

## Embodied Identity in a Literary Work: Analyzing Women's Body Representation in the Film 'Imperfect' through Simone de Beauvoir's Lens

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Received: October 2024; Revised: November 2024; Published: December 2024

### Abstract

As a prominent medium within the realm of literary works, film serves as a popular medium with a strong influence on public perceptions of various phenomena and issues, particularly as media act as conduits for societal control in the modern era. This study aims to explore the representation of women's bodies in the film *Imperfect* by Ernest Prakasa through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory. The research focuses on two main aspects: societal beauty standards for women's bodies and the female protagonist's resistance to these standards. *Imperfect* portrays the social pressures women face to conform to narrow, patriarchal standards of beauty, such as a slim figure and fair skin. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method, with data collection techniques including observation and note-taking. Observation is conducted through attentive viewing of the film, while note-taking involves documenting relevant dialogues and scenes. Data analysis is carried out systematically in several stages: transcribing key scenes, identifying and classifying scenes that reflect beauty standards and the concept of "the Other," and conducting in-depth analysis of the gathered data. The findings indicate that the film often positions women as "the Other," or as objects judged by external standards. Through its main character, the film also presents a form of resistance to these standards, underscoring the importance of self-acceptance and the freedom to define beauty independently. This study hopes to contribute to the discourse on existentialist feminism and highlight relevant issues regarding social pressures on women's bodies in Indonesian popular culture.

**Keywords:** Literary works; Woman body representation; Beauty standards; Existentialist feminist theory

**How to Cite:** Permatasari, M.P., Amilia, F., Suaedi, H., & Dzarna, D. (2024). Embodied Identity in a Literary Work: Analyzing Women's Body Representation in the Film 'Imperfect' through Simone de Beauvoir's Lens. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 4(4), 784-796. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v4i4.2360>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v4i4.2360>

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the representation of women has become a focal point of objectivity, drawing attention from academics, activists, and the general public alike. Film has long served as a powerful popular medium that shapes public perception on various phenomena or issues, given that media functions as a vehicle of control in modern times, according to Lubis (2014). Beyond acting as social control, Brecht, as cited in Branigan & Buckland (2014), argues that media also serves as a social construct that bridges trending issues, with gender and women's bodies being among the recurrent topics. This research emphasizes the importance of analyzing beauty standards as portrayed in film through a philosopher's perspective, underscoring how these portrayals reinforce stereotypes and societal expectations that pressure women into adhering to an "ideal" standard (Buckingham et al., 2019).

The beauty standards depicted in this film reflect societal norms, often placing pressure on women to meet specific criteria to gain acceptance. This is aligned with Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that women are frequently regarded as 'the Other' within a patriarchal social framework. The social construction surrounding women's bodies encompasses not only physical attributes but also how women are perceived and treated based on their appearance (Ordinasari, 2021). With regard to the social construction of beauty standards, the film 'Imperfect': *Karier, Cinta, dan Timbangan* (hereafter referred to as "IKCT") provides a vivid exploration of female body representation.

According to Halomoan in Siregar (2016), female representation comprises a variety of images, including race, gender, body shape (such as slim, overweight, tall, or short), hair, facial expressions, and fashion. These images convey specific values, such as beauty, youth, femininity, as well as judgments of good or bad, right or wrong, and what is deemed normal or abnormal. The representation of women's bodies, central to this research, is significant as it integrates relevant issues regarding beauty standards and the social pressures exerted on women's bodies, particularly as portrayed in popular Indonesian cinema.

Through Simone de Beauvoir's lens, this study aims to reveal how the film IKCT critiques social constructions surrounding women and their bodies. This research hopes to make a meaningful contribution to contemporary feminist discourse while creating opportunities to link existentialist philosophy with local popular culture. Directed by Ernest Prakasa and featuring a powerful lead performance by Jessica Mila, IKCT has won awards such as the Best Lead Actress and Best Soundtrack from Ifa Fachir and Dimas Wibisana, according to [www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com) (accessed September 28, 2024). The film presents a narrative of a woman's struggle against social pressures related to beauty standards a narrative well-suited to existential feminist analysis.

