

## **STIGMATIZATION TOWARD TATTOOED BALINESE WOMEN IN DENPASAR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The phenomenon of Tattooed Balinese Woman has been increasingly frequent in public spaces in Denpasar. Tattooed Balinese women want to convey or express their feelings through tattoo on their body, but this is not fully accepted by the society who has different judgement and perception encapsulated in what we call as Stigma. Stigma is viewed as a struggle between dominant and sub-cultural ideology within discourses which may cause marginalization and discrimination of tattooed Balinese woman psycho-socially and culturally. The research is aimed to find out the forms and implications of stigmatization of tattooed Balinese woman in Denpasar. The data collection method uses observation technique, in-depth interview, and document study. The data analysis adopts cultural study approach through reduction, reporting, and verification processes. The researcher uses Power-Knowledge Relation Theory, Stigma Theory, and Identity Theory as theoretical framework. The result of this research concludes that the form of the stigma of tattooed Balinese woman in Denpasar is labeling, stereotyping, separation and discrimination. The implication of the stigma is personal worthlessness and alienation, psychological instability, paradoxical attitudes in relationships and association, and sense of proving oneself as an expression of resistance against the stigma.

Keyword: stigma, Balinese Woman, Tattoo, resistance

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stigmatization toward tattooed women happen in Bali connected with cultural dominant of Balinese. Culturally tattoo is strongly associated with Balinese men. In fact, it is not difficult to find Balinese men with tattoos in every space, time, and activity. Balinese men from various backgrounds such as business, office employee, public servant, and even the customary and religious leader within Balinese Hindu community have tattoos on their body. It is as if tattoo is not a cultural hindrance to Balinese men to participate in public spaces.

On the contrary, though the trend of tattoo is also followed by Balinese women, from the youth ones to the older housewives, tattoo to women is still considered unusual (*Radar*

*Bali, 1 October 2017 edition*). This means the society prefers to accept Balinese men with tattoo to Balinese woman even when it refers to the same artwork. According to this, the research is focused to understand and to analyse the forms and implications of the stigma toward tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research was designed using cultural study approach. The data collection process was conducted using in-depth interview, observation, dan document study as instruments. The subject of this research is tattooed Balinese women living in Denpasar, shared Hinduism beliefs, and originated from Bali ethnic. The next subject is the family or relatives of the tattooed Balinese women, ordinary citizens, and customary institution leaders. All subjects were chosen with snowball and purposive sampling technique. Total of research subject are 25 informant. The data analysis was done using qualitative method, using Theory of Power and Knowledge Relations by Michel Foucault, Stigma Theory by Erving Goffman and Identity Theory by Erik Erikson. The Theory of Power and Knowledge Relations-Foucault connects knowledge and power in constructing discourses which explains how stigma is born in society. In this case, the stigma against tattooed Balinese women can be traced by following the pathways of knowledge adopted by the society to stigmatize the tattooed Balinese women in the degree of morality, science, and politics along with the sphere of power influence ruling this connection. The basic assumption of the research is grounded upon a view that every constructed stigma toward tattooed Balinese women is the result of meaning identification and the judgement from the actors (stigma perceivers). Such judgement was not presented to be verified by its factual correctness and its validity in the degree of morality and scientific, instead it was due to the underlying power practice. Hence, the polarity of power and ideology can be deconstructed.

Stigma Theory, according to Goffman (1963:11—16), stated that if somebody receives a stigma, that person is may not the actual one who misbehave, rather one is negatively perceived due to stigmatization in the society or one's environment. Often, stigmas are given based on certain signifier. Stigma can encourage the motivation of stigma receivers to change themselves in a better way. On the contrary, it can also weaken their mentality which makes them harder to escape from their doom. This what indicates tattooed Balinese women to hesitantly express themselves and socialize with others which leads to even more negative stigma towards them.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

To this date, there is no valid data about tattooed Balinese women. There is even no statistical data of the development of tattoo in general. The absence of data shows a very low concern regarding tattoo existence as a subculture even when it actually has been developing in Bali Province, especially in Denpasar. The case is certainly different if we refer to mainstream cultures such as Balinese traditional arts. We can easily find the data from various formal government agencies such as The Culture Office of Bali Province. The informant or tattooed Balinese women for this research are 12 people in total. This number does not represent a sample that represent the whole population of tattooed women in Bali. This is due to the fact that there is no exact number of tattooed women population in the island. This research, to its minimum, can contribute in describing the existence of tattooed Balinese women. In order not to deviate from the material object of this research, the tattooed Balinese women being discussed here in this research article are those who believe in Hinduism, live in various regions in Bali, and become an active member of customary village or *banjar*. Upon this criteria, the researcher chose 25 informants which are divided into 2 groups.

