

## Beauty Standards In Film Imperfect (2019)

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### Abstract

*This study examines beauty standards and their social impacts on women as represented in the film Imperfect (2019). In social life, beauty standards often place women under specific physical judgments, such as slim body shape, skin color, and outward appearance, which subsequently influence social acceptance and self-confidence. This research aims to reveal how beauty standards are constructed in the film and how they affect the main character's self-identity and social relationships. The study employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis. The data consist of dialogues, scenes, and visual elements that represent physical judgment, body shaming, and social pressure related to beauty standards. Data were collected through film observation and documentation and analyzed descriptively. The findings indicate that Imperfect portrays beauty standards as a form of social pressure that leads to discrimination, bullying, and unequal treatment of women in both family and workplace settings. The film also illustrates the main character's process of self-awareness in rejecting narrow beauty ideals and developing self-acceptance. Therefore, Imperfect serves as a form of social criticism that highlights the negative impacts of dominant beauty ideals and emphasizes the importance of appreciating bodily diversity and female identity.*

**Keywords:** Beauty standard, body image, film

### INTRODUCTION

Beauty standards are not formed naturally, but are socially constructed through media, popular culture, and everyday social interactions. These standards often emphasize certain physical traits, such as a slim body, fair skin, and attractive appearance, as ideals. As a result, women frequently become the main targets of physical judgment, causing beauty standards to influence how they view themselves, how they are treated by others, and how they are positioned in social and professional spaces.

More previous study have discussed beauty standards in popular media. However, many of them still treat beauty standards as a separate issue, without fully explaining how these standards are formed and maintained through everyday social interactions. In reality, dominant beauty standards are often used as benchmarks to judge individuals, encouraging women to conform to certain beauty ideals in order to gain social acceptance. This focus highlights the strong role of beauty standards in shaping self-perception, social relationships, and women's positions in society.

The study aims to analyze beauty standards in the journal Imperfect Karir, Cinta, dan Timbangan by exploring and discussing how these standards are constructed and used through daily interactions. In this study, the concept of symbolic violence developed by Pierre Bourdieu serves as the theoretical concept. Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is an unseen and silent form of domination that is exercised through culture, language, and regimes of recognition or misrecognition (Bourdieu, 2001). The beauty standards serve as a kind of symbolic violence in

the context of the movie, according to which the norms of physical beauty are established and accepted as natural. Gender stereotyping and bullying are some of the means by which this symbolic violence is perpetuated, such that people, especially women, internalise these standards of beauty without any forceful way. This means that beauty ideals are not only subjective but also a social construct in terms of social expectations and power dynamics that sustain inequality and social control.

According to Wolf (1991), beauty ideals are a social construct that has been perpetrated by the media and the beauty industry. The constant portrayal of the idealized female body, such as thinness, white skin, and perfect bodies, socializes women to believe that they too can reach the ideal portrayed by the media. Wolf believes that the ideals of beauty can be considered a form of social control, especially now, when women are gaining greater access to education and the professional world. The idea of the beauty myth restricts the freedom of women, making them focus their attention not on intellectual, personal, and professional growth but on the obsessive interest in physical appearance.

On the same note, Bordo (1993) elaborates that the beauty norms discipline the bodies of women; this is done by adhering to cultural practices that encourage thinness and control of the body. She states that the female body is a place where social power may be practiced because the female body is shown to be taught to watch, judge, and control their looks based on the dominant norms. The process supports gender inequality in that it makes self-surveillance and body dissatisfaction the norm.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) also give an argument through the Objectification Theory that women are socially conditioned to perceive their bodies as objects to be judged by others. Such an outside appearance makes women internalize the standard of beauty in the society, which causes self-objectification, feelings of body shame, and anxiety. These psychological impacts reveal that beauty ideals have gone beyond beauty and had far reaching influence on how women were able to view their self-image and identity.

When applying the concept to media representation, Mulvey (1975) suggests a so-called male gaze, which is the reason why the visual media tend to depict women as objects of visual pleasure, as opposed to active subjects. This type of representation supports the limited beauty images and places the value of women more through their physical looks. The movies, thus, are important in upholding and perpetuating the dominant aesthetics through visual narration.