This study explores social beauty standards by examining body-related issues due to their relevance within contemporary society, which often constructs narrow and unrealistic beauty stereotypes. Such standards impact women's mental and physical well-being, creating an idealized image of women as "perfect" objects, with thin bodies, fair skin, and other patriarchal norms that pressure women to alter themselves. The research also examines the protagonist's resistance to these beauty standards (Andreas, 2019). Within existentialist feminist theory, Simone de Beauvoir's perspective critically aligns with the themes addressed in this film, illuminating how beauty standards imposed on women's bodies contribute to normalized oppression (Bimbingan et al., 2017). For instance, phrases such as "*So cute, so fair-skinned, just like a cotton ball. Lucky this one looks like her mom*" (Minute 00.19) illustrate physical comparisons as a form of standardization for women's bodies. Such statements portray beauty as an idealized metric to which women must conform.

Particularly regarding women's skin color, beauty standards impose a hierarchy wherein women with darker skin tones often face discriminatory treatment (Garcia, 2023). In Indonesia, fair skin is a dominant beauty standard. Scenes in this film illustrate how exclusive standards such as skin color shape and constrain individual identity and self-confidence, particularly for women who do not meet these criteria. Such scenes highlight patriarchal standards that reduce women's bodies to visual objects, a notion reinforced by a survey from ZAP Beauty Clinic & Markplus Inc. (2020), where 82.5% endorsed similar beauty ideals. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that women are defined as "the Other" viewed as objects to be assessed, controlled, and measured against men as the subject (Geleuk, 2017). The focus on body and beauty standards in Indonesia is uniquely normalized within a strongly patriarchal culture. Women who fail to meet these standards experience discrimination and pressures concerning their physical appearance, as portrayed by the

protagonist in IKCT, which exemplifies how women resist beauty standards imposed by a patriarchal society.

The link between Simone de Beauvoir's theory and the film IKCT lies in the philosopher's concept that women are positioned as "the Other," where men are subjects, and women are historically placed as objects. This patriarchal standardization of women's bodies as objects to be judged, controlled, and restricted underscores the film's depiction of female representation (Beauvoir, 2016). Women are viewed as inanimate objects, lacking the power to assert their own autonomy, where the initial assessment of a woman centers on her physical appearance (Kurniawati, 2018). This study aims to analyze how beauty standards are constructed through the representation of women's bodies.

The film *Imperfect* illustrates the relevance of Simone de Beauvoir's theory, offering a fresh perspective by examining how social constructions affect women's bodies based on these societal standards. In comparison to previous studies such as Adelya's (2024) focus on existentialist feminism in the domestic sphere, Sagita's (2023) emphasis on internal conflicts, and Meivitasari's (2023) discussion of gender inequality, and Putra's (2021) contains a study by Simone de Beauvoir with an analysis of the concept of the body with a focus on forms of resistance to body ownership. Based this views, the present study is guided with two research questions: How are beauty standards represented towards women's bodies in the IKCT film? How does female characters' resistance to the standardization of body beauty affect the identities and life experiences of female characters in the film? This unique focus aims to deepen the understanding of social constructs around beauty standards for women's bodies and to explore female characters' resistance to these societal norms.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to depict and analyze the representation of women's bodies in Ernest Prakasa's film IKCT. The choice of descriptive qualitative methodology is due to its suitability for in-depth analysis of female body representation within the film's content. This approach provides flexibility in data collection (Setiawan & Anggito, 2018), allowing the researcher to use documentation techniques, including dialogue, images (scenes), and duration, as well as observational data to gain a more holistic understanding of IKCT's narrative.

Within this research, the researcher examines how the female character in the film is positioned as 'the Other' according to Beauvoir, while also investigating how socially constructed beauty standards affect the character's identity and experiences. This approach allows for interpretive freedom across various elements, such as scenes, dialogue, and character traits associated with themes of body and beauty, and their relevance to existentialist feminism. The descriptive qualitative method thus enables the researcher to delve into the social perspectives behind the representation of women's bodies in IKCT. This approach serves to explore and illustrate social phenomena, specifically focusing on how female bodies are portrayed in the film from the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory. Through this lens, the research aims to elucidate the relationship between social constructions of femininity and existentialist feminist theory, facilitating a deeper exploration of how the film reflects or challenges prevailing gender norms in society.