The first group is called 'stigma perceivers' and consists of customary institution leaders (4 people), parents and family relatives to tattooed Balinese women (4 people), and ordinary citizens (5 people) so that there are 13 informants in total for this group. The second group is called 'stigma receivers' and consists of 12 tattooed Balinese women as informant. There are 5 women who create tattoo because of invitation from her friends, influence from her association, and her love and passion to the art of tattoo. Meanwhile, another 7 women create tattoo on their body due to misfortune and bad experience in life. It means, aside from personal motivation, tattoo to these Balinese women has also become a media of struggle, vent, and reaction toward their life experience. These reasons affect the perspective and behavior of tattooed Balinese women in their social and personal life. It also affects the stigma in society. The data told us that tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar comes from various age and education background. In addition, they also have varied reasons to paint tattoos. It is interesting to notice that those reasons were failed relationships, family disharmony, association, hobby, and others. These reasons are often linked to each others. For instance, the one who decided to have tattoos due to frustration may end up doing it for hobby.

Nonetheless, it can give the general picture showing the factual reality of tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar along with all complex reasons behind it.

Stigma is a negative perception toward someone else according to signs and attributes associated with the person. Those signs and attributes are associated with abnormality and negative moral status of the bearers (Goffman, 1963:1). However, stigma receivers are not the actual one who misbehave, instead they receive the negative perceptions due to stigmatization and one's environment. According to Link and Phelan (in Scheid & Brown, 2010:572), stigma may appear in the form of labeling, stereotype, separation and discrimination.

Stigma was not appeared organically, but socil-culturally constructed through detecting, defining, and actor's judgement within the society. According to the theory and the findings, the forms of stigma toward tattooed Balinese women can be explained as follows:

- a) Labeling marks the form of stigmatization at the level of its definition stating that tattooed Balinese women are perceived deviant group of people.
- b) Stereotype is the form of stigmatization at cognitive level which negatively perceives all women in Bali without seeing the individual aspects.
- c) Separation is a form of stigmatization at the level of group identity. It is where people negatively perceive other people from other groups (outsider, outgroup) which in turn can showcase the stigma created by dominant culture toward the identity of subculture.
- d) Discrimination is a form of stigmatization at the level of action which is influenced by various prejudice and negative description toward tattooed Balinese women. The course of actions, then, determine the stand point and treatment to them in every social aspect.

Implication means involvement or the condition of getting involved, including or concluded, suggested, but remained unexpressed (Depdiknas, 2005:427). This definition shows the causal relationship between one reality and the appearance of other reality as an inevitable consequences. In this case, stigma toward tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar be it labeling, stereotype, separation, or discrimination reveals unacceptability/disapproval from dominant culture toward subkultur.

Those stigma implicate physically, socially, and culturally toward tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar as stigma receivers in the explanation below:

- a) personal worthlessness and alienation, is an implication resulted from stigmatization which makes tattooed Balinese women fail to portray themselves as accepted figure in society. This failed portrayal is internalized becomes worthlessness, guilt, regret, and alienated from their own world.
- b) Psychological instability, is changeable comfort in different environment setting because stigmatization makes tattooed Balinese women failed to reach their identity maturity as an individual that can accept oneself and others. The signs of homelessness become a mental condition that they need to face as the result of this psychic instability because tattooed Balinese women always strive to find a social home that offers the utmost comfort for them.
- c) Paradoxical attitude in relationships and association, is an implication due to stigmatization push them to develop sceptical and anticipatory attitude toward unpleasant possibility in their relationships with others. This makes tattooed Balinese women tend to behave exclusively to people they perceive judging them with the stigma. On the contrary, they also behave inclusively to people who sympathize and accept their attribute.
- d) proving oneself, is an implication appeared due to the stigmatization which encourage tattooed Balinese woman to explore all of their potential and resources should an opportunity arrives. This act to prove oneself can also be done to prove themselves as an individual who are truly free and autonomous which leads to exaggerated attitude that may further support the stigma instead of diminishing it.



Picture: Proving oneself through humanity cause and overly reacted self-proving.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGESTION**

The result of this research concludes that the forms of stigma toward tattooed Balinese women in Denpasar consists of 4 types such as labeling, stereotype, separation and discrimination. The impact of stigmatization toward tattooed Balinese women are: personal worthlessness and alienation, psychological instability, paradoxical behavior in relationships, and the act of proving oneself. Basically, stigmatization toward tattooed Balinese women shows the denial of dominant culture toward subculture representation. Denpasar, the capital city of Bali Province, is unique.

Denpasar, the capital city of Bali Province, is quite unique. The city's thriving economic which can be seen from the city's development and its advanced human resources make the city become quite modern. However, this same city also still retain its strong customs and patriarchal culture. This precondition identifies the difference in perception regarding tattooed Balinese women who supposedly enjoy the same freedom of expression as the opposite gender. This research also refers to form of resistance by tattooed Balinese women in the struggle of eliminating the stigma. The resistance manifests in social activity and giving all reserved potential in proving their ultimate dedication to society.

According to conclusion aforementioned above, this research suggests that all related stakeholders to heed these actions; To all stigma perceivers, it suggests that the stigma toward tattooed Balinese women should be ended and to begin social activity where they are

free from discrimination as well as promoting equality to all women in Bali. To tattooed Balinese women to refer tattoo as an artwork and symbolic media to fight for social justice. Tattoo supposedly not to be seen as a tool for legitimacy of our misbehavior and misconduct because it will worsen the already existed stigma toward it. Hence, do behave and keep your attitude in accordance with the norms and values in society. This will gradually modify the stigma so that there will be no difference between men and women in expressing themselves with tattoo.

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