

## BODY SHAMING AND ITS EFFECT IN FILM TALL GIRL (A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS)

**Putri Ayu Wulandari**

*putriayuxx1a@gmail.com*

*Sastra Inggris, Universitas Muslim Indonesia*

**Andi Hudriati**

*andi.hudriati@umi.ac.id*

*Sastra Inggris, Universitas Muslim Indonesia*

**Hadijah**

*hadijahsaleh13@gmail.com*

*Sastra Inggris, Universitas Muslim Indonesia*

### **Abstrak**

*Body shaming merupakan tindakan pelecehan yang sering terjadi namun banyak orang yang tidak menyadarinya. Dalam masyarakat, ada standar kecantikan yang harus dipenuhi oleh setiap orang, dan jika tidak, maka akan terjadi body shaming. Ada banyak media yang bisa kita gunakan untuk mengetahui tentang body shaming seperti koran, majalah, tabloid, film, radio, dan lain-lain. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan film sebagai media dalam meneliti tindakan body shaming, film tersebut adalah Tall Girl karya Nzingha Stewart. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tanda-tanda body shaming dan pengaruhnya terhadap tokoh utama. Peneliti menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dan menggunakan teori Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes mengembangkan gagasan tentang dua tahap penandaan yaitu denotasi dan konotasi. Denotasi adalah makna objektif tingkat pertama yang dapat diberikan kepada simbol, yaitu dengan menghubungkan secara langsung antara simbol dengan kenyataan. Kemudian makna konotatif adalah makna yang dapat diberikan pada simbol dengan mengacu pada nilai-nilai budaya dan berdasarkan perasaan dan emosi. Dari hasil penelitian, peneliti menemukan bahwa dalam film terdapat tanda-tanda body shaming dalam bentuk konotatif dan denotatif dan juga banyak efek pada karakter utama seperti krisis kepercayaan diri, rasa tidak aman, perasaan selalu menjadi objek. bullying, dan perasaan ingin mengubah hal-hal yang seharusnya sudah ditakdirkan untuk dimiliki.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Bodi shaming, Semiotik, Roland Barthes*

### **Abstract**

Body shaming is an act of harassment that often occurs but many people are not aware of. In society, there are beauty standards that must be fulfilled by everyone, and if not, then body shaming will occur. There are many media that we can use to find out about body shaming such as newspapers, magazines, tabloids, film, radio, and others. In this research, the researcher use film as a medium in researching the actions of body shaming and the film is Tall Girl by Nzingha Stewart. This research aimed to identify the sign of body shaming and its effect towards the main character. The researcher used descriptive qualitative as the research method and use the theory of Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes developed the idea of two stages of signification that is denotation

and connotation. Denotation is the first level of objective meaning that can be given to symbols, namely by linking directly between the symbol and the reality. Then the connotative meanings are the meanings that can be given to symbols by referring to cultural values and based on feelings and emotions. As a result of the research, the researcher found that in the film there are signs of body shaming in connotative and denotative forms and there are also many effects on the main character such as a crisis of confidence, insecurity, feelings of always being the object of bullying, and feelings of want to change the things that should have been destined to be owned.

**Keyword:** Body Shaming, Semiotic, Roland Barthes

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the process of communicating, there is one term called mass communication. Mass communication is a process of communicating information, ideas, opinions, and attitudes to a large audience through a particular medium or mass media. Mass media is a tool used in mass communication such as newspapers, magazines, tabloids, television, radio, and others. One of the easiest media used by society is television. such as in news, cartoons, reality shows, films and more. According to Kridalaksana, film is a mass media that has audio-visual properties, which can reach large audiences (Kridalaksana, 1984). Film has the power and potential to reach many social classes to transmitting messages in a unique way. The message in the film uses the mechanism of symbols that exist in the human mind in the form of message content, sound, speech, conversation, and so on. Film also contain scenes that are not appropriate to imitate such as promiscuity, sex, crime, violence, humiliation, and others. One of the things that often happens in society is that someone will not hesitate to say disrespectful sentences to other people, whether they know them or not. A subject that is often become of a humiliation is the lack of physique. Either someone is too thin, too fat, or has some other form of deficiency. This term of humiliation is commonly known as Body shaming.