### Research Object and Data Collection Technique

The research object analyzed in this study is the representation of beauty standards imposed on women's bodies in the film *Imperfect* by Ernest Prakasa, as well as the female character's resistance to these beauty standards. The primary data source used in this research consists of scenes and dialogue from the film 'IKCT'. Secondary sources include

books and previous studies, supplemented by additional references from journals, articles, and literature. These reference sources serve as a foundational framework to support the researcher in analyzing the relevance and validity of the data (Rohmah, 2021). The process of constructing this qualitative research involves collecting and describing facts and data (Rizal et al., 2022).

This study is situated within the realm of literary analysis, specifically exploring the cinematic realm where film is analyzed as an audiovisual medium. Unlike other fields that might focus on a particular geographic or cultural context, this analysis is not constrained by a specific location, but rather by the content and thematic elements presented within the film. The study emphasizes how film, as a form of art and storytelling, uses both visual and auditory components to convey meaning. To gather relevant data, the research employs two primary techniques: observation and note-taking. The first step in the process involves carefully watching the film *IKCT*, paying close attention to its scenes, characters, and overall narrative structure. This observation technique allows researchers to immerse themselves in the audiovisual experience, identifying key moments that carry significant meaning. The second step involves note-taking, where the researchers record pertinent dialogues, phrases, or entire scenes that align with the research's focus. These selected words, phrases, or sentences become the primary material for further interpretation and analysis. By isolating these elements from the film, the researchers aim to uncover deeper meanings, thematic connections, and cultural reflections embedded within the audiovisual medium.

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, the analysis is carried out systematically through descriptive analysis techniques to ensure a thorough examination of the film's content and alignment with the research objectives. The first step in this process involves transcribing significant scenes from the film. These scenes are selected based on their portrayal of women's bodies and their relevance to the protagonist's resistance to established beauty standards. This transcription process allows for detailed examination of both visual and narrative elements within the scenes, providing a foundation for understanding how beauty standards are represented and challenged within the film. The transcribed scenes form a comprehensive dataset that captures the essence of the film's approach to societal norms around female bodies.

The second step entails identifying and categorizing scenes that reflect societal beauty standards imposed on women, as well as the female character's resistance to these standards. This step is guided by concepts from Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory, particularly her ideas on women being positioned as 'the Other' and the social pressures they face regarding appearance. Scenes are classified according to themes such as the imposition of beauty ideals, the protagonist's reaction, and instances of defiance, which are then analyzed in relation to de Beauvoir's theoretical framework. This categorization helps in structuring the analysis, allowing for a clearer understanding of how the film's narrative aligns with or contests societal expectations.

In the third step, an in-depth analysis is conducted on the classified scenes, synthesizing the visual and thematic content with the theoretical lens provided by de Beauvoir's concepts. This detailed examination includes both textual and visual analysis to interpret the underlying social messages regarding body image and autonomy. By exploring the ways in which beauty standards influence the protagonist's identity and sense of agency, this step illuminates the complex interplay between societal expectations and personal resistance. The analysis also considers broader implications of the film's portrayal of these themes, such as the impact on audience perception and cultural understanding of beauty standards.



Finally, conclusions are drawn from the analyzed data to address the research questions. This stage involves synthesizing insights from each analytic step to provide coherent answers regarding the film's representation of women's bodies and the resistance to societal beauty standards. The conclusions reflect an integration of de Beauvoir's theoretical framework with the film's narrative elements, offering a nuanced perspective on how the protagonist's journey aligns with existentialist feminist principles. Through this systematic approach, the research ultimately seeks to contribute to discussions on gender, identity, and beauty standards within both cinematic and sociocultural contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Representation of Body Beauty Standards in Society

The findings from the film *Imperfect* by Ernest Prakasa highlight the pervasive and reinforced beauty standards imposed on women's bodies through various social interactions. This standard becomes particularly evident in the behavior and remarks of those around the protagonist, including family members and colleagues, who often imply that an ideal body is slim, fair-skinned, and aligned with popular beauty trends.

