AN ECO-FEMINISM STUDY ON THE SOCIAL STIGMA OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS IN ARABIC FILM

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Abstract

Eco-feminist studies that focus on social stigma against people with HIV/AIDS are still a growing phenomenon in society and are often represented through film media, including Arabic films. The film Asmaa' raises this issue by showing the experiences of women with HIV/AIDS in the face of social exclusion, discrimination, and cultural pressure. This study aims to examine the form, type, process, and response of social stigma experienced by the characters in the film Asmaa' based on the perspective of eco-feminism. This study uses a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. Data were obtained through documentation techniques by watching the film Asmaa' repeatedly to record scenes and dialogues that represent the practice of social stigma. The collected data was then analyzed by associating it with concepts in Erving Goffman's stigma theory. The results showed that there were two main forms of stigma: physical stigma related to HIV/AIDS and patrilineal cultural demands, and character stigma that viewed HIV/AIDS as a moral disgrace. The stigmatization process takes place through labeling, stereotyping, separation, and discrimination. In responding to this stigma, the presence of the own and the wise acts as social support that encourages a change in the strategy of the character from the discreditable to the discredited. These findings show that the ability of sufferers to manage their identity is highly dependent on the support and sense of security of the immediate environment, thus enabling them to fight for the recognition of equal rights.

Keywords: Eco-Feminism; Social Stigma; Women with HIV/AIDS; Arabic Film.

INTRODUCTION

Differences in conditions, social positions, and perspectives often cause tension in social interactions. The phenomenon of social stigma is a phenomenon that occurs in society that can be seen and felt with human consciousness (Widyastutik, 2021). One of the obvious manifestations of social stigma can be seen in the way society treats people with HIV/AIDS. Many people with HIV still experience social rejection from relatives, the work environment, and health facilities. Based on the *United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS* (UNAIDS) Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 report, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, around 97% of new HIV infections have occurred, and many groups still face social discrimination and legal barriers to accessing health services. This shows that social stigma does not only come from the views of individuals, but also reflects the social and cultural systems of society (Fauk et al., 2021)(“UNAIDS Glob. AIDS Updat. 2023,” 2023). The phenomenon of social stigma also appears in the world of literature and film. This is a reflection of social reality ; .

One of the films that highlights this problem is an Egyptian film by Amr Salama entitled Asmaa ', which raises the issue of women living with HIV/AIDS. A number of

previous studies have examined various feminisms and social stigmas. The film Asmaa' not only exposes the stigma against people with HIV/AIDS, but also shows how society sets the boundaries between "accepted" and "rejected." This study aims to analyze the social reality of eco-feminism criticism, which is associated with social stigma in a film.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses the theory of macro literary sociology and Erving Goffman's dramaturgy theory, which discusses social stigma associated with eco-feminism. Literary sociology is closely related to humans and society, and uses literary works as the object discussed. This sociology serves as an approach in the study of literature, still considering the social aspects of the literary work itself (Mukhanifah & Mustari, 2023). Literary works can be understood as a description of a social stage where humans present themselves, build an image, and adjust their actions to the expectations of society (Makaf, 2021). The dramaturgy theory was developed by Erving Goffman through his work The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Goffman uses the metaphor of theater to describe the way individuals present themselves in the presence of others in social life (Inosensius Enryco Mokos, 2025). Social stigma is a label attached to a person, associated with negative stereotypes and judgments, that makes them perceived as different or abnormal. This social stigma is a form of prejudice that leads to discriminatory and discriminatory treatment of the individual (Purbaningsih et al., 2020)

Erving Goffman's concept of stigma is closely related to dramaturgical theory, where he views social life as a dramatic performance. Like an actor on stage who tries to show a certain impression to the audience, a person in social interaction shows themselves not only as personal property, but also as the result of a dramatic relationship between himself and the audience. Goffman explains the strategies that a person uses to maintain the image they want, as well as how they deal with the various issues that arise in those interactions (Trinugraha et al., 2023). According to Erving Goffman, social stigma refers to a mark on the body that aims to indicate something that is considered unusual and bad regarding an individual's moral status (Goffman, 1963). Erving Goffman also defines stigma as a phenomenon in which individuals with attributes that are highly unacceptable to their society are rejected as a result of those attributes (Arbia & Sugitanata, 2024).

