

Representation of Generation Z women's Roles In The Film “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*”

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the representation of Generation Z women in the film “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*” using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The film was chosen for its depiction of power dynamics within a patriarchal family and the emotional struggle of a young woman facing domestic violence. Set against the backdrop of ongoing gender inequality, the research highlights how Generation Z women raised in a digital and more progressive era are increasingly vocal and responsive to issues of equality. The study aims to explore how film, as a form of mass media, shapes public perceptions of women's roles and struggles. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the analysis focuses on denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings within key scenes. The character Tari emerges as a symbol of strength and resistance, expressing vulnerability while challenging patriarchal norms without completely abandoning familial values. The findings suggest that the film offers a counter-narrative to traditional portrayals of passive femininity, emphasizing young women's pursuit of mental health and gender justice. Ultimately, the study underlines the importance of media in representing evolving gender roles and fostering awareness about women's issues, particularly those faced by Generation Z in patriarchal societies.

Keywords: *Representation; Film; Women's role; Semiotics; Roland Barthes*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, women have often been placed in subordinate positions, with limited access to education and employment, their rational capacity undervalued, and their participation in the public sphere deemed inappropriate. This pattern is deeply rooted in patriarchal culture, which constructs men as superior and expects women to sacrifice personal aspirations in favor of social norms. As a result, women's opportunities for self-development and professional achievement are hindered, perpetuating gender inequality across nearly all areas of life. This phenomenon is especially reflected in the film. In Indonesia, the representation of women in film has frequently been confined to traditional roles portrayed as gentle, emotional, passive figures, or as objects in need of protection. However, with growing

awareness of gender equality issues, more films have emerged featuring women as independent, empowered protagonists who actively shape their destinies. The film has become a crucial medium in the Indonesian context to voice women's experiences, illustrate their struggles, and challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and stereotypes. In terms of communication, female representation in film is a vital issue, as the media wields immense power in shaping societal perceptions. Both in Indonesia and globally, film is not merely a form of entertainment but also a vehicle for transmitting values, ideologies, and perceptions of gender roles. While traditional stereotypes such as the passive woman, the sexual object, or the cold career woman persist, the film also holds the potential to become a space for empowerment when women are depicted as active and independent figures. Despite progress in the quantity of female representation, gender inequality still exists both on-screen and behind the scenes. This imbalance reveals that gender representation in film not only reflects social realities but also actively shapes them. Therefore, the film serves as a symbolic battleground either reinforcing inequality or advancing gender justice. "*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*" presents an emotional portrait of a young Generation Z woman's struggle to face the harsh realities of life. The protagonist, Tari (played by Prilly Latuconsina), grows up in a household marked by conflict and violence. She witnesses her mother, Devi (Dominique Sanda), become a victim of abuse at the hands of her father, Pras. Through this narrative, the film highlights the impact of familial trauma and social pressure on young women, while also portraying their efforts to rise above their pain and discover inner strength. This film was chosen for its unique portrayal of female representation, differing from the conventional depiction of women in cinema. Unlike films that portray women as flawless or overly idealized figures, "*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*" presents Tari's character in a deeply personal, emotional, and realistic manner. Through her experience of domestic violence and societal expectations, the film honestly and poignantly addresses women's mental health and emotional trauma. In contrast to films like "*Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini*" (NKCTHI), which emphasize emotional resilience, this film highlights the courage it takes for women to acknowledge their vulnerability and seek support, such as through a support group. This approach reflects the dynamics of Generation Z women, who are more open to expressing emotions and exploring healing processes while challenging the stigma that crying is a sign of weakness. This research is important to understand how film, as a medium of communication, can represent the complex social realities of women. By examining how young women are portrayed in humanized and struggle-filled narratives, this study seeks to reveal the role of film in shaping public perception and opening up dialogue about gender equality and the social construction of gender roles in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Film

The film serves as a medium of representation with a powerful capacity to convey messages and ideologies through visual means. Prakosa (1997) describes the film as a

sequence of images on celluloid projected through a device, offering a democratic and open space for multiple interpretations. This view emphasizes that film is not merely a form of entertainment, but rather a platform where ideologies and values can be negotiated, challenged, and exchanged. Furthermore, Ida (2014) underscores the importance of a story in the film, defining it as a chronological series of events constructed by the filmmaker to deliver a narrative to the audience. As both an artistic and cultural product, the film also functions as a tool for social critique. Its ability to reach diverse segments of society positions it as an effective medium for communicating specific messages (Salim & Sukendro, 2021). Within the realm of mass communication, film holds a distinct advantage due to its audiovisual nature, allowing it to present complex narratives and meanings within a relatively short duration. Ibrahim (2011) highlights that film is not only a medium for transmitting messages, but also a channel through which mutual communication can occur between filmmakers and audiences. Thus, film occupies a strategic role within the broader communication system, serving both individual and collective purposes.