Body shaming is a behavior form of evaluating the body appearance of oneself and others against the internalization of ideal beauty standards (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Body shaming is an attitude or behavior that criticizes weight, body size and body appearance of oneself and others (Gilbert, 2007; Syarifuddin, S., & Hasyim, I., 2020). Body shaming can happen to anyone regardless of age, body shape or skin color so the victims and the doers can come from various ages also. (Lestari, 2018). Body shaming can have a negative impact on body image. Body image can affect a person's mental and social condition, impacting the emergence of effect, including feeling anxious, ashamed, not confident, angry, low self-esteem, hatred of self-appearance, strict diets, eating disorders, and mental disorders, and others (Cash Pruzinsky, 2002). One of film that represent about body shaming is Tall Girl film. Tall Girl is an American romantic comedy film, directed by Nzingha Stewart, from a screenplay by Sam Wolfson and it was released by Netflix on September 13, 2019.

In analyzing body shaming in film tall girl the researcher used semiotic theory by Roland Barthes. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory broke down the process of reading signs and focused on their interpretation by different cultures or societies. According to Roland Barthes, by acknowledging the thought influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes developed the idea of two stages of signification. The two stages refer to the terms denotation and connotation to designate the level of meaning. The meaning of denotation is the first level of objective meaning that can be given to symbols, namely by linking directly between the symbol and the reality. Then

the connotative meanings are the meanings that can be given to symbols by referring to cultural values and based on feelings and emotions. Therefore at the second level, Barthes uses the signifiant-signifier theory which was developed into a theory of denotation and connotation. The term signifiant becomes the expression and the signifier becomes the content. However, Barthes said that between the signifiant and the signifier there must be a certain relation, so that a sign is formed.

## METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative as a method. Qualitative research is research which investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. The purpose of qualitative research focused on promoting a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon such, environment, a process, or even belief. In this case, the researcher collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data and then described it (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). While the descriptive method is a method that examines the status of human groups, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class event in the present (Nazir, 1988). This method aims to describe everything related to the research topic. The source of data for this research is the Tall Girl film. Tall Girl is an American romantic comedy film directed by Nzingha Stewart and written by Sam Wolfson, released by Netflix on September 13, 2019. This movie is 1 hour and 42 minutes long. The researchers recorded only a portion of the movie scenes relevant to this study. That is the signs of body shaming and the effect of body shaming towards the main character. To complete the problem statement of this research, the researcher used some procedures to collect the data. The procedures are:

1. The researcher watched Tall Girl film with a support device.

The researcher chose scenes that was analyzed which was contain about the sign of Body shaming and the effect of Body shaming towards the main character. The researcher separated and classified the data based on the sign of body shaming and the effect of body shaming towards the main character. This research had two problem statements and to analyze each of the problems, the researcher used some steps. The following steps were: First, analyzing the data from Tall Girl Film about the sign of Body shaming and the effect of Body shaming towards the main character. Then, applying the related theory, that was the theory of semiotics by Roland Barthes which distinguishes the meaning of denotation and connotation.

Finally, made the conclusion. In addition, the writers used scientific writing through the use of Mendeley-based instruction for this study.

## FINDINGS

### The Sign of Body Shaming in Tall Girl Film

The main issue of this film is Body shaming, being an over height woman is a big problem for a teenager named Jodi who is only 16 years old and is 6 feet and a half as the main character. Experiencing bullying from a young age, Jodi become an insecure teenager. Based on the findings of the researcher, the researcher found that the body shaming behavior that Jodi received was in the form of: a) Denotation and b) Connotation. The denotative form was the most common body shaming behavior found throughout Tall Girl films. In the film Tall Girl, the body shaming behavior shown by the characters was very diverse. Not only conveyed in denotation, but also connotation. As it should be, the body shaming that the main character receives in the film certainly has an impact on Jodi's daily life.

