



Zozi's Election as Miss Universe 2019: A Transformation of the Concept of Women's Beauty and Leadership

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Abstract

The election of Zozi as Miss Universe in 2019 raises a critical discourse on the concept of women's beauty and leadership. This article aims to show the transformation of the concept of beauty and leadership. The method used in this paper is Critical Discourse Analysis by collecting secondary data from the official Miss Universe website, journals, media and the internet, as well as Zozi's speeches and activities before and after being elected as Miss Universe 2019. The results of the research show that transformation of the concept of beauty is needed to create justice. The concept of beauty is necessary to accommodate diversity and inclusivity. In addition, beauty is not only determined by physical appearance, but also must be supported by strong character. Moreover, women face a number of problems of structured and cultural discrimination that resulted in them being left behind. Women must participate actively in society, create them to become empowered and progressive women. The election of Zozi as Miss Universe has broken the conventional western concept of beauty, uniform and everything is measured from a male point of view. Zozi has become a role model that inspires other women to become women with personality.

Keywords: *Beauty Concept; Critical Discourse; Leadership; Miss Universe*

Introduction

Beauty contests always get great attention in various corners of the world. One of the beauty contests with the highest level of recognition is the Miss Universe which was held since 1926. This beauty contest was held every year until 1935. The contest was stopped because the world was hit by the economic depression and World War II, until it was held again regularly in 1952 until now. The beauty pageant received extensive media coverage, with an estimated 500 million viewers in 190 countries. When a television station airs this program, you can imagine how many advertisements it can get. This shows that beauty contests have very high economic value because they can be used as a means of promoting various products. Miss Universe or the Miss Universe Organization (MUO) is a global, inclusive organization that celebrates all cultures, backgrounds and religions (Miss Universe Organization, 2019). As the beauty and science contest develops, since the ownership of Miss Universe has moved from Donald Trump to IMG, Miss Universe has prioritized the vision and mission leadership of woman.

Talking about leadership, leadership can define as an ability possessed by an individual so that they can influence, encourage, move others to do something to achieve certain goals (Bahruddin & Umairson, 2012). In fact, leadership led by a woman still considered taboo because of the social construction which stated that women are weak, so they are unable to carry out social tasks. Whereas based on studies, women's leadership tends to be far more democratic. They encourage participation, share power and informations and try to increase the benefits for their followers. Conversely, men tend to use a leadership style that is based on control and orders. They are more based on the position of formal authority as a basis for him to exercise influence.

2019 was a historic year for the African people. Because this year, the Miss Universe victory was won by a black woman named Zozibini Tunzi after previously being won by Leila Lopes in 2011 who came from Angola. Zozibini Tunzi is a 26-year-old gender violence activist from Tsolo, South Africa who defeated Puerto Rican finalists Madison Anderson and Sofia Aragon from Mexico in the Miss Universe 2019 (BBC Indonesia, 2019). Miss Universe was created with the aim of providing space for women to spread stories that became their concern to giving an impact to the world. Just like what they said that 'The Miss Universe Organization provides women who participate in this international platform with the tools to affect positive change personally, professionally and philanthropically serving as inspirational leaders and role models to the communities and fans around the world' (Miss Universe Organization, 2019).

The urgency of women's leadership finally received "special attention" when it was appointed in the Miss Universe pageant. Zozi's victory in the Miss Universe pageant has at least indirectly illustrated that a woman's leadership is not only limited to control and orders, but also to encourage participation and benefit for her followers. Furthermore, women tend to lead through involvement and empowerment and are based on charisma, expertise, contacts and interpersonal skills in influencing others. Through Miss Universe, the definition of beautiful is no longer just limited to a charming appearance, but far more than that, namely being able to empower women all over the world.

During Miss Universe, finalists from all over the world will be asked questions on various topics, such as climate change, demonstration and social media, including Zozi, who raises issues regarding beauty standards and women's leadership. For Zozi, leadership is an important thing to teach to the young women and mature women. Because so far, women have always been underestimated by society which causes women to become powerless. Zozi's statement regarding leadership then led her to the winner of Miss Universe 2019.

Zozi's victory received a positive response from the international community including Oprah Winfrey who congratulated Zozi, as quoted in Oprah's tweet to Zozi that "Agree with you. Leadership is the most powerful thing we should be teaching young women today. We welcome your visit to #OWLAGE, our Leadership Academy for Girl."

Besides Oprah, the number of people also underlined the importance of a black woman with natural hair to win the beauty contest. Because so far, the stigma labeled by society regarding beauty contests is someone who has a symmetrical face with a proportional body, as reported by the Everyday Health website which says that how the environment defines a woman can be said to be attractive if they have a beautiful symmetrical face, huge eyes on a small face, lips full and in proportion with the rest of the face and smooth skin and long hair (Opdycke, 2017). Zozi also said the same thing. "I grew up in a world where a woman who looked like me, with my skin type and hair type was never considered beautiful" (BBC Indonesia, 2019). Thus, Zozi's victory in the Miss Universe beauty contest can be considered by the world community in defining beauty. Because with Zozi's victory at Miss Universe 2019, the definition of beautiful is not only limited to a symmetrical and proportional face, but beauty is something that comes from within a woman to be able to be herself and love herself as she is.

Methodology

This article uses descriptive secondary data to analyse using the number of concepts and theories. In collecting data, the author uses data obtained through the official Miss Universe website, books, journal articles, media platforms and the internet as well as literature.

