that they can express themselves as a women with wishes and hopes, so it will be more easily understood by the researcher who try to analyze the actual context.

The nature of the research is descriptive, since this study aims to describe the systematic and specific facts or characteristics about the situation, social setting, or a particular relationship, whether it be state, problems, attitudes, opinions, conditions, procedures, or systems. (Neuman, 2003: 30).

The selected research approach is qualitative, because the researchers wanted to reveal how the SPA phenomenon turns into an arena and how woman used it as a tool of resistance on patriarchal domination that has been oppresses them.

The data were analyzed in 3 phases. The first phase is open coding, in which interviews were coded to concentrate the data into a particular categorization. This stage brings the researcher who had just seen the data on the surface, to be more focus into the data obtained. The second stage is axial coding. In this second phase, researchers will concentrate more on themes or categories that have been granted in the first stage earlier, compared to the data. This stage is where the researcher questioned about the causes and consequences, conditions and interactions, strategies and processes, and look for concepts or categories that can be grouped together. The third stage is the selective coding. In this phase, researchers identified the main themes of research, and then selectively, look for cases that illustrate the theme, and make comparisons. (Neuman, 2003: 442-445)

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Socialization of Patriarchy Dominance**

The informants in this study initially embody patriarchal domination that occurred many years in their lives perfectly. Socialization is preceded by the formation of how their mothers raise them. Mother determines what should be done and what is not worth doing, teaches how a girl should behave, according to what is desired by the environment.

A Mother - family - significant others - then used as a benchmark by her daughter in how to act, and made the pattern adopted by her son in finding a spouse. The mother then taught his son that women are not equal with men. Marriage, as an institution also supported this idea. After marriage, a woman is not allowed to do things that subordinated the family.

As someone who used to be dominated, woman feels that man power is a complements in their life. Whatever women do then is a form of devotion. They feel that their life is not complete without husband, father, and even their lovers. However powerful a woman is, man were always regarded as a figure who always be put first.

As already disclosed, women is silenced, and this is experienced by the informants in their workplace. How they should behave are unwritten rules that curb and confine women. They cannot behave like women. Not only they have to change the style of speaking and ways of thinking, their looks too must change.

Entering the work place is an initial step for women to enter the man world at large. Changing the style becomes more like a men, has her own financial strength, and use a more empathetic style of communication makes woman a solid but soft figure. Becoming manly does not mean women forget the power of beauty they posses, only slightly change the style in order to adjust with man.

### **SPA and Career Women**

As a woman who works, there is a lot of pressure that must be faced by career woman. The pressures that come will make woman lose a lot of energy. Career woman chooses to go to the SPA, because SPA restore their confidence and appreciated their existence.

Body treatments that familiar by the informants is a standard care of her body which is known by almost many women, like scrubbing, cream bath, manicure-pedicure, and facials. They choose to do the body treatment in the SPA, because it has a different atmosphere conditions and a more holistic purpose. The first introduction to the world of SPA experienced by informants comes after they enter the work place work. They desire to go to the SPA was preceded to try something new. A more guarded privacy and convenience is served at the SPA to make the informant feel that they have found the perfect place for relaxing and doing their body treatment.

The first process performed when someone enter a SPA will determine how the overall results of the treatment. In SPA, the user determines what she wants to do, in terms of choice of treatment in accordance with what is recommended by therapists, after first hearing the body condition of the client. Special treatment will be referenced for users who suffer from hypertension, diabetes, and acute migraine. Different diseases or complaint that affects the body massaged with the selection of essential oils, as well as having aromatherapy during all the treatments performed. The complete process before, during, and after treatment, making SPA as well as body care clinics to help ease the burden on the body due to certain diseases. This is certainly a beneficial for the SPA user, because not only their body and soul are treated, but the treatment process itself will lead to the cure of disease.

### **Freedom of Expression and Self Existence**

Achievement in the community is one way from woman to declare the existence, as well as the transformation of others into self. But, to be beautiful is the way to opening opportunities. Without a good appearance, hard to be considered, respected, recognized her ability and approved opinions. In accordance with the opinion of the feminist existentialist, a career woman is a woman that smart. Feeling restless if ignored, underestimated and not recognized. Make her play the role as desired by the men who dominate in place to work, does not make her stop struggling. Instead, they know that there are a lot of added from beauty. Beauty can be used as weapons and means from women. Beauty can be achieved with complete body treatment at the SPA.