## The Effect of Body Shaming Towards the Main Character in Tall Girl Film

The effects of body shaming can be found at the beginning to the middle of the film. This is due to the bad treatment that Jodi received during his life. In Tall Girl film, the researcher found some of the effects that Jodi received as a victim of Body Shaming, namely a crisis of confidence, insecurity, feelings of always being the object of bullying, and feelings of want to change the things that should have been destined to be owned.

## DISCUSSION

### The Sign of Body Shaming in Tall Girl Film

#### 1. Denotation

The first sign of body shaming can be found at the very beginning of the film. when Jodi as the main character sits in the library next to a stranger man. After the stranger sees the posture of Jodi, he directly feels shocked. After leaving, Jodi found the man talks with his friend about her. In the minute (00:01:58) *“You know that really, really, really tall girl that you go to school with?”* the denotative of body shaming can be seen directly from the dialogue between the man and his friend which seems so amazed with Jodi’s appearance. It is happened because in society’s vision, it is unusual to see a girl with above-average height. In the minute (00:11:41) Body shaming is also appeared in the throwback of Jodi and Kimmy’s childhood. It shows Kimmy’s reaction to Jodi’s hand, as soon as she makes fun of Jodi’s big hand, all of the children in the class suddenly laugh. *“Look, Guys! Jodi's hand is so big, it doesn't even fit on the clay.” “We're gonna need more paint.”* This scene depicts how a big girl often get bullied in her environment. In this case, is, in Jodi’s school. Her body size are being mocked by her schoolmate directly after seeing that Jodi has an unusual big hands which is the result of her body shape.

In the minute (00:13:23), body shaming also mentioned by Jodi’s friend, Dunkleman, which is known to get obsessed with her, he tries to convince Jodi that her relationship with Stig will not work out well because both of them are tall and that will result to their newborn as well. *“Just let me do my thing. So, let's say that you and Stig date, okay? You, uh, fall in love, stick together through college, down the line you get married, have a baby. And the combined strength of your tall gene and his tall gene creates a zygote in your belly the size of an above-average sized watermelon.”* This scene shows the society's stigma against marriage between two people with above average height, as if a tall woman should not marry a tall man. This is because people are afraid that the child to be born has a severe abnormality in terms of body shape. This is clearly conveyed by Dunkleman to Jodi to make her shrink and stop liking men who are taller than her.

In the minute (00:27:07), when Jodi tries to call Stig, it turns out that the number is fake, it is just kimmy who is playing tricks on Jodi. In a telephone conversation, Kimmy then mentions that Jodi is not a beautiful girl but just a tall girl. *“Besides, you really don't think a guy as hot as Stig would be into you, do you? I mean, let's face it, Jodi. You're the tall girl. You'll never be the pretty girl.”* In this scene, Kimmy thoughtlessly insults Jodi who has feelings for Stig. She says that Jodi is just a tall girl, not a pretty girl. Near the end of the film in (01:25:28), Jodi watches a videotape of the showdown between Stig and Dunkleman. In the footage, Dunkleman looks very angry when Stig humiliates Jodi, but in the middle of a fight, one of Stig's friends then mocks Jodi's tall body which then provokes Dunkleman's anger. *“You guys, none of you guys are. You think...” “She is so much cooler than all of you guys combined.” “Yeah, well, she's also taller than all of us combined, so...”*

## 2. Conotation

In the minute (00:02:03), Jodi explains how she always treated badly in form of body shaming, people often call her as a basketball player, skyscraper, or any word which represents overheight, the statement as follows: *“The one that people call LeBron, Skyscraper, Daddy Long Legs?”*. In minute (00:03:12) We can also see the body shaming that is conveyed connotatively in the scene, every day people will ask the same question which implies how tall Jodi is. *“Well, how's the weather up there?”* which connotes how people think Jodi's height is something that deserves to be bullied. At the next minute (00.12.03), we still can see the sign of body shaming committed by Kimmy to Jodi. *“And that's why I want to be just like Taylor Swift when I grow up.” “Taylor Swift? More like Taller Swift.”* We can see how body shaming behaviors are conveyed in the form of connotation when people insult Jodi implicitly with a sentence that does not directly mention her strange height, but uses a sentence that actually implies it that can make Jodi feel even more hurt.