#### *Data 1 (Minute 04:37)*

*"Rara, you seem to have gained weight."*

This scene reflects a prevalent social norm in which a woman's body is subject to scrutiny, judged against a set of predefined criteria that define what is considered "ideal." This aligns with Maharani's (2023) observation that women's bodies, as experienced by the protagonist, are often subject to external evaluation and criticism, creating significant pressure to conform to societal beauty standards. The intense focus on physical appearance reveals how women's bodies are viewed as objects to be assessed, commodified, and measured against unrealistic ideals, rather than being acknowledged as diverse and natural expressions of individual identity. Such standards often imply that a woman's body is not naturally beautiful or acceptable unless it is molded or altered—whether through cosmetics, dieting, or other forms of body modification—to meet these imposed expectations. This notion is reinforced by media portrayals and social expectations, which suggest that beauty is synonymous with worth. As Maddox (2021) asserts, beauty is not inherently present in a woman's body; it must be cultivated, often at great personal and emotional cost. In this context, the film critiques how these beauty standards can become a source of self-objectification, where women are not only pressured to meet external expectations but also internalize these judgments, leading to a cycle of self-surveillance and self-worth determined by outward appearance. The scene, thus, invites viewers to critically engage with the harmful social norms that dictate women's bodies, urging a more inclusive and authentic understanding of beauty.

In line with this, Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "the Other" frames this judgment as part of how society positions women as fundamentally different and separate from its own idealized definitions, which then become the benchmark for evaluation. Women's bodies, in this context, are viewed as "lacking" and in need of transformation to meet the ideal criteria enforced by their social environment.

#### *Data 2 (Minute 05:18)*

*Aunt Magna: "You two are so different, aren't you?"*

*Aunt Nora: "Lulu, oh my, you're always so beautiful."*

This exchange highlights a physical contrast between the protagonist (Rara) and her sister. The remarks create a boundary between appearances that are deemed to meet

beauty standards and those considered less acceptable. Rara, whose appearance diverges from societal ideals, is labeled as different from Lulu, who aligns more closely with conventional beauty standards, characterized by a slim body, fair skin, and straight hair. This illustrates how beauty standards isolate women who do not conform to these norms, casting them as "the Other," excluded from the idealized definition of femininity. These standards delineate a line between those considered physically valuable and those who must work harder to gain recognition. In this context, stereotypes about women based on societal beauty standards are both visually and verbally expressed, emphasizing that slim women receive more favorable treatment than women with larger bodies (Garcia, 2023).

**Data 3 (Minute 01:26:32)**

*Dika: "Are you leaving your hair like that?"*

*Lulu: "Yeah, just like this—is that okay?"*

*Dika: "Oh, it's fine, why?"*

*Lulu: "I'm not confident because of a pimple."*

*Dika: "If it's a pimple, I can edit it out later."*

*Lulu: "But my face is round."*

*Dika: "who says?"*

*Lulu: "People on Instagram, George, my mom—everyone says I look chubby."*

This interaction reveals the beauty standards faced by Lulu, particularly the social pressure to maintain an ideal appearance, with flawless skin and a slim face. Lulu's insecurity over her acne and her "chubby" face shows that much of her negative self-perception stems from comments on social media, like Instagram, and from close connections, including her boyfriend George, her mother, and her Instagram followers. Lulu's response to these beauty standards reflects how societal expectations affect her self-confidence. Acne and a round face are seen as flaws, prompting Dika to offer to edit her photo to make her appear more "perfect" by conventional standards. This suggests that physical appearance is often valued over comfort or self-acceptance, with photo editing as a quick solution to align with these ideals. The social construction in this scene demonstrates the pressure placed on women to conform to an ideal body according to modern beauty standards (Jhines, 2021). Overall, this conversation underscores how narrow beauty standards are imposed, both directly and indirectly, creating pressure for women to conform to be accepted and valued, even if it means sacrificing authenticity. The prevailing notion is that to be beautiful, a woman must have flawless, "perfect" skin with no visible blemishes (Elanda, 2018).

