



Gender Discrimination of Women in Baseball Girl Movie: A Study of Semiotics

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ABSTRACT

The representation of women by the entertainment media as well as in the real world is always described as very typical, one of them is that they can only carry out limited professions and activities. So that the existence of women is not represented proportionally. Based on this, the study aims to describe the signs of women's gender discrimination and equality. This study used the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes which describes the forms of denotative meaning, connotative meaning, and myths contained in the Baseball Girl movie. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with listening and note-taking techniques. The results found in the Baseball girl movie are as follows: (1) the meaning of denotation in this study described the gender discrimination of women who are considered weak by the coach or the professional baseball recruiting team in participating in the trials towards the professional baseball team. (2) The connotative meaning found in this film shows four forms of gender discrimination, namely marginalization, stereotype, subordination, and violence. (3) The myth that can be concluded in this study is that there is a culture that is believed by the coach, the professional baseball team recruiter, and the mother of the main female character in this film who considers women physically weaker than men.

Keywords: semiotics, Roland Barthes, Baseball girl



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1. Introduction

Films can be an effective medium to recount the great phenomena that occurred in their time (Kryston & Eden, 2022). The film is an audio-visual communication medium to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a certain place. A film is also a new tool used to spread entertainment that has become a habit before, as well as to present stories, events, music, drama, comedy, and other technical offerings to the general public. The most important things in films are pictures and sound; spoken words or plus other sounds accompanying the pictures, and film music. The semiotic system that is more important in the film is the use of iconic signs, namely signs that describe something used in the film to signal a message to the audience.

The film is a field of study that is very relevant for semiotic analysis because the film is built with various signs. The signs include various sign systems that work well together to achieve the desired effect. Films usually have meanings as suggested by Roland Barthes, namely signifiers and signified. Usually, the audience only knows the meaning of the film as a whole, but when the film is analyzed, there are many meanings of denotation, connotation, and myth (Jain, Roy, Garud, & Mazid, 2019).

The idea to make a film can come from novels, poetry, true stories, and even social criticism in society such as a film from Korea entitled *Baseball Girl*. The film raises the theme of gender equality. This film also tells the story of a teenage girl who tries to pursue her dream to become a professional baseball athlete. Unfortunately, the struggle she had to go through to achieve her dream was not as easy as she imagined. She had to face some pretty tough obstacles. This film tells the story of a woman who becomes the only female

baseball player at her school. *Baseball Girl* also tells the story of a woman's persistence in fighting the stereotype that baseball is for men only. Indirectly, this film also acknowledges that many women are trying desperately to get a professional position in various places that are gender-biased and patriarchal (Fleischer, 2021). This must first be validated. This film also provides satire as well as lessons about where women deserve to be given a chance. Because in the end what influences the success of a team is not which gender leads or dominates, but the ability of its members.

Mansour Fakih in his book explains how the forms of gender injustice that occur in everyday life (Lloyd & Kay, 2021). Among the forms, namely: (1) Gender and Marginalization, are traits that marginalize a group of people, both men, and women, which causes injustice between the two parties. This form of gender marginalization can occur anywhere and comes from anywhere. (2) Gender and Subordination, is a form of discrimination based on the assumption that women are emotional beings and cannot lead and are not worthy of making decisions. Finally, there is an assumption that women are the number two creatures after men. (3) Gender and Stereotype, is a labeling of a people or group that is detrimental to the group. (4) Gender and Violence, is violence in the form of physical and non-physical. Violence due to gender is certainly caused by gender assumptions where violence can occur anywhere, anytime, and by anyone. (5) Workload, is the effect of gender values, such as women having to take care of household chores such as mopping, washing clothes, washing dishes, and others. These jobs can also be done by men because of the emergence of various assumptions that it is women who have to do all the work, this is where gender discrimination appears in life (Dawn, 2019).