Further, Gill (2007) asserts that modern media advance the nature of the so-called postfeminist culture of beauty where women are shown to be freely choosing to adhere to ideals of beauty. Nonetheless, this seemingly available option is influenced by the strong social norms according to which attractiveness is synonymous with success, confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, the beauty standards will remain a subtle but widespread form of social control. Collectively, these theoretical viewpoints show that beauty ideals are not personal preferences but social constructs which are supported by cultural, psychological and media practices. Through the application of the theories to the analysis of *Imperfect*, this study will analyze the beauty ideals and how they affect the social acceptance, self-perception and gendered identity of the film to illustrate how society imposes expectations on women in the film.

Based on this gap, this study focuses on analyzing beauty standards in *Imperfect* by viewing beauty standards are reflected in *Imperfect* (2019) and specifying how the mentioned standards influence the experience of the main character. This study has an academic impact on the study of film and literature, especially in the context of the ideas of beauty norms in popular

culture. At the social level, it aims to increase awareness of the harmful effects of binding beauty ideals and to promote a more accommodating view of different bodies and appearance.

## **METHOD**

To enhance the methodological basis of the current study, qualitative descriptive approach is also justified by several scholars working in the field of qualitative research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research is interpretive in character and aims to comprehend social phenomena based on the meanings people attribute to them in particular cultural and social contexts. This view is especially applicable to the analysis of films, which function as cultural texts that represent and shape social values, including standards of beauty and gender norms. Drawing on the example of *Imperfect* as an artistic product, this paper examines the representation and negotiation of societal expectations of physical appearance through storyline, characterization, and visual symbolism.

Moreover, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) note that qualitative analysis includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. These stages are used in this study to select notable scenes and dialogues in terms of body image and social judgment and sort them into thematic categories, including social acceptance, body shaming, and professional validation, and explain their meanings within the greater context of the body ideals as social constructs. This theoretical procedure enables the scholar to expose modes of representation that depict the functioning of beauty standards as a social regulation against the female characters.

In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) consider thematic analysis a good qualitative technique for recognizing, examining, and reporting trends in data. This method suits the research's purposes, as the recurring themes of beauty standards, self-perception, and gender expectations will be examined in detail in *Imperfect*. The thematic interpretation of the film constitutes not only the analysis of the film as entertainment but also the process that reproduces and criticizes the prevailing social ideologies.

Generally, qualitative descriptive research with film text analysis is suitable for exploring beauty standards in *Imperfect* because it enables one to gain in-depth interpretations of meaning, context, and representation. Drawing on proven qualitative research paradigms, this paper demonstrates that beauty norms are not personal issues but societal standards supported by media discourse. Therefore, the movie is a critical commentary on the role of social judgment and media coverage in determining the identity of women, their experiences, and opportunities in modern society.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Beauty standards are conventions based on what is deemed to be physically attractive in a society, and conventionally, these conventions are not naturally established. These ideals tend to focus on individual physical features, such as skin tone and body shape, whereby slim-bodied people, light-skinned and traditionally pretty faces are favored. Beauty standards in social and work environments play a major role in defining how women are viewed, appreciated and how they are treated. As a result, women are often under pressure to live up to these ideals so that they can enjoy social approval and being recognized professionally, despite them being unrealistic and exclusionary.

**BEAUTY STANDARD**

Beauty Standards and Professional Expectations  
Imperfect (2019), 00:29:00

Naomi Wolf explicitly states that “beauty is a currency system, like the gold standard” which is deliberately constructed to regulate women’s social and professional value (Wolf, 1991, p. 12). She also states that with women having access to more education and professional experiences, the beauty standards become a new way of control that causes one to draw their attention out of the capabilities of women and aim towards their bodily attributes. In this respect, beauty ideals are not natural norms, but procedures that perpetuate inequality by establishing those women as the deserving ones in terms of recognition and promotion.

This idea is also evident in the scene at the workplace where Rara is involved, her colleagues are talking about her being promoted to a managerial role. Instead of discussing her competence or her performance in her work, the conversation shifts to her looks as depicted in the conversation, "How about she learn to wear make-up first? By this assertion, professional preparedness cannot be considered outside the context of physical appearance and physical appearance is seen as a requirement of being a leader. Consequently, the needs to conform to the expectations of the way Rara should look override her qualifications.

The scene portrays the role of beauty standards that operate unobtrusively yet intensively in workplaces. Following the idea of Wolf that beauty serves as currency in society, the looks of Rara determines the way in which she will be assessed by her peers (Wolf, 1991, p. 12). This serves to strengthen the gender inequality because it puts extra aesthetic expectations on women that are not aired on men. By describing this, Imperfect shows how beauty ideals are an invisible obstacle that limits the rise of women in their career and unequal distribution of power in the workplace.



