

HERS: Understanding the Reason Behind a Woman's Choice not to Get Married

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ABSTRACT

This creative project is a screenplay. The screenplay is about a woman who struggles to defy the idea of getting married. In the New Order, President Soeharto led Indonesia using Javanese culture. Until today, there is a belief that women in Indonesia are obliged to get married because of the culture. In Javanese culture, there is a value called 3M (*macak, masak, manak*). The value created a definition of a true woman. A true woman has to be able to look pretty and cook. In order to fulfil the third value, a woman has to get married and have a family. This value burdens some modern Indonesian women, especially those who have careers. Through this screenplay, I want to encourage women that being married is a matter of choice and not an obligation.

Keywords: Indonesian women, Javanese value, Javanese culture, marriage, single woman.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Creative Work

From the moment I had to decide how I would graduate from the English Department, I immediately chose the creative thesis path. By choosing creative thesis, I had to make an original creative work related to a certain topic. Through creating a creative work, I could address a real issue, a phenomenon, which what happened in Indonesian society. Creative work was also a medium to address current issues, such as feminism, racism, and politics.

There are few types of creative work and one of them is film. Since I was in elementary school, film always fascinated me. The first film that hooked me was *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (Osborne & Jackson, 2002). Through that film, the actors played their part beautifully until I could also feel what they were going through. The first movie of *The Lord of the Rings* made me want to explore more about how film is made. During my study, I came to understand that there could not be a film without a screenplay because it was the soul of a film; therefore, I had to make screenplay first before I could make my own film.

Filmmaking and screenwriting are integral part of the world's culture (Field, 2007, p.2). It is a tool of mass communication to address a message that is educating and entertaining (Effendy, 1993, p.127). Through film, the audience attention is focused on the problem the film presents while being entertained. In a recent interview, a well-known Indonesian actress, Dian Sastrowardoyo, said that Indonesian film industry lacked quality content and current issues (Waluyo, 2018, para. 8). Thus, screenplay is the best form for my creative work with a more emerging issue.

Every creative work needs a classification so it will make it easier for both the creator and audience to understand the story deeper. I choose romance drama as the genre of my screenplay because it brings more serious tone to the romantic relationship in the fiction. Drama also often includes current issues such as gender inequality or racial judgment which need a serious vessel which will bring the best or the worst of a human being. In addition, Andi Boediman, a managing partner of Ideosource Film Fund in Indonesia said, "Drama is the second most demanded film genre in Indonesia" (Hasibuan, 2018, para. 3). Because drama has a serious tone and high demand, it will be more accepted by the audience in Indonesia.

A real life situation sometimes inspires artist to make an art. In 2011, an experienced journalist, Angela Epstein, who had worked in the media for 25 years, wrote an article for the Daily Mail UK about the "Forever Singles" (Epstein, 2011, para. 5). Forever single was a new term to label independent women who did not want to be defined by relationship in UK. That particular term intrigued me to dig deeper of what it was about. In the article, she interviewed approximately 10 single women in UK to know what their reasons were to be "Forever Singles"; most of them said they did not want to be burdened by men (Epstein, 2011, para. 49). The Forever Singles article really showed that marriage does not fit to modern women lifestyle because men could become a burden for them in UK.

A similar statement came from Firliana Purwanti's paper, a gender activist from Indonesia. She stated the happiness of an Indonesian woman was also determined by the presence of a man (Purwanti, 2016, para 4.). That was why some elders in Indonesia believed marriage is the happiest stage of a woman's life. The belief affected some women, especially who lived in big cities, to get married not long after they graduated from college. However, parallel to what happened in UK, Central Bureau of Statistic in Indonesia also stated that single people in Indonesia, had the highest index of happiness (71.53%) compared to other type of relationship (Sari, 2017, para. 2). Purwanti wrote on Magdalene, an online magazine, which discussed about gender issues in Indonesia. She stated that the Ministry of Religious Affair reported the divorce rate had increased 80%. Between 2012 and 2013, there were 350,000 divorce cases and 70% of those were filed by women. She also stated the reasons why the divorce happened and the strongest reason was men in Indonesia were raised to be king; their needs would be fulfilled, while women were supposed to be the good girl who served man (Purwanti, 2016, para. 12-13).

In Indonesia, women were expected to have boyfriends by the end of their college life and got married after that. There was an unspoken standard by Indonesian society that women had to please the men by being submissive, such as serving their needs. That assumption made several women feel marriage life was not for them. Also, to further the statement 'man is the king' in Indonesia, there was a prejudice that being a wife was the happiest stage in a woman's life. That idealism showed up and was ingrained in many Indonesian people because they thought a woman did not have to provide the family's financial. There is a traditional belief, more specifically, stereotype, that the nature of a man is to be the breadwinner and the nature of a woman is to obey her husband (Retnaningsih, 2013, p. 6-11). It means a married woman had to submit to her husband's command.