In the film IKCT, the main character undergoes a long journey of self-discovery amid societal pressures to conform to certain beauty standards. The protagonist's struggle reflects how women are often compelled to confront an identity constructed externally rather than from within, aligning with Beauvoir's concept of women as "the Other." Beauvoir also emphasizes that the position of women as "the Other" results from socialization processes that reinforce gender hierarchies (Heriyani, 2018).

From Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist perspective, beauty standards are a social construct that shapes how women are treated and defined. Beauvoir argues that women are frequently positioned as "the Other," meaning they are seen as objects rather than subjects in a patriarchal society. Societal beauty standards serve to reinforce women's subordinate position, where they are expected to meet physical expectations dictated by men and dominant cultural norms (Putra, 2021). According to Beauvoir, women are compelled to align with these external standards, thereby losing autonomy in defining their own identities. Thus, existentialist feminism underscores the importance of understanding how societal roles influence the construction of women's identities, highlighting certain limitations that constrain women's experiences.

In Ernest Prakasa's film IKCT, the connection between Simone de Beauvoir's theory and beauty standards is evident through the main character, Rara, who perceives herself as failing to meet prevailing beauty norms. The film's relevance to feminist thought offers a framework to encourage women, who are often objectified in contrast to men, to assert themselves (Pidada, 2021). The film's social construction illustrates the demands placed on women to maintain an ideal body that aligns with modern beauty standards (Jhines, 2021). The protagonist, with an appearance deemed "not ideal," faces social pressure from her surroundings, including her workplace, where slimmer and more attractive women are seen as more successful and accepted. The film vividly portrays how women like Rara are coerced into conforming to detrimental beauty standards, embodying Beauvoir's concept of women being trapped in external expectations and relegated to the position of "the Other."

### **The Female Protagonist's Resistance to Beauty Standardization**

Using Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory, several dialogues and scenes in IKCT depict the resistance of female characters in accordance with the strategy put forward by Simone de Beauvoir to affirm the existence of women in society, in the study found several dialogues in scenes that show the resistance of female characters in facing the beauty standards of society. in the film "IKCT", including: women can work, women become intellectual agents, women are subordinate, and women become influential figures in society.

#### **Data 1 (Minute 56:30)**

*(Rara's first day as a manager)*

*Kelvin: "Are you ready? Honestly, your task is quite challenging. Our sales have been declining, so I need you to evaluate our last ten campaigns and come up with strategies, especially for online."*

*Rara (nods) with enthusiasm to start strategizing.*

In this scene, Rara nods, eager to start developing her strategy. This moment marks a significant step in the protagonist's professional journey in the film IKCT. Her promotion to manager at a cosmetics company is a notable achievement, symbolizing her defiance of beauty standards and stereotypes that typically constrain women. This dialogue highlights that Rara is being assessed based on her skills and potential, no longer solely on her physical appearance. Rara's success in securing a managerial role represents a challenge to social expectations that often limit women in the beauty industry. Despite working in an environment that emphasizes beauty standards, the protagonist demonstrates that a woman's worth extends beyond her physical appearance. She breaks stereotypes by showcasing intellectual capability and professionalism. Through employment, women not only contribute economically but also actively shape their identities and futures, challenging social structures that place them in unequal positions (Meivitasari, 2023).

The protagonist's struggle in the workplace symbolizes broader resistance to restrictive gender expectations and damaging stereotypes that typically confine women in male-dominated leadership spaces (Sholihah, 2018). This achievement also demonstrates that challenging beauty standards can manifest through professional success. By focusing on career development and intellectual growth, Rara implicitly challenges views that reduce women's value to physical attributes alone. Her accomplishment serves as a tangible example that women can—and should—be valued for their competencies and contributions, not merely their appearance. Beauvoir would see this struggle as a significant step in women's journey toward a liberated existence (Purnami, 2021).