### **SPA and Resistance from Patriarchy Domination**

In the work place, women is preceded by changes in the appearance, but not at the negotiating style, how to communicate and behave in the face of a problem. These women just wanted to show her strength as a woman who does bow on domination, instead using her femininity as a weapon.

This supported by a strong self-confidence inherent in the informants, because SPA treatments make the informants able to show their ability to express themselves, and opportunities that they believe they can find. SPA is their solution in resistance from patriarchal domination.

The definition of beauty is within the power of patriarchal domination, but feminist existentialist turn things around. Existentialist feminists argue that with a beautiful and well dressed, women can be located just above men. As recognized by the informant, with the SPA treatment, she can present her better, so she's in control.

Appearance and beauty is a subjective means, depending from each person to judge. Informants define beauty as something that was not the same as what had been perceived by most people.

For women, in the dominance of patriarchal ideology, there is the construction of categories there are idealized as the ideal woman for men, woman who can deal with all matters of the household, and always put family first. Our informant turns out to be such a figure, the figure of a woman who nearly filled the category ideal woman in patriarchal domination.

However, according to some informants, in their opinion, the ideal woman is not only women who are submissive, docile, and obedient. Informants struggled to live in a world of men, not to comply, but instead stand up with pride that she was, in fact, a woman.

Not only that, informant 3 states that in a relationship with her boyfriend, she was seen as an independent woman's and able to voice her voice, having equality with their partners, even though her family background come from a mother who is subject to the Dad.

SPA later became the means to go on with the concept of beauty that comes with basic essentials, who portrays the struggle against patriarchal domination and resistance against things that can be achieved in many ways, not necessarily extreme, but proceed. A good self image as a way to express yourself, that can be achieved by treating the body's, and SPA is the best medium they can use to express themselves, their tendency is to choose SPA for a more holistic impact on themselves.

Appearances have an important role so that we can be accepted in society, but our society still hold on to and influenced by the values of patriarchy. But as women, they still have the strength and independence, they dare to live independently. They realized that as women they should seek the same rights.

From the analysis of the responses from the informants and its relation to concepts and theories used in this study, SPA is used by a career woman as a resistance to the presence of patriarchal domination. In terms of their entry into the work place, then their resistance to patriarchal domination is by having its own financial strength. The applicability of the SPA is the main thing so that they can maintain their existence in the work place, because before, during and after they enter the world of work, beauty is a weapon to continuing show the capability and access to higher hierarchy. It was not how they were socialized by their social environment since childhood, but still they manage to grow as a solid and elegant figure. With higher education and intellectual, they use beauty as liberation of patriarchal domination.

## CONCLUSION

For women beauty become powerfulness, strength, power and existence, where beauty is a woman's self-declaration to the world, to show that women can prevail! Beauty and the glory of women are a weapon and power to protect themselves from the pressures of patriarchal domination. Woman looks is like a mirror that reflects women's heart, and a clear soul that full of charm. So it is no exaggeration when female beauty and elegance is considered as a giant magnet that can give strength to the world. World in the context of this research is a world dominated by men, in which masculinity is always in the first sequence. Women became the second party under the shadow of such domination. Change is the only choice, and as women, these changes can be done by using a 'weapon' that they had already possess, cling tightly to its image, in the picture. It is a body treatment.

Body care is one of the activities identified with women, and SPA, a holistic beauty care area, is the perfect embodiment of body care activities by a woman that she becomes familiar from childhood. SPA body care is not just for physical well-preserved woman, but also making the mind to be more clear and positive, because they were given the opportunity to release all the fatigue that exists comfortably. After all treatments are undertaken, women not only restore their stamina, but also get energy and concentration, with a positive aura as a bonus, so they can pitch and work again with more confidence. Because when they believing in themselves, then everything went out from them hold a positive aura, in which self-confidence showing perfectly from woman made her the figure to be reckoned with, that their appearance is a reflection of what lies within us.



A convincing appearance makes them no longer under the shadow of patriarchal domination so that women can get out from condition that silencing their expressions, ability and achievement. By sure, they can show their pride as a woman who exists in every line of life they want. Beauty is a formation of patriarchal domination that lasted for centuries ever. However, the beauty which is the formation of patriarchal domination that is considered as a form of dominance for women, turns out it can be used to empower women. With beauty treatments and holistic body treatments, women can be recognized, and has a variety of access that had been held only by men. What then is needed is how beauty is socialized in the women. That beauty is in essence should be directed to themselves first, not for others. By convinced that beauty and good looks have made them comfortable and appreciate themselves, can change something that was originally translated as domination of patriarchy into empowerment for women.

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