### The Effect of Body Shaming Towards the Main Character in Tall Girl Film

The main character of the film, Jodi, have experienced a lot of the effect of body shaming one of them is a crisis of confidence. In the minute (00:08:46), When Dunkleman tries to convince Jodi to go out with him, Jodi explains that if that happened, people might mock them because it is impossible for a woman to be taller than a man. *“Okay, it would be weird. We've known each other for so long, and dating a guy who's shorter than me would just draw more attention to how much of a freak I am.”* Jodi becomes embarrassed when she meets people who often look at her with condescending eyes. She is tired of receiving insults from people who always mock her different posture from other women. At (00:29:49), it is seen where Jodi is avoiding the crowd, when her friend is looking for her, it turns out that Jodi is in the toilet to hide. *“Out. Now.” “Excuse me. I'm reading.” “You're hiding.”*

At (00:39:43), Jodi starts thinking about surgery so that she could adjust her height like a normal woman. She starts browsing the internet to find out what surgery costs she might do to improve her appearance. It can be seen from the scene where Jodi questions herself. *“Why couldn't I have just been normal?”* This scene really shows that Jodi is very incredulous about her body shape. At (00:46:06), Jodi expresses her anxiety when she is telling Stig that in this world, having a tall body is only beneficial for men, whereas if a woman has a tall posture, they will be the object of bullying. because the stigma that people have about being tall is only for men. *“Being a tall guy is... is great, but...when you're tall girl, it's...it's the only thing that people see.”*

## CONCLUSION

It can be inferred that Tall Girl film tells the story of a tall woman who receives body shaming treatment in her daily life. In the film we can see how body shaming is depicted trough denotative and connotative way. People insult Jodi who has unusual heights blatantly and even they very often offend her with jokes that have connotative meaning which of course can make the victim more hurt. Furthermore, Body shaming which caused by people's bad behavior also has an impact on the lack of self-confidence, feelings of wanting to change God's gifts, not wanting to associate with people, and feeling sorry for having been born with the condition.

## **REFERENCE**

- Andi Hudriati, Rusdiah, Muli Umiaty Noer, Muhammad Arham. (2019). EFL Students' Attitude on Mendeley-Based Instruction for Scientific Writing in. *Asian EFL Journal Research Articles*.
- Bogdan, Robert C. & Biklen Kopp Sari (1982). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: Boston London.
- Chairani, L. (2018). *Body Shame dan Gangguan Makan Kajian Meta-Analysis*. Buletin Psikologi, Vol 26 No.1.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). *Objectification theory: toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks*. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 173–206.
- Gilbert, P. (2007). *The evaluation of shame as a marker for relationship security: a biopsychosocial approach*. In J.L. Tracy, R.W. Robins & J.P. Tangney (Eds), *The Self Conscious Emotions: Theory and Research*. New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.
- Kridalaksana. (1984). *Kamus Linguistik*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Lestari, S. (2019). *Bullying or Body Shaming? Young Women in Patient Body Dymorphic Disorder*. *Philanthropy: Journal of Psychology*, Vol 3 Nomor 1, 1-74.
- Nazir. (1988). *Metode Penelitian*. Jakarta : Ghalia Indonesia
- Pruzinsky, T., & Cash, T. (2002). *Understanding body images. Historical and contemporary perspectives*. In *Body image: A handbook of theory, research, and clinical practice*
- Sakinah. (2018). "Ini Bukan Lelucon": *Body Shaming, Citra Tubuh, Dampak dan Cara Mengatasinya*. *Jurnal Emik*, 1.
- Syarifuddin, Salmia and Hasyim, Irmawaty (2020) *Semantic Analysis in English High School Handbooks*. British: *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*. Vol 9, No 1, p. 1-12.