In the film, there is a signifier and a signified which are used to find a denotative marker which is a connotative marker. Semiotics is a scientific study or analytical method to examine signs in the context of scenarios, images, texts, and scenes in films into something that can be interpreted, while the word "semiotics" itself comes from the Greek, *semeion* which means "sign" or *seme* which means "interpreter of signs".

Through the film "*Baseball Girl*", the author tries to examine analytical semiotics, namely semiotics that analyzes sign systems, normative semiotics, namely semiotics that specifically examines sign systems made by humans, social semiotics, namely semiotics that examines sign systems produced by humans in the form of symbols. and structural semiotics, namely semiotics that specifically examines the sign system which is manifested through the language structure in the film (Lombar, 2018; Dydyński & Mäekivi, 2021). In the following, the author will present examples of data related to semiotic analysis contained in the title of this film, namely the word *Baseball Girl*. This word has a denotative meaning which is the initial meaning of a sign, text, and so on. In other words, this denotation refers to what common sense or people believe. So, according to the understanding of people in general when hearing the word "*Baseball*" that comes to our minds is one type of sport that is played by men.

The meaning of connotation, which is a term used by Barthes to describe one of the three ways signs work in the second stage of sign significance, explains the interactions that occur when the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the user and the values in their culture. When it comes to the connotative meaning, the word "*Baseball Girl*" is another name for the word "a boy's game played by women." Barthes argues that the main factor in connotation is the signifier of the connotative sign. Furthermore, at the stage of myth, as explained by Barthes, that myth is the second way in the way of signs work in the second order. The usual use is words that show the user's distrust. Myth is people who believe in it in the true sense. Myth is a story in a culture that explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature. So, the myth of the word "*Baseball Girl*" itself is a game played by men. While the word "*Baseball Girl*" in this film tells the story of a woman who tries to change the stereotype about the game of baseball which is only commonly played by men.

2. Literature Review

The study of gender identity and gendered representation is the focus of the interdisciplinary academic area known as gender studies (Calderón-Sandoval, 2022). Women's studies, which focus on women, feminism, gender, and politics, is where gender studies got their start. These days, the field combines men's studies and gay studies. After 1990, it began to gain popularity, particularly in Western colleges, at the same time as deconstruction. The fields of literature, linguistics, human geography, history, political science, archaeology, economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, cinema, musicology, media studies, human development, law, public health, and medicine are among those that regularly contribute to gender studies. Gender studies also examine how the concepts of gender and sexuality interact with those of race, ethnicity, location, socioeconomic class, nationality, and disability.

Instead of referring to the biological features of the male or female sex, the term "gender" is frequently employed in gender studies to describe the social and cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity (Mshweshwe, 2020). However, not all gender theorists share this opinion. Numerous academic fields,

including anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, literary theory, theatrical studies, film theory, performance theory, contemporary art history, and psychology, are relevant to gender. However, there are occasions when various disciplines take different stances on how and why gender is examined. Gender can be seen as a foundational language in politics that political players use to define their positions on a range of issues. As a discipline unto itself, gender studies draw techniques and strategies from many other fields.

Discrimination based on a person's gender is known as "gender discrimination." In terms of education, careers, economic advancement, and political influence, women typically face discrimination and are not treated equally to males (Pan, Lu, & Zhang, 2021). It is a typical form of prejudice that occurs all around the world, especially in developed nations. An employee who claims that his or her manager only promotes male employees and keeps women in entry-level positions is an example of gender discrimination or sexual harassment that would be covered by the act.

"Baseball Girl" is a new movie created as part of the Korean Academy of Film Arts (KAFA)'s advanced feature film course. It is a story about a high school girl baseball player who is going to graduate from high school and is challenging herself to enter professional baseball. Two sisters join the first female professional baseball league and struggle to help it succeed amidst their own growing rivalry. A fan who has an affair with one minor-league baseball player each season meets an up-and-coming pitcher and the experienced catcher assigned to him.