Erving Goffman's theoretical concepts consist of Identity stigma, types of stigma, the process of stigma occurring, The Normals and The Stigmatized, and the Stigma Response.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature approach that focuses on understanding the meaning behind the social phenomena shown in the film. The data collection process uses various written sources such as the film Asmaa', books, scientific journals, and previous research results (Murdiyanto, 2020). In the analysis, the theory used is the theory of social stigma put forward by Erving Goffman (Sulung & Muspawi, 2025). The data collection technique in this study uses documentation techniques (Moleong 2011, 2022). Data validity techniques: Persistence, peer discussion, and peer review (Husnullail et al., 2024). The data analysis technique in this study was carried out using *content analysis* (Sumarno, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The stigma that arises is not only a medical condition, but also related to social judgment and public treatment of female figures with HIV/AIDS, which is considered different from the prevailing social norms and expectations.

1. IDENTITY STIGMA

Identity stigma is not just a negative label of social interaction, but it has become part of their identity. The concept of self consists of two main forms, namely the inferior self and the pessimistic self.

Self-inferiority is a condition in which a person views himself or herself as inferior, worse, or disproportionate to others. Stigma has affected the confidence of the figure. One of them is the character Asmaa; this can be seen when he begins to doubt his suitability to appear in public. At an advanced stage, self-inferiority becomes a deeply pessimistic attitude towards the future. Self-pessimism is a condition in which a person sees himself as no longer hopeful and gives up on bad things. The constant pressure of stigma will slowly make him lose the will to survive and see himself as someone who no longer has the chance to live in the future.

This identity is external, related to how society gives negative labels that ultimately affect the social position of the character. The identity of the character is damaged or spoiled. Their image in the eyes of others is only influenced by stigma, not who they really are. Marginal Identity is a position in which a person is not automatically recognized by his or her social environment. The stigma in the film causes the character to be in a marginalized social position; in this condition, the existence of the character is no longer considered part of the general public. Identity Equality is a condition when a person sees himself as having the same position as others, without distinction based on the disease he suffers from. Self-esteem identity refers to a person's efforts to maintain their principles, honor, and value when in a stressful situation. Patrilineal identity is a family's pride and honor measured through the existence of a son.

2. TYPES OF STIGMA

Erving Goffman divides several types of stigma. In this Arabic film, there are two main types of stigma, namely because of his illness and because of bad assumptions about his personality. First, the Physical Stigma of Infertility refers to the negative assessment of society's physical condition of a person who is considered not to meet the social standards that apply in his society. Second, the Stigma of Immorality Character that arises when a person is seen by society as a figure who has deviations in his attitude, morals, or personality.

3. THE STIGMATIZED

Individuals who are in a discredited condition are those whose stigmatized status has been exposed and known by the surrounding environment. In this position, the main problem faced by sufferers is no longer related to efforts to hide their identity, but to how to deal with and manage social interactions in the midst of negative societal views. At this stage, stigmatized people face various social pressures because their identity is considered to have been tainted (spoiled identity). In this case, there is Discredited Social Control, the assumptions and rules given by society to stigmatized individuals so that they act in accordance with applicable social expectations. Discredited Social Control Denial arises when a stigmatized person begins to realize that the rules applied by society are unfair and burdensome to only one party.

Discredited Social Death refers to a condition when a person is still physically alive, but is no longer socially recognized or considered to have value. Discreditable Control Information, those who have stigma attributes, such as HIV/AIDS status, but the condition is not yet known to their social environment.

4. THE PROCESS OF STIGMA

Labeling is the initial stage of the emergence of stigma, where society attaches certain stamps or designations to individuals who are considered different from the average person. First, Demonization Labeling is the act of labeling someone with a very negative designation, such as a demon or demon, so that the person is considered a source of trouble that should be avoided or expelled. Second, Moralization Labeling is the process of giving negative labels that are associated with moral or moral standards. At this stage, the public assesses patients not based on medical conditions, but based on behavior that is considered deviant. Third, the Stereotype of Powerlessness arises when people associate negative labels with assumptions or prejudices that are not necessarily true. Once a person is labeled as HIV/AIDS, society tends to immediately judge that the person has certain negative traits.