The Role of Women

The theory of women's roles serves as a sociological and psychological framework that explains how societal expectations, norms, and behaviors are shaped and imposed on women (Connell, 1987; Eagly, 1987). This theory centers on the concept of gender roles socially constructed expectations based on sex and how these roles influence women's identities, opportunities, and life experiences. Simone de Beauvoir (2012) reinforces this perspective by asserting that a woman's gender identity is not purely biological, but rather shaped through ongoing social and cultural interactions. These interactions often place women in predefined roles that reflect societal values and norms. As a result, women have traditionally been associated with domestic responsibilities such as caregiving and household management, while men have typically occupied positions of power in the public sphere. Social developments, however, have introduced the concept of dual roles for women, in which they are expected to participate both in domestic and public domains. This includes not only managing familial responsibilities but also engaging in economic activities and contributing to the broader social sphere. Studies, including those analyzing film and real-world social dynamics, reveal that women's roles can generally be categorized into three main areas: reproductive roles (family care), productive roles (economic participation), and community roles (involvement in social and political activities). Ultimately, the theory of women's roles highlights how female social roles are constructed and constrained by cultural norms and patriarchal structures. It also sheds light on the strategies women use to navigate, negotiate, and balance these intersecting roles in their daily lives.

Generation Z

Stillman (2018) identifies Generation Z as individuals born in the early 2000s, a cohort that has grown up immersed in technological advancements. This generation is

characterized by its deep integration with digital tools and platforms, shaping both their communication patterns and worldviews. Noordiono (2016) adds that the rapid development of technology significantly influences Generation Z, particularly through the ease and speed with which they access information via the Internet. As digital natives, members of Generation Z are often perceived as independent, largely due to their ability to obtain information autonomously through online resources. This access empowers them to make informed decisions without relying heavily on others. For instance, in the context of consumer behavior, Generation Z tends to depend on technology to stay updated with current trends, which in turn shapes their perceptions and preferences regarding brands. The unique characteristics of Generation Z are also evident in how they interact with digital content. They are not merely passive consumers but actively create and share content through social media. This ability to directly participate in the digital space gives them substantial influence in shaping public opinion and social trends. As such, Generation Z plays a dual role: as audience and as content creators. Therefore, any approach to engaging this generation whether in education, marketing, or social communication—must take into account their active role and autonomy in selecting and processing information. They value authenticity, transparency, and speed in receiving information, all of which are supported by the advanced technology they use daily.

Representation

In the context of media, language, and communication, representation manifests in various forms such as words, images, sequences, and narratives that convey ideas, emotions, facts, and more (Hartley, 2010). Media does not neutrally reflect reality; instead, it actively constructs reality through selective processes. Certain forms of representation such as those related to gender, ethnicity, age, and social class play a crucial role in shaping cultural and political life. Representation relies on pre-existing signs and culturally understood imagery, which are embedded in language acquisition and diverse semiotic or textual systems (Hartley, 2010). Thus, representation serves not merely to depict reality, but to construct meaning and shape perceptions of that reality. From a semiotic perspective, representation is understood as the physical manifestation of interpretation, knowledge, or explanation of messages. Danny (2010) defines representation more precisely as the use of signs that are absorbed, perceived, imagined, or considered in a physical form. It operates through the relationship between signs and meanings, highlighting the dynamic nature of meaning-making. Representations are not fixed; they evolve as meanings shift. These shifts occur through ongoing processes of negotiation and interpretation, indicating that representation is inherently fluid and context-dependent. In the context of modern media communication, representation holds immense power in shaping public opinion and framing social realities. Through repeated portrayals, media can reinforce stereotypes or, conversely, challenge them by presenting alternative narratives. For example, the depiction of minority groups in films or news coverage not only affects how the public perceives those groups, but also influences how

those groups see themselves. Therefore, representation is never neutral it is always mediated by specific values, ideological interests, and cultural contexts. The semiotic approach allows us to deconstruct these meaning constructions and identify how symbols and signs are used to legitimize power, identity, and social structures. By understanding that meaning is dynamic and socially produced, we can become more critical of what we consume through media.