**Data 2 (Minute 01:43:21)**

*Rara delivers a speech on behalf of Malati Group, voicing her thoughts on restrictive and burdensome beauty standards imposed on women.*

*"Being a woman isn't easy. There are countless expectations placed upon us—beauty standards that often make no sense: beauty means being slim, beauty means being fair-skinned. But women are incredibly diverse."*

The protagonist's speech powerfully expresses her awareness of the burdensome expectations women face, particularly regarding beauty standards that label beauty as synonymous with being slim and fair-skinned. This statement highlights Rara's awareness of the injustices within beauty standards that fail to appreciate women's diversity. As a woman who understands her position in society, the protagonist critiques the notion that beauty must conform to a uniform standard, asserting that women embody a wide range of forms and unique characteristics.

In referencing Simone de Beauvoir's theory, the protagonist's struggle in *IKCT* reflects a deeper philosophical resistance against being defined as "the Other"—a term de Beauvoir uses to describe how women have historically been reduced to objects of male desire, social conformity, and judgment. According to de Beauvoir (2016), women have often been conditioned to accept their roles as secondary, limited by societal constructs that position them as subordinate to men. This "Otherness" is not inherent to women but is a product of historical and cultural structures that assign them a passive, objectified role in society. The protagonist's journey in *IKCT* symbolizes an attempt to break free from this condition by rejecting societal expectations that confine her body and her identity to these stereotypical norms.

De Beauvoir contends that education and self-empowerment are crucial in enabling women to transcend these limitations. Knowledge, for de Beauvoir, acts as a means of liberation, allowing women to recognize their autonomy and challenge patriarchal structures. In the film, Rara's intellectual resistance emerges as a form of empowerment, where she actively questions and contests the external judgments placed upon her appearance. Her defiance of restrictive beauty standards illustrates her rejection of the cultural imposition that dictates what constitutes a woman's value or worth. This aligns with Munaris' (2021) interpretation, where Rara's actions are framed as an intellectual resistance—a deliberate, conscious challenge to the notion that beauty must conform to a singular, external ideal.

Rara's defiance can be understood as an embodiment of de Beauvoir's idea of transcendence. By voicing her perspective and asserting her agency, she takes ownership of her identity, refusing to be confined by the objectifying gaze of society. In doing so, she challenges the notion that beauty should be a universal, monolithic standard, affirming that a woman's worth should not be determined by her physical appearance but by her individuality, intellect, and agency. This portrayal not only critiques the oppressive societal norms but also invites viewers to rethink the arbitrary nature of beauty standards, urging a more diverse, inclusive perspective on women's bodies.

**Data 3 (Minute 01:49:23)**

*Aunt Magna: "Why are you gaining weight again? Are you stressed? Did you lose your job? Pregnant? Oh, I know, you stopped working out, didn't you?"*

*Rara: "No, Auntie, I still exercise, but it's for health, not to be thin."*

*Aunt Meilinda: "But you're prettier when you're slim, Rara."*

*Rara: "Well, it turns out that beauty doesn't necessarily bring happiness, Auntie."*

This dialogue demonstrates Rara's rejection of the subordinating beauty standards, as interpreted through Simone de Beauvoir's concept. When Rara receives comments from Aunt Magna and Aunt Meilinda critiquing her appearance, she responds with assertive



and unexpected answers. Rara clarifies that her purpose in exercising is to maintain her health, not to become thin according to the beauty standards her aunts deem ideal. When Aunt Meilinda emphasizes that Rara looks more beautiful when slim, Rara responds by saying, “Well, it turns out that beauty doesn’t necessarily bring happiness, Auntie.” Here, Rara not only rejects the notion that a thin body is the sole measure of beauty but also challenges the idea that physical beauty is the primary determinant of happiness and self-worth. In rejecting this subordination, the female protagonist bravely voices her views, challenging prevailing norms (Cahyaningrum, 2023).