Body Surveillance and Internalized Beauty Standards  
*Imperfect* (2019), 00:15:30

The scene in the picture is that of a workplace where Rara falls victim to unsolicited remarks on her body, her weight to be more precise, as the comment suggests, when she is told, "Ra, remember your fat." This scene is an illustration of how the bodies of women are constantly supervised and controlled at work. Instead of being a neutral environment that appreciates productivity and competence, the workplace turns out to be a space where the body size, especially the size of the body, acts as a gauge of discipline and social

Based on the idea of beauty as a currency system by Naomi Wolf, this scene demonstrates that conformity of the body is connected to professional legitimacy (Wolf, 1991). The mention that is sent to Rara does not just comment on her looks but reminds her in a subtle way that women have to control their bodies to conform to socially acceptable beauty standards so that they can be respected. Her body is a sort of mark that is easy to judge and place her in a situation where she has to always be corrected or made better even in a place where it is not needed.

The informal commentary of the statement also underlines the normalization of body shaming in the workplace. It acts unseen and it is inherent in the daily interactions but its influence is immense. Rara is shown as having a personal failure in her weight instead of questioning the existence of physical demands in the first place. This concurs with the argument presented by Wolf, who says that the beauty standards act as a contemporary system of control that shifts the attention of women towards their ability and intellectual input to the aspect of self-surveillance on their body.

With this scene, *Imperfect* reveals how beauty ideals and body ideals are used to support gender disparity in the workplace. The women are also engaged in extra emotional and mental work- they are continually reminded to get their bodies in check and the men are hardly ever subjected to the same aesthetic consideration. Consequently, the movie criticizes the perpetuation of uneven power dynamics and constrained agency and career mobility, by disproportionately mirroring the chastising remark that apparently can be made with ease, by women.



Appearance as Corporate Representation  
Imperfect (2019), 00:27:44

Naomi Wolf explicitly states that “beauty is a currency system, like the gold standard” which is deliberately constructed to regulate women’s social and professional value (Wolf, 1991, p. 12). She also states that with women having access to more education and professional experiences, the beauty standards become a new way of control that causes one to draw their attention out of the capabilities of women and aim towards their bodily attributes. In this respect, beauty ideals are not natural norms, but procedures that perpetuate inequality by establishing those women as the deserving ones in terms of recognition and promotion.

This concept is portrayed in the scene in which the boss of Rara recognizes her intelligence yet at the same time stresses on the significance of physical appearance, as demonstrated in the conversation, "Appearance is also important, too. Even though the words seem neutral and professional, the statement supports the assumption that women have to visualize corporate ideals in order to be regarded as appropriate staff members. The intellectual capability of Rara is acknowledged, but it is put against the context of being unfinished without meeting the appearance-based expectations.

The scene illustrates how the beauty standards are normalized via the authority figures and seem to be sensible and essential. Following the argument of Wolf, appearance turns out to be a symbolic capital which is what defines whether a woman is in a position to enjoy full gain of professional acknowledgement or not (Wolf, 1991, p. 12). Not only is Rara placed as a worker but also as a visual face of the company which puts the emphasis on her competence and looks instead. With this description, Imperfect exposes the role of beauty norms as a structural force perpetuating gender inequality by internalizing the appearance as a professional requirement in women.

## CONCLUSION

The paper comes to a conclusion that the book by Imperfect (2019) gives an incisive account of beauty standards as socially constructed standards of beauty that acts as a symbolic violence towards women. The film, through the work interactions, family relationships and daily communication, shows that physical appearances, especially the size of the body and its general appearance, has become a factor that defines the social acceptance of women and their professional validity. The beauty standards are represented not only as personal tastes, but as processes of controlling the body, behavior, and self-image of women.

Moreover, the results indicate that the ideals of beauty work invisibly but strongly by denying internalized surveillance and body shaming as well as reinforcement by institutions particularly in the workplace. Through an importance on looks and abilities, the film reveals the imbalance of power in which women are overburdened with the responsibilities of appearance that men do not face. Finally, *Imperfect* is also a social commentary that threatens to non-beauty standards and promote self-acceptance and body diversity. The movie shows people to challenge the standards of beauty that are considered as normal and how they promote gender inequality in the modern world.

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