Semiotic

According to Segers (as cited in Sobur, 2003), the in-depth exploration of semiotics as a field of study first gained traction in Anglo-Saxon academic contexts. Often referred to as Saussurean thought, semiology focuses on the study of signs and their functions. Semiotics, as a method of analysis, is applied to interpret signs within various media forms such as scripts, images, texts, and scenes in film. The term “semiotics” derives from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning “*sign*,” or *seme*, referring to the interpreter of signs. Historically, semiotics finds its roots in classical and scholastic traditions of logic, rhetoric, and ethics (Kurniawan, 2001). Signs function as essential tools for navigating human experience, mediating understanding of the world, and facilitating social interaction. Roland Barthes, who referred to the field as semiology, emphasized that the core of semiotics lies in understanding how humans assign meaning to things (Barthes, 1988). In this framework, “*to signify*” is not synonymous with “*to communicate*.” Signification implies that objects do more than merely convey information they participate in constructing structured systems of meaning (Kurniawan, 2001). Thus, semiotics explores how meaning is produced, shaped, and understood within cultural and communicative contexts. The semiotic approach has become increasingly relevant in the contemporary era, particularly within the context of visual culture and mass communication. In a society saturated with images, symbols, and digital narratives, understanding how signs function is crucial for interpreting the underlying messages embedded in media representations. Semiotics does not merely analyze what is explicitly communicated, but also investigates how meaning is constructed through codes, conventions, and underlying ideologies. For instance, in advertisements or films, elements such as color, gestures, settings, and sound all carry symbolic meaning that can be interpreted semiotically to uncover implicit messages conveyed to the audience. Thus, semiotics serves not only as an analytical tool but also as a critical approach to understanding the dynamics of meaning in popular culture and everyday communication practices.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach and Roland Barthes’ semiotic analysis to examine the representation of Generation Z women's roles in the film “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*”, which has a runtime of 1 hour and 41 minutes. The subject of this study is the film itself, with a specific focus on the representation of Generation Z women as the main object of analysis. The units of analysis consist of selected scenes from the film, where observations are focused on visual elements, audio, dialogue, and relevant scenes to identify

both denotative and connotative meanings. The primary data source is the film “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*”, while secondary data sources include e-books, academic journals, online articles, and relevant previous theses. Data collection was conducted through documentation by capturing scenes that depict the roles of Generation Z women. These scenes were then analyzed using Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach. The stages of analysis include identifying signs and symbols, examining denotative and connotative meanings, and interpreting myths to understand how the film reflects social realities and shapes audience perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tari Experiences Restraint and Control of Freedom from Her Father



Figure 1 (Tari's father scolded Tari for going out with Baskara without his permission)
Source: Netflix

The scene in the film “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*” portrays the dynamics of patriarchal power within the family through the character of Pras, Tari’s father, who exerts control in an authoritarian and intimidating manner. When Tari is forcibly picked up and taken home after leaving without her father's permission, the tension is immediately palpable. Upon arriving home, Pras vents his anger at Tari without offering space for dialogue or explanation. Tari remains silent, lowers her gaze, and obeys her father’s commands not out of incapacity to resist, but due to deep-rooted psychological pressure stemming from years of paternal dominance. Her submission becomes a symbol of how patriarchal power systems suppress women, especially daughters, forcing them into compliance without the freedom to express their own will. Pras’s authority is manifested not only through normative rules but also through verbal and emotional intimidation. He demands absolute control over every aspect of his daughter’s life, insisting that all decisions and actions require his approval. He does not hesitate to issue threats when his boundaries are crossed, illustrating that the power he holds is not a form of protection, but a mechanism of control and subjugation. On the other hand, Tari’s mother is portrayed as a weak and marginalized figure within the family structure. She remains silent while Pras scolds Tari, despite knowing the truth of the situation.