From de Beauvoir’s perspective, women are often positioned as “the Other,” where a patriarchal society dictates and defines their value based on an ideal physical appearance. In this context, beauty standards serve as a tool that places women in a subordinate position, implying that their bodies must meet external criteria to be considered valuable. The protagonist, through her statements, resists this subordination by emphasizing that her self-worth is not tied to conforming to narrow beauty standards; she refuses to be treated as an object of judgment, shifting the focus from physical appearance to what matters more to her—health and happiness. Siregar (2021) asserts that injustice can stem from such subordination of one individual to another. Sagita (2023) adds that through actions like Rara’s, women not only liberate themselves from the bonds of subordination but also create space for other women to do the same.

Rara’s rejection of the notion that physical beauty brings happiness reflects her awareness of her own will and her desire not to submit to rigid social expectations. In de Beauvoir’s view, this action represents existential freedom, where women have the right to determine their own self-worth and are not subject to external judgments. This enables them to live with autonomy and integrity, free from definitions imposed by others (Purnami, 2021). By stating, “beauty doesn’t necessarily bring happiness,” Rara firmly rejects the subordination that frames women solely as objects of beauty, illustrating that happiness and self-worth are far more complex than simply meeting dominant beauty standards.

#### **Data 4 (Minute 01:46:11)**

*Maria: “What did I tell you? When you part your bangs like that, you look so beautiful.”*

*Prita: “Yeah, Maria, now that I look at it, my birthmark actually looks kind of cute—I almost want another one.”*

This scene shows that Rara, as the main character, can be viewed as a catalyst for societal change, particularly concerning beauty standards, aligning with Simone de Beauvoir’s perspective. In this context, the protagonist serves as an inspiration for shifting perceptions of women’s bodies and conventional beauty standards. Her speech on women’s existence and the rejection of restrictive beauty standards, especially delivered in front of women who feel they don’t fit those standards, reflects an effort to break the social hegemony that has pressured women into conforming to an idealized standard of beauty (Pratiwi, 2018).

According to Simone de Beauvoir, women are often objectified and regarded as “the Other,” treated as beings that are inherently deficient or different compared to men and coerced to conform to socially imposed beauty standards. Through her confident speech, the protagonist introduces a new perspective that challenges this notion. She not only speaks about the acceptance of women’s bodies in general but also encourages women to celebrate their physical imperfections and uniqueness, rather than feeling compelled to conform to an image of beauty dictated by societal norms.

This interaction illustrates resistance to beauty standards that demand physical perfection and disregard the diversity of women’s bodies (Iskandar, 2023). Prita’s

transformation, from feeling insecure and trying to hide her birthmark to seeing it as a unique feature worthy of appreciation, demonstrates the influence Rara has on her self-perception. Through her interactions with Rara and the support of a more open-minded social environment, Prita begins to accept her physical "flaw" and even views it as part of her individuality.

From Beauvoir's perspective, this change in Prita represents a form of liberation from the societal oppression that requires women to conform to rigid and unrealistic beauty standards (Pranowo, 2016). The protagonist, with her unconventional outlook, acts as an agent of change, empowering women like Prita to free themselves from external judgments that often define them solely by their physical appearance. In this way, Rara becomes not only an inspiring speaker but also a transformative figure, encouraging women to define beauty by their own criteria rather than adhering to restrictive social norms (Azzahra, 2022).

Through the findings and discussion in this study of Ernest Prakasa's film IKCT, two primary issues regarding the representation of women's bodies are highlighted: the pressure of societal beauty standards and the female protagonist's resistance to that pressure. The film portrays women as often being positioned as "the Other" or as objects judged according to rigid external standards. The protagonist, Rara, faces pressure to meet certain physical criteria, such as a slim body and fair skin, as well as other beauty standards deemed ideal by a patriarchal society. These beauty standards not only strip women of the autonomy to define themselves but also impose expectations that are often unrealistic.