3. Methods

This study used descriptive qualitative research methods using the referential method as a research tool. The qualitative research method is a naturalistic research method because the assessment is carried out in natural conditions (Sugiyono, 2013). Then according to Mahsun (2012, p. 93), it is called the listening method because the method used to obtain data is done by listening to the use of language. The term listening here is not only related to the use of spoken language but also the use of written language. By using Fakhri's (1996) theory of gender analysis which divides gender into five parts, namely, marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and double burden, the author will also use Roland Barthes' semiotic marking theory which divides semiotics into three elements, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. Then this study uses the Roland Barthes model, which focuses on the idea of two orders of signification. The significance of the first stage is the relationship between the signifier (signifier) and the signified (signified) in a sign to external reality. Barthes calls it a denotative meaning, where this meaning is the most obvious of signs. While the meaning of connotation is the term used by Barthes to show the significance of the second stage. In the second stage of significance related to the content, signs work through myths. Myth is how culture explains or understands some aspects of reality or natural phenomena.

4. Results

To explain the identification of the problem above, five scenes that have messages related to Baseball Girl were taken which have been analyzed using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory, as follows:

Scene 1



Picture. 1

a. Meaning of Denotation

From the picture above, it can be seen that the new coach is talking to the old coach. The old coach introduced the situation and conditions regarding the baseball team he had coached so far to the new coach.

The conversation above shows how surprised and disbelieving the new coach was when he found out that there were female players on the baseball team at the school. Because baseball is generally only played by men. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“How can a woman play on a high school team?”**

b. Meaning of Connotation

The scenes and conversations show how women experience stereotypes. This indicates that the game of baseball is not a realm that should be entered by women because baseball is dominated by men.

c. Myth

From the new coach's point of view, he thought that baseball players could only be played by men. That Joo Soo-in has already become a female baseball player who is famous in Korea because of their ball-throwing speed of 130 km/h.

Scene 2



Picture. 2

a. Meaning of Denotation

From the picture above, it can be seen that the female player is talking to a professional baseball team recruiter about her participation in recruiting which become a professional baseball team.

In the conversation above, the professional team recruiter asserts that baseball is not for women. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“No! Girls can't join high school teams.”** Then the conversation above also shows how the recruiter complicates the registration process for female players by suddenly adding several requirements that must be met by female players. This makes a difference in terms of requirements for the recruitment of male and female teams of players. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“First, you must pass the preliminary file screening. The announcement does not include file filtering. The rule only exists this time.”**

b. Connotation Meaning

The scenes and conversations show how women experience subordination. Here, it is seen that the position of women and men are not the same. Women are only as being number two after men. Then, in this scene also visible manifestations of stereotyped attitudes because the presence of women is considered only to be detrimental to the group.

c. Myth

Based on the dialogue above, the point of view of a professional baseball team recruiter lowers the existence of women in a professional baseball team. The woman is gender biased. The fact is that the ability of women is not far inferior to men. The woman named Joo Soo-in in her school's national team is a great player, even though she was the only woman on the team.

Scene 3



Picture. 3

a. Meaning of Denotation

From the picture above, it can be seen that the female player is having a conversation with the new coach and the new coach reaffirms the female player not participate in professional baseball recruitment because she will not be able to do that. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“No matter how hard you try, you can't. There's no point in trying.”** Then the conversation above also contains threats to female players not participating in the recruitment. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“do as I say before it's too late.”**

b. Connotation Meaning

The scenes and conversations show how women experience stereotypes. Where women are considered too weak. So it will not be able to compete with men. Then, in this scene, the manifestation of violence can be seen in the first scene. This arises when a female player experiences considerable psychological pressure because she is forced to give up her dream of joining a professional baseball team.

c. Myth

In the scene above, there is a myth that no matter how hard the woman named Joo Soo-In tries to join the professional baseball team, the results will be in vain. Because her coach said there was no point in trying, while Joo Soo-in dismissed his coach's words that he had not tried but had given up. Even though there is no such thing as failure before trying it means that we have to try first.