Her silence does not reflect indifference but is rooted in fear and deep trauma from her husband's harsh and oppressive behavior. This condition reveals that patriarchal power targets not only daughters but also silences adult women in the roles of mother and wife. Both Tari and her mother exist within a deeply imbalanced family structure where women's voices and autonomy are suppressed by absolute male authority. This representation mirrors a persistent social reality in which women within families are often denied the space to express opinions, make decisions, or determine the course of their own lives. Through this scene, the film offers a sharp critique of a patriarchal culture that positions women in a subordinate role and reveals the emotional and psychological consequences of oppressive power structures within the domestic sphere.

Tari Experiences Disappointment and Resignation



Figure 2 (Tari, who is lost in thought, in a state of resignation)
Source: Netflix (2024)

The scene in which Tari leans against her bedroom wall reflects a deep emotional pain caused by the pressure and dominance of her authoritarian father. Her blank, contemplative expression conveys a psychological burden that, while invisible, steadily erodes her sense of freedom as a young woman living within a patriarchal family environment. When her mother enters the room and attempts to justify her father's behavior, Tari offers no resistance, instead surrendering the decision entirely to her mother. This gesture does not stem from weakness but rather represents a form of adaptation, a survival strategy often employed by women within imbalanced power structures. Within the framework of gender role theory in patriarchal culture, this scene illustrates how women both as daughters and as mothers are placed in subordinate positions and are compelled to submit to male authority. Tari is not only physically restrained by her father's prohibitions, but also mentally confined by the constant pressure to conform to norms and values that diminish her agency. This theory suggests that women in patriarchal systems are often expected to operate within the domestic sphere and uphold family harmony, even at the expense of their desires and voices (Afifah & Syafrini, 2021). In this context, Tari becomes a vivid representation of the tension between individual awareness and traditional constraints that continue to hold sway in society. As a member of Generation Z, Tari is portrayed as someone who possesses a sense of gender equality and the right to make her own life choices. However, she remains shackled by the conservative values inherited within her family. The internal conflict she experiences reflects the dilemma

faced by many young women today, who find themselves caught between modern ideals and traditional expectations. Her apparent resignation is not the end of resistance, but rather the beginning of an emerging consciousness, a realization that change is needed within domestic power relations. This scene underscores the importance of creating space for young women to express themselves, break free from stereotypes, and shape identities that are not confined by patriarchal norms. Through the character of Tari, the film not only critiques male-dominated family systems but also presents a glimpse of shifting values and the potential for resistance growing within Generation Z women.

Tari is Experiencing Emotional Trauma



Figure 3 (Tari was in her room listening to the commotion of her parents)

Source: Netflix (2024)

The scene vividly portrays the emotional abuse experienced by a young woman within the context of a patriarchal family structure. Tari, the main character in “*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*”, is shown in her bedroom with a panicked and fearful expression as she listens to the intense argument between her parents erupting in the living room. Her father's furious shouting creates a tense atmosphere that leaves a profound psychological impact. Tari's inability to intervene or de-escalate the conflict reflects the subordinate position and helplessness often faced by young women in toxic domestic environments. To cope with the emotional distress, Tari puts on her headphones and listens to music, a typical coping mechanism among Generation Z, who frequently turn to media and technology as an escape from stress and trauma. This act not only represents a response to the unseen emotional violence but also illustrates how Gen Z women attempt to manage their inner wounds independently. Although this generation is widely recognized for being more open to mental health awareness and seeking psychological support, they still struggle when their home environment offers no emotional freedom or healing space. This scene, therefore, highlights the psychosocial impact of familial conflict and emphasizes the importance of safe emotional spaces and support systems for young women navigating systemic trauma. Through Tari's silent resistance and solitary coping, the film sheds light on the urgent need for both structural and emotional reform in how families address and support mental well-being.

Tari Acts Brave to Support and Protect Her Mother



Figure 4 (Tari and her mother were chatting, Tari invited her mother to live together without her father)

Source: Netflix (2024)