From the researches above, I find interesting similarities; society unconsciously makes it hard for some women to be happy. The society is not only men, but also women. According to Purwanti, men in Indonesia are raised to be the king in the house and women have to satisfy them. Society will mark a woman bad-mannered if she neglects this act. They, the society, also tend to overuse the role of nature and use it as a way to define what a woman should do or be. Thus, that makes the society believes men are the central of everything. That is why through my screenplay I want to raise awareness that getting married is not the answer to a woman's happiness.

To respond the issue that I would like to address, my creative work will focus on Emma, a 24-year-old business woman. Because her business is in wedding industry, everyone thinks she is a big fan of wedding and it will be easy for her to have her dream wedding. It is true that she loves wedding because for her, wedding reunites long lost family member, but marriage, which is very distinct from wedding, is still not in the picture for her. Being an Indonesian, Emma's community expects her to get married and have her own family. They think if a woman does not get married, she will bring shame to her family. With all the prejudices about unmarried woman, her nature as woman and her dreams as an independent woman makes her question the need for marriage.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From the background, my screenplay explores the possible reasons why there are women in Indonesia who choose to be forever single. After finding the possible reasons, my screenplay will

explore how the society disapproves unmarried women. Thus, through this project I would like to reveal:

1. Why Emma, the main character, decides to be forever single.
2. How the community tries to force the idea of marriage and her nature as a woman to her.

1.3 Purpose of the Creative Work

Through this project I want to show: the reasons why some women choose to be forever single, also the way the society feeds women the idea of a true woman. Therefore, through this project I also want to prove:

1. The reason Emma choose to be forever single is because she is an independent woman who can sustain her own life.
2. Her community forcing her by persuading her into marrying Andrew.

1.4 Significance of the Work

Through this screenplay, I want to bring more attention to women in relation with marriage in Indonesia. Many films that involve women and marriage only focus on how the woman finds the right man and get married. However, my screenplay will rather focus on the struggles of the main female character who defies the idea of getting married. Hopefully, by following the main character's journey of consolidating her decision, young women in Indonesia may have another point of view that marriage is a choice and not an obligation. Also for the parents of those young women, I hope they may gain insight that marriage is not the only way to happiness and stop forcing their daughters to get married.

1.5.2 Methodology

Reliability and validity is importance in a research. That was why while deciding then shaping my screenplay, I used the secondary research. Secondary research was done by gathering the information that had already existed; therefore, I researched experts' journals that discussed about women and relationships. Most of the journals I used are from the internet and a few from the books in library. One of the journals I researched discussed about Javanisation that explained why Javanese culture rooted in all over Indonesia. Other than journals, I also researched articles done by scholars as another support. One of the articles I used is about the issue of single woman and why they chose singlehood.

Before writing the screenplay, I also researched the setting and interviewed several people. The place setting for this screenplay was in Surabaya, Indonesia. I went to places in Surabaya, for example the Demandailing café, and decided to use several locations to my screenplay. Regarding the profession of the characters, I interviewed my friends who involves in wedding organizer business to give me insight what they were doing. For example, I chose the main character's job as wedding organizer because according to my friends, it was the most profitable job amongst young professional.

OUTLINE OF THE CREATIVE WORK

2.2.1. Theme

The subject matter of my screenplay is marriage. The theme I am focusing on is that marriage is a choice for women. I want to explore how modern women, ones who are well-educated, work and have her income, view the idea of marriage. Emma, who is the main character of my story, does not want to be burdened by housewife tasks such as taking care of her family or doing house chores. In contrast, her community, such as her family or friends in Surabaya, Indonesia still believes that marriage is the purpose of a relationship because that is when a woman becomes a true woman. The story will evolve around Emma's love life. She believes that having a relationship according to Indonesian standard does not suit her to achieve her dream. From the beginning, Emma has decided not to get married because she thinks she is an independent woman and marriage will get in her way. However, since Emma is an obedient daughter, she agrees to have a boyfriend when her mother asks Emma and gives a chance to relationship.

2.2.2 Pitch

- A. Emma is a young woman who wants to become a successful business woman without marriage, but her community tells her to get married instead.
- B. She does not want to give up her independency and freedoms by getting married.
- C. Finally, she realizes that she can choose whether to be married or not.

2.2.3 Synopsis

Emmanuella Chandra, Emma, is one of the lucky girls. She is rich, smart, and beautiful. She is everything a guy wants. Born and raised in Surabaya, Indonesia, Emma's mother always taught her the traditional values of being a woman. Her mother expects her to be a true woman, meaning getting married, having children, and taking care of the house. However, Emma thinks that concept is outdated and has her own agenda. Emma dreams to build a wedding organizer empire.