IKCT depicts the protagonist's resistance to these narrow beauty standards. Rara gradually realizes that her value is not defined by her physical appearance in alignment with societal standards but by her authenticity and self-acceptance. This journey is portrayed through her emotional development and interactions with those around her. Rara rejects the notion that places women as mere objects and asserts her freedom to define beauty on her own terms. Ultimately, the film underscores the importance of existential freedom for women to determine their perceptions of their own bodies, while simultaneously critiquing the social pressures that often confine women within an idealized framework of beauty.

In Ernest Prakasa's film IKCT, the main character faces societal pressure to alter her body to better align with common beauty standards. Rara is depicted as a confident woman but frequently receives criticism for her appearance, which is considered to fall short of ideal beauty norms. As the story unfolds, Rara experiences an inner conflict between her desire to remain true to herself and the external pressure to appear "perfect." Her resistance is not limited to rejecting unwanted physical changes; it also represents her effort to embrace her body and defy unrealistic beauty standards. Through her emotional journey, Rara ultimately finds the courage to redefine the meaning of beauty, shifting her focus from physical appearance to self-acceptance and the freedom to reject restrictive standards.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, women are often placed in a position where they are seen as "the Other" in a patriarchal society that shapes social perceptions and expectations. This concept illustrates how women are frequently treated as objects detached from their own consciousness, judged and valued based on standards set by external authorities. Beauvoir asserts that, in the context of beauty standards, women should have the freedom to define their bodies and identities without being constrained by external expectations. Rara's resistance in IKCT aligns with Beauvoir's ideas, as she strives to escape the role of "the Other" submissive to societal beauty standards, pursuing instead her existential freedom. Thus, the female protagonist's resistance in IKCT is not merely a rejection of an idealized physical appearance but also a positive effort to realize women's freedom to define beauty on a personal level. On this journey, Rara boldly

challenges the boundaries imposed by popular culture, demonstrating that beauty need not be viewed through a singular, uniform standard. From Beauvoir's perspective, Rara's actions illustrate how women possess the ability to be not merely objects judged by society but also autonomous individuals who freely define and control their own perception of their bodies.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the film "Imperfect": Career, Love, and Scales by Ernest Prakasa, the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society with narrow and unrealistic contemporary beauty standards are vividly portrayed. Through an in-depth analysis, it becomes evident that women are often objectified and evaluated based on their physical appearance, while their intrinsic value and identity are frequently overlooked. Simone de Beauvoir's concept of subordination is relevant here, as women are positioned as "the Other," expected to meet societal expectations imposed upon them. Despite the powerful social pressures, women hold the potential to become agents of change. By voicing their perspectives and challenging existing norms, women can advocate for their right to define beauty personally and celebrate diversity. The dissemination of these ideas can start within small circles, such as family and friends, before extending to the broader community. Through such actions, women not only liberate themselves from the chains of subordination but also create a space for other women to do the same.

This research highlights that a woman's courage to express herself and reject unjust beauty standards is an essential step in the struggle for gender equality. By fostering solidarity and creating a collective movement, women can challenge the social constructs that limit them and advocate for more inclusive change. Therefore, it is vital for women to continue learning, innovating, and contributing to society so they may become significant catalysts for change in addressing existing challenges, particularly those related to restrictive beauty standards.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Future research on the representation of women's bodies and resistance to restrictive beauty standards in media should focus on exploring diverse cultural contexts and examining how these representations impact women's self-perception across different demographics. A comparative analysis of films or media from various societies could shed light on universal versus culturally specific pressures that women face regarding beauty ideals. Researchers might also investigate how these portrayals affect women's mental health, self-esteem, and behavior, particularly in younger audiences who are highly influenced by media. Potential barriers in conducting such research include limited access to a diverse range of media or the challenge of finding reliable data on viewers' personal reactions to these portrayals. Additionally, societal attitudes and biases around beauty and gender roles may impact participants' openness in discussing their experiences and feelings. Addressing these challenges will require careful consideration of sampling methods and data collection strategies that respect participants' confidentiality and encourage authentic responses. Incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives from psychology, sociology, and media studies could further strengthen the research, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how beauty standards shape and limit women's identities and well-being globally.

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