The scene depicting a warm interaction between Tari and her mother before she leaves for work illustrates a deep emotional bond between a mother and daughter within a household marked by pressure and tension. As Tari prepares for her day, she stops by the kitchen to greet her mother, pick up her lunch, and collect the cakes her mother had baked. In a tender gesture, she also hands her mother an informational card about a support group, inviting her to join a path of healing together. During their light-hearted conversation, Tari expresses a heartfelt wish to move out and live alone with her mother so they can enjoy more freedom and so her mother can pursue her dream of opening a cake shop. However, this suggestion is gently declined with the familiar rationale that “*everything is still fine at home*” a response that reflects a deep attachment to traditional norms and a denial of the emotional abuse embedded in their domestic reality. This moment not only showcases Tari’s empathy and care as a daughter but also represents Generation Z women as proactive, solution-oriented, and courageous in expressing emotional needs not only for themselves but also for their loved ones. Women of Gen Z, as embodied by Tari, embrace openness regarding mental health issues and recognize the importance of emotional safety within the family unit. Unlike previous generations who often endured or concealed domestic conflict in silence, these young women emerge as agents of change, seeking to break the cycle of silence and denial. Tari’s act of giving her mother the support group flyer symbolizes a paradigm shift in understanding emotional well-being from passive endurance to active recovery. This scene thus reinforces the idea that Generation Z women are growing up with a heightened awareness of psychological wellness and are unafraid to take concrete steps toward creating a more supportive, egalitarian, and emotionally healthy family environment.

Tari Seeks Support Through a Support Group



Figure 5 (Tari joined a support group to seek support for her mental health)
Source: Netflix (2024)

The scene depicting Tari's involvement in a support group offers a vivid portrayal of the collective strength and emotional awareness emerging among Generation Z women. This community serves as a safe space for young individuals, including Tari, to share their traumatic experiences stemming from high-pressure family environments, particularly those shaped by patriarchal dynamics and emotional abuse. The circular seating arrangement within the group symbolizes equality, inclusivity, and active listening values strongly embraced by Generation Z, such as empathy, openness, and a collective desire to break the cycle of intergenerational pain. The presence of a mentor acting as a facilitator signifies a shift in emotional authority from traditional family figures to community-based support systems. For Tari, the decision to join the support group marks a proactive stance and a conscious recognition of the importance of collective psychological healing. This reflects a broader characteristic of Generation Z, a cohort deeply engaged with technology, open-minded, and courageous in expressing themselves beyond the confines of conservative norms (Suhantono, 2021; Bhakti & Safitri, 2017). They value freedom of expression and often seek emotional solidarity through alternative platforms, including digital communities and open discussion forums. Therefore, this scene not only illustrates an individual's healing process but also represents a broader social transformation in how today's youth, especially young women, navigate trauma, construct identity, and create new support systems outside traditional family structures. Symbolically, the film suggests that strength does not solely emerge from silent endurance, but also from the courage to speak up, connect with others, and heal together. The relationship between Generation Z women and authoritative family figures, such as fathers who uphold patriarchal values, is often strained. These young women grow up with a strong awareness of gender equality and are more likely to question authoritarian power structures within the family. They recognize that patriarchal traditions have long created power

imbalances not only between fathers and daughters but also between husbands and wives. Generation Z women, equipped with critical awareness, deep empathy, and the courage to speak out, lead the resistance against these outdated norms. Unlike previous generations, they refuse to stay silent in the face of inequality, even in deeply personal family spaces. Their boldness reflects the typical characteristics of Generation Z, who are more open to gender equality discourse and actively oppose patriarchal practices. According to Twenge (2017), Generation Z demonstrates a higher level of awareness regarding gender equality compared to previous generations. Komnas Perempuan (2022) supports this view, noting that Generation Z women are more courageous in challenging patriarchal authority due to their strong understanding of human rights and equality. These women do not rebel without purpose; instead, they offer constructive criticism and invite authoritative figures to see from a broader perspective, while still respecting their freedom to accept or reject it. Patriarchal dominance is clearly depicted in the film through the father's authoritarian and dismissive behavior toward the protagonist and her mother. Despite enduring emotional suppression and trauma, the main character eventually confronts her father expressing pain, frustration, and disappointment with his actions. She sacrifices her own dreams to protect her mother and takes on the emotional burden of trying to awaken her father's conscience. This situation mirrors real-life gender inequality, where women and daughters are often expected to remain passive and obedient. The father's role as the ultimate authority figure reflects the old myth of absolute male dominance in the family. However, this myth is gradually being challenged by a new narrative driven by the protagonist's bravery to question and resist unjust treatment. Her resistance marks a shift in how women are viewed within the family: as individuals who also have the right to be heard and to decide their own paths. This shift gives rise to a new ideology called Empathocracy. Empathocracy is a contemporary ideology born from the spirit of the times, particularly from Generation Z women who refuse to submit to oppressive patriarchal systems. It does not merely seek formal gender equality but emphasizes empathy as the foundation of just and humane social relationships. In an Empathocratic system, power is no longer defined by control or dominance, but by the ability to listen, understand, and emotionally connect with others especially those, like women, who have historically been silenced by a culture of submission. Empathocracy reframes vulnerability as a source of true strength, not weakness. It offers a vision of power based on emotional openness, gender equality, and justice especially for those who have long been marginalized within traditional family structures. This narrative illustrates the social transformation from oppressive myths toward a more inclusive, democratic, and compassionate family model. Generation Z women play a central role in the emergence and spread of this ideology. Growing up amidst globalization and widespread access to information, they have developed a critical awareness of gender inequality and the courage to challenge it. No longer silent in the face of injustice whether in the family, education, or the workplace Gen Z women often resist not through confrontation, but through empathy. They initiate dialogue, speak the truth with emotional courage, and create safe spaces for mutual listening and understanding. In the context of the