On the other side, there is Andrew Anggoro, a manager of a travel company, is interested on Emma. He invests in Emma's business hoping she will fall for him. Soon, they start dating only because Emma wants to be a good daughter to her mother. Their relationship is not harmonious because Emma is not committed. Even though that is the fact, both of their families encourage Andrew to propose to Emma and force her to accept. They think both of them are ready to get married. Will Emma be happy if she accepts Andrew's proposal?

2.2.5. Characters

- **Major Character**

- **Emmanuella Chandra (24 years old)**

She is a Javanese and her nickname is Emma. She has a close relationship with her family. To her parents, she is an obedient daughter. Her family is rich, so they get used to hire helps to do house chores. That is why Emma does not like to do them. Her dream is to be a successful businesswoman like her father. She is a hardworking, smart, and agile person. Because of her dream, marriage is not in the picture because she puts her business first.

- **Andrew Anggoro (33 years old)**

He is the son of Fransiska's friend and they are also Javanese. He is an only son and is spoiled since he was a child. His parents provide his needs and wants. Emma is his second girlfriend. Before Emma, he almost got married, but his fiancé cheated on him. Therefore, he becomes an old-fashioned guy who is possessive to his girlfriend. For him, marriage is the goal of a relationship. He has the same ideal type of a good wife like Fransiska. He will be Emma's wedding organizer investor only because he wants Emma's attention.

- **Supporting Characters**

- **Fransiska Chandra (49 years old)**

She is Emma's mother. She is a socialite, demanding, and strict mother. She wants her children to be honorable people. She believes to be honorable her children should have high education and family of their own.

- **David Chandra (49 years old)**

He is Emma's father. His business is focus on export and import. He knows that her daughter is a strong woman and support every decision she makes. He is a little bit afraid to his wife. He likes to throw a party on any occasion because it is a family tradition.

- **Eric Chandra (17 years old)**

He is Emma's little brother. He likes to eat, yet very still skinny. He is a laid-back person and loves his sister.

- **Kevin Tanuharja (24 years old)**

He is Emma's best friend. Out of five Emma's best friend, he is the closest to her. He is a wise person. He can always put himself in another's shoes. That is why Emma likes to talk to him the most.

- **Ica & Meli (24 years old)**

They are also Emma's best friends. Unlike Emma, both of them think that romantic relationship is everything. Marriage is the goal in their life. Like Emma's mother, they are trying to make Emma agree to marry Andrew.

2.2.6 Conflict

The main conflict of the story is man versus society. For Emma, her life goal is to be a successful business woman. She studies hard dreaming to build a wedding organizer empire. In the process, she becomes more mature and independent. However, the society, her mother, boyfriend, and friends, do not think a woman has to be a successful business woman. A woman needs to find a boyfriend with a good husband material and get married. He will provide for her life and working is a part time job of a housewife. For Emma, she cannot focus on her dream to be a businesswoman if she is married. However, for the society, an old virgin has a bad reputation.

2.2.7 Setting

- **Place**

- Surabaya, Indonesia

Surabaya is Emma's hometown. All of her family is here. She lives in East Surabaya. There are many people in Surabaya that think marriage is the goal in life.

- Bali, Indonesia

Emma and her friends have a vacation here. They stay in a villa located in Denpasar.

- **Time**

The time starts in 2016, a few months before Emma graduates.

CONCLUSION

Making a screenplay as my final project is a long process and not easy. For final project, the screenplay I make have to a full-length featured. This is my first time writing a screenplay that runs for more than 10 minutes. It is a challenging journey. I learn a lot from writing this screenplay. I learn that a screenplay has to be genuine. I also learn that the relation between marriage and woman has been set by the culture and people abide by it.

Firstly, I learn that a screenplay or any creative work has to be based on reality. Prior to working on the screenplay, I have to do research on the screenplay and the issue. I cannot make a creative work just because I like it. I have to know which form of creative work that suits the issue I will be working on. The issue itself cannot be a false. Creative work is a fiction, but the issue is not fiction; therefore, I have to know the background of the issue and how to solve it based on the facts. By making a genuine creative work with the right form, in this case a screenplay helps me deliver the message of the issue properly.

Secondly, I learn about why Indonesians urge youngsters to get married. While doing research, I find that Indonesians, specifically Javanese, have strong respect toward their culture. Valuing 3M (*macak, masak, manak*) is one of their way to respect the culture. Parents prepare their daughters to do those three since they are young. For them, it is like a guide on how to be a true woman. This value ingrains in Indonesians to the point forcing every woman in Indonesia to follow this value. If a woman cannot wear makeup or cook, people will gossip them because for them that

woman will be hard to find a husband. For some women, following this value means sacrificing the things they love and sometimes it is not worth it. That is why there are women who do not follow this value.

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