Scene 4



Picture. 4

a. Meaning of Denotation

From the picture above, it can be seen that the female player is talking with her mother in the house while having dinner. The mother reiterates to her son not to take part in the professional team baseball recruits because the result will be the same every year no matter how many times she tries. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“You've been playing for years. One more year won't make a difference.”**

b. Connotation Meaning

These scenes and conversations show how women experience violence can be seen in this scene. This occurs when a female player experiences considerable psychological pressure because she is forced to give up her mother to join a professional baseball team.

c. Myth

In the scene, there is a myth that no one knows about the next life, as Joo Soo-in's mother said "one more year will not make a difference". In this case, Joo Soo-in's mother talks about Joo Soo-in being a baseball player at her school which will not change her fate. No one knows the fate of a person in the future.

Scene 5



Picture. 5

a. Meaning of Denotation

From the picture above, it can be seen that the female player is talking to her new coach on the bus when she wanted to go somewhere. On her way, the women's player asked the new coach how her future should be managed by others. This can be seen in the following text quote: **“How do they know my future?”**

b. Connotation Meaning

The scenes and conversations show how women experience marginalization where women do not have the right to their future.

c. Myth

Based on the dialogue above, the ability to play a woman's baseball is doubted by many parties. Even his mother doubted his becoming a baseball player because it would not make any money. The fact is that with practice, abilities which she can become a female baseball player on a professional team at a time.

5. Discussion

In today's postcolonial and post-secular communities, emancipation, acceptance of differences, and knowledge of the interconnections of gender with other identity-making elements (class, race, age, sexuality, etc.) are essential analytical tools. Many academic fields, including anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, literary theory, theatrical studies, cinema theory, performance theory, contemporary art history, and psychology, are relevant to gender (Heise et al., 2019). However, there are occasions when various disciplines take different stances on how and why gender is examined. Gender can be seen as a foundational language in politics that political players use to define their positions on a range of issues. Gender studies, which draws from numerous other disciplines, is also a discipline in and of itself.

The results of this study reveal that there are several aspects found in the film related to gender discrimination (Schiele, Louie, & Chen, 2020) which can be analyzed through its denotation, connotation and myth meanings. The results of this study are very relevant to the topic and title of this film which seek to reveal societal phenomena related to gender discrimination in everyday life, just like some of the results of previous studies related to gender discrimination.

Even though there have been many films that have explored the phenomenon of gender discrimination in a pluralistic society (Wölfer & Foroutan, 2022; Dahl et al., 2022), not only in developed countries, but also in developing countries, however, this topic is still interesting to be raised and discussed in the form of works of

art such as movies. The results of this study can at least contribute to disclosing the variety of gender discrimination that exists in society and add to the literature related to gender studies.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis of the Baseball Girls film, it can be concluded that the meaning of denotation in this study describes the gender discrimination of women who are considered weak by the coach or the professional baseball recruiting team in participating in the trials towards the professional baseball team. The connotative meaning found in this film shows three forms of gender discrimination, namely marginalization in scene 5, stereotype in scenes 1, 2, and 3, subordination in scene 2, and violence in scenes 3 and 4. Myths that can be concluded In this study, there is a culture that is believed by the coach, the pro baseball team recruiter, and the mother of the main female character in this film who considers women's physique to be weak compared to men. If women train hard, they will be able to compete with the strength of men. And in the film's setting at school, not all the boys in school are capable of being the best baseball players. The results of this study can at least contribute to disclosing the variety of gender discrimination that exists in society and add to the literature related to gender studies. Although the results of this study can contribute to adding to the literature related to gender in the field of movies, the process and results of this research still have some limitations that must be complemented by future research, especially those related to the addition of research objects, choice of movie themes and sharpness of analysis so that the phenomenon of gender discrimination can be well described and patterned.

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