family, they challenge the authoritarian roles of fathers or husbands by voicing their personal experiences, emotional wounds, and their need for equal and respectful relationships. Generation Z women demonstrate that true strength does not lie in violence or cold assertiveness, but in the courage to cry, to heal emotional wounds, and to fight for a humane space to live and thrive. In this sense, Empathocracy can be seen as a continuation of the ideals of second-wave feminism, which fought for equal access to education, career opportunities, and women's control over their own bodies and lives. However, Empathocracy goes beyond structural struggles by extending into the psychological and emotional realms: advocating for the freedom to feel, to express, and to recover from the generational trauma imposed by patriarchal systems. Where second-wave feminism focused on the redistribution of rights and roles within social and political domains, Empathocracy expands the struggle to the deepest aspects of humanity relationships that empower one another through empathy. In a world increasingly aware of the importance of mental health, healthy relationships, and freedom of expression, Empathocracy emerges as a timely and necessary ideology. Contemporary films increasingly portray Generation Z women in their coming-of-age journeys, growing up in family environments often marked by harshness, authoritarianism, and male dominance. The father figure is frequently depicted as the most dominant character, fully controlling the decisions and movements of both wife and children. Initially, Generation Z women may appear passive and silent, reflecting how traditional values have long taught women to obey, suppress emotions, and never question male authority especially that of the father. This portrayal underscores how traditional roles continue to associate women with subordination, the burden of preserving family honor, and the obligation to conform to male expectations. However, this narrative has shifted significantly. Generation Z women are now portrayed as agents of change, actively dismantling outdated myths that have long confined female roles such as the belief that women must silently endure pain. Instead of continuing to internalize emotional pressure and childhood trauma, Gen Z women in these films take bold steps by seeking emotional support groups. This act is revolutionary in a patriarchal culture, where admitting weakness and seeking help is often considered taboo. These women create safe spaces to open up, express grief, and share long-suppressed traumatic experiences. This is not a form of escape, but rather a new kind of courage the courage to heal through communication and solidarity. Contrary to traditional views that regard sadness and vulnerability as signs of weakness, Generation Z women reveal that acknowledging pain is an act of true strength. These films offer a new narrative: vulnerability, tears, and the courage to seek help are all powerful forms of resistance. This reconstructs the identity of young women as emotionally autonomous individuals, while still respecting local values. They prove that emotional resilience stems not from suppression, but from the honesty of confronting trauma. Another myth broken by Generation Z is the idea that strong women must be stoic, cold, and unemotional. Popular media in Indonesia has often portrayed strong women as assertive, rational, and emotionally detached as if strength must always take the form of rigidity. Yet, Gen Z women in modern films revise this narrative. Their strength lies in emotional honesty,