While Physical Separation is a form of separation that is seen in the form of physical actions, Institutional Separation occurs officially within an organization or institution. Social Separation occurs when stigmatized individuals are forced to stay away from their social life, public space, and social roles. Furthermore, discrimination is the last and most concrete stage of the stigma process. The discrimination that occurs includes Legal Discrimination, Persecution Discrimination, and Health Access Discrimination.

5. THE STIGMATIZED STRATEGY

The next process is the stigmatized strategy, which consists of passing, functional covering, and disclosure. Passing is a strategy in which individuals with stigma try to completely cover their condition or identity from others. There are 2 forms: Situational Passing, where stigmatized individuals cover up their identities only at certain times, places, or conditions when they feel socially threatened, and Information Control Passing is applied when the stigmatized individual continues to interact in a social environment, but actively withholds, conceals, or manipulates

information so that their true identity is not revealed. Meanwhile, Functional Covering that occurs is a person's effort to show that the stigma or condition he has does not interfere with his function like society in general. Disclosure is a strategy that is carried out when individuals consciously choose to reveal their stigmatized identity to others or to the public. There is Public Disclosure and Private Disclosure

6. STIGMA RESPONSE

The Own is the first response to emerge from a group that has similar experiences of stigma and suffering. The Own in the form of a community group, which is a collection of fellow people with HIV/AIDS who function as a space to support each other. In addition to the support of fellow stigmatized people, they gain acceptance from people who are not stigmatized, but are able to understand their condition. The Wise Professional is an individual who has a good understanding of the patient's condition, which is formed from the knowledge and professional responsibilities he has. In this context, medical personnel (doctors) appear as parties who are able to create a sense of security through a rational, neutral, and judgment-free attitude. The Relational Wise is the support of people who have a close emotional relationship with him. The Social Wise arises from individuals in the general public who have a sensitivity to human values. The most powerful and touching Wise Family comes from the core family environment. As the party closest to the sufferer, the family is the first place that can protect stigma sufferers from the pressure due to the stigma they receive.

The following is a table of results and discussions:

Number	SOCIAL STIGMA	STIGMA ASPECT	FINDING AND DISCUSSION
1	Stigma Identity	Self	– Self Inferior – Self Pessimist
		Identity	– Marginal Identity – Equality Identity – Self-Esteem Identity – Patrilineal Identity

2	Types of Stigma	Physical Stigma	The Physical Stigma of Infertility
		Character Stigma	The Stigma of Amorality Character
3	The Stigmatized	Discredited	– Social Control Discredited – Social Control Denial Discredited – Social Death Discredited
		Discreditable	Control Information Discreditable
4	The Process of Stigma	Labeling	– Demonization Labeling – Moralizing Labeling
		Stereotypes	Stereotypes of Helplessness
		Separation	– Separation Physical – Separation Institutions – Separation Social
		Discrimination	– Law Discrimination – Persecution Discrimination – Health Access Discrimination
5	The Stigmatized Strategy	Passing	– Passing of Situational – Passing of Information Control
		Covering	Fungsional Covering
		Disclosure	– Public Disclosure – Private Disclosure
6	Social Stigma Response	The Own	– Konstruksi Budaya
		The Wise	– The Wise of Professional – The Wise of Relational – The Wise of Social – The Wise of Family

CONCLUSIONS

The perspective of social stigma experienced by the characters in the film Asmaa' is shaped by the experience of stigma that affects their identity. This study found that the characters in the film Asmaa' experience identity damage related to the way they are seen and treated by the surrounding environment. The stigma appears in two forms, namely physical stigma related to infertility, where in patrilineal culture, the inability to have offspring is considered a failure of women in carrying out their social roles. Then there is a character stigma that positions HIV/AIDS as a moral disgrace. Regarding the process and response to stigma, it was found that stigmatization occurs gradually, starting from labeling, the formation of stereotypes, to social separation. This process has an impact on the emergence of discrimination that causes the character to experience a condition of social death. In dealing with this situation, the characters in the film try to hide their identity by hiding their condition (*passing*) while still in a *discreditable position*. However, over time, there is a change in the condition of stigma from *discreditable* to *discredited*, namely when the character opens his identity consciously and boldly as a discredited individual. This decision is supported by the existence of The Own and The Wise groups, relationships, and families, which are a safe space for characters to fight stigma and fight for justice and equal rights.

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