the bravery to cry, and the decision not to suffer in silence. They fight for healing not by rejecting emotions, but by embracing them. In the tides of globalization, Indonesian Gen Z women possess a heightened awareness of power dynamics within the family, the importance of mental health, and the right to choose their own path in life. Wide access to information and cross-cultural discourse allows them to critique, reinterpret, and adapt local values to their emotional and social needs. Modern films vividly dismantle old myths and present a new narrative of empowered women. This marks a significant shift toward a new ideology: Equalora (from *Equal* = equal, and *Ora* = to speak or voice). Equalora represents a more democratic and just ideology in which women have the equal right to be heard, to express their opinions, and to determine their own life paths drawing strength from their willingness to embrace vulnerability. Within the framework of Equalora, Generation Z women emerge as conscious, active agents of change. They no longer wait for transformation to come from external sources but instead position themselves as key drivers of progress within the family and society at large. Women are no longer seen merely as moral guardians or domestic caretakers but as autonomous individuals with voices, agency, and the power to shape their own futures. Armed with critical awareness, emotional courage, and social empathy, Gen Z women not only resist patriarchal domination but also offer a new model for building healthier power relations. They advocate for empathy-based and egalitarian forms of power not rooted in domination or revenge, but in liberation. This is where Equalora takes root: as an ideology that recognizes women's strength not in overpowering men, but in freeing themselves and others from oppressive power structures. More than a reaction to injustice, Generation Z women actively create safe spaces, champion mental health, and build emotional solidarity among women. This is a form of "soft power" no less revolutionary than confrontational resistance. In film, acts like crying, revealing inner wounds, and seeking help are positioned as political gestures a rejection of the culture of silence and emotional repression passed down by patriarchy. Second-wave feminism emerged and flourished between the 1960s and 1980s, focusing on structural and systemic gender injustices. Unlike first-wave feminism, which centered on legal rights such as suffrage, the second wave highlighted inequalities that occurred both in domestic and public spheres. Issues such as the division of labor within the household, reproductive freedom, violence against women, and workplace discrimination became the primary concerns of the movement. In response, second-wave feminism called for changes in the domestic division of labor, access to education and careers, and women's control over their bodies and reproductive choices. It shed light on the unequal dynamics in the domestic sphere, where women were traditionally burdened with the primary responsibility of household chores, child-rearing, and caregiving without equal recognition or compensation. The movement demanded a more equitable distribution of domestic labor between men and women and rejected the notion that housework is a natural or sole responsibility of women. These ideas find renewed relevance today in the context of Generation Z women, who are growing up with a critical awareness of rigid gender roles. Generation Z women no longer passively accept traditional roles that

position them as emotional and physical caregivers within the home. Instead, they boldly voice the injustice of unequal domestic responsibilities and advocate for cooperative and equitable household dynamics. Moreover, they reject being confined to purely domestic roles; they demand recognition as individuals with the right to pursue careers, education, and personal fulfillment without bearing the burden of double standards. With the courage to question authority and dismantle patriarchal structures within the domestic realm, Generation Z women continue the legacy of second-wave feminism, but with more empathetic, inclusive, and dialogical approaches. Their resistance to unequal domestic labor is a crucial part of their struggle to create democratic families and egalitarian relationships. Additionally, second-wave feminism emphasized equal access to education and professional opportunities for women, as well as full autonomy over their bodies and reproductive choices. The movement arose in response to the restrictions faced by women in determining their own life paths restrictions long upheld by patriarchal norms. Women were often forced to choose between domestic life or a career, and rarely allowed to pursue both equally. Furthermore, women's bodies were controlled by societal norms and policies that limited their reproductive rights and life choices.

CONCLUSION

The film "*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*" offers a profound representation of Generation Z women through the character of Tari, who embodies emotional complexity, courage, and the pursuit of healing from past trauma. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the film reveals an alternative narrative that challenges common stereotypes of women in media, particularly the notion that female strength must always be portrayed through assertiveness and emotional restraint. In contrast, this film portrays feminine strength as the courage to cry, to acknowledge emotional wounds, and to seek support through collective spaces such as support groups. Tari becomes a symbol of resistance against patriarchal values and repressive family structures, while also representing a young woman who actively reclaims agency over her own life. She is not merely depicted as a victim of parental conflict or domestic violence, but as a subject who articulates her pain and negotiates personal boundaries for the sake of her mental well-being. In this way, the film illustrates that feminine strength is not monolithic; it is multidimensional and deeply shaped by social, psychological, and cultural contexts. The film's overarching narrative reinforces the idea that media representations of women must evolve toward more humanizing and realistic portrayals of women as whole individuals who can feel, suffer, and heal. Within the field of communication, "*Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis*" serves as a vital medium for expressing the authentic experiences of young women, while also opening space for dialogue about the importance of building empathetic and inclusive support systems. Therefore, this film functions not only as a cinematic work, but also as a powerful social representation that reflects the evolving roles of

Generation Z women as they navigate issues of identity, trauma, and the ongoing pursuit of equality.

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