To analyse how changes in the transformation of women's beauty and leadership, the authors use Critical Discourse Analysis to implement Zozibini Tunzi's role as a role model in breaking the conventional western concept of beauty, uniform and all things measured from a male point of view. Departing from the concept of feminism which criticizes the very masculine world view of the international world, critical discourse analysis become a renewal tool for analysing discourse that is criticized in the context of feminism. One of the criticisms put forward by feminists is the emphasis on the central position of "men" and ignoring the role of "women" in the formulation of foreign strategy and policy resulting in an analysis that has the nuances of "male chauvinism" (Elsthain, 1995). Meanwhile, second-generation feminist thinkers such as Ann Tincker, Vivienne Jabri, Jill Stearn, and others are demanding the expansion of the boundaries of the field of international relations studies by taking women's perspectives more into account. In this context, they call for the existence of mainstreaming gender (gender mainstreaming) in international relations studies, namely raising gender issues in various international events and involving women in making foreign policy.

The same thing was done by Zozibini Tunzi through Miss Universe. Zozi through her campaign on women's leadership and changing beauty standards has become an issue raised as an international issue through the Miss Universe platform. Zozi's criticism discourse is a critique of the conventional definition of beauty and is always measured from the physique and perspective of men. Such a definition of beauty is the result of a knowledge discourse that defines western women as having blonde hair, burning eyes, and white skin. In contrast to Zozi's background who comes from Africa with curly hair, black eyes and dark skin make Zozi fall short of conventional western beauty standards. This criticism was accompanied by a new discourse initiated by Zozi that the definition of beauty can be explained from various views such as skill, character and beauty which are inclusive. What Zozi did caused this deconstruction against the theoretical framework of international relations which has a gender bias.

Besides this criticism towards beauty standards, Zozibini Tunzi also criticized the existence of gender bias in involving women in society. The minimal participation of women causes a stigma that women can only be followers and cannot become the followers' leader. This became the concentration of Zozibini Tunzi as Miss Universe who criticized the public who see women as backward people who are unable to lead men. Discourse analysis of criticism of women's leadership has made the issue of women's leadership raised as an international issue that breaks conventional leadership concepts that always prioritize men as leaders. Her criticism of male leadership is confirmed by the emergence of the argument that "men are the protectors, women are the ones who are protected". The theoretical framework in criticizing the condition of society which is still thick with stigma is important to be used as a background for making a discourse analysis.

Discussion

The conventional and westernized definition of beauty has been shattered by Zozi through Miss Universe. Zozi's victory has had a big impact on society's perspective on the definition of beauty that is only seen from the physical. Especially when talking about women's leadership, women are often not given the opportunity to become leaders. The following discussion shows the transformation of the concept of beauty and leadership.

This beauty contest has very high pros and cons. Some feminists, including feminists Canada Judy Rebick strongly disapproves of beauty contests which she considers an exploitation and oppression of women. (Bain, 2003). Women who were participants were forced to meet the ideal body criteria, such as tall, thin, smooth face without blemishes, symmetry, without the slightest flaw, white skin, long enough hair and blonde. Women who want to be considered beautiful are forced to conform to capitalist interests, industry clothing, cosmetics, beauty salons, health supplements, food and so on. Female behaviour is dictated by the power of valuable advertising trillion dollars. Women are willing to use high heels even though the use of high heels will complicate their movements and steps. One of the stages in the Miss Universe contest is featuring participants in swimwear and bikinis. Beauty, the curves of women's bodies, even pornography and porn action of women then become commodities that generate millions of dollars for the capitalists.

The willingness of women to adapt to the criteria formulated by the men shows that women have been dominated and hegemonic by men. That is why, beauty pageants preserve conservative beauty values and place women in the position of "object" not "subject". Beauty contests do not reduce the gender gap, but actually strengthen the gender gap. Conversely, some women argue that beauty contests are an arena for women to show their existence. Interviews conducted by CNN with beauty pageant participants showed that most of their main motivation was wanting to gain pride because they had succeeded in gaining local, national and international recognition that they had perfect beauty (Purnamasari, 2019).

Beauty Concept Transformation

The many criticisms of beauty contests forced organizers to improve beauty criteria. In the Miss Universe 2019 election, the 3B concept was used, namely Brain, Beauty and Behaviour. The brain concept means that Miss Universe participants must have broad general knowledge and the ability to educate people about culture. The concept of beauty is interpreted as inner beauty, namely beauty that radiates from within a woman who has a strong character, is full of enthusiasm and has a positive self-image. The concept of behavior is interpreted as the beauty that is produced by the women's real work to solve the problems that currently being faced by society (Kanzulfikar, 2021).

The election of Zozi as Miss Universe shows that the criteria of beauty have undergone a transformation, from a conservative concept of beauty focusing on physical beauty, turning into beauty with the concept of 3B (Brain, Beauty and Behavior), to natural beauty. During the Miss Universe pageant, persistently kept her hair short and refused to wear wigs. Zozi, who was originally Miss South Africa, is a black woman who has a background as a female activist who is determined to combat the practice of violence against women that is rife in Africa. (Palupi & Setyawan, 2021). When a woman activist can be elected as Miss Universe, this will increase leverage so that the international community pays more attention to the problems faced by women, such as poverty, deficiency of nutrition and nutrition, violence against women, low education and others. (Keck, M. & Sikkink, K., 1999)

Women's Leadership

During the Miss Universe pageant, the jury asked Zozi: "What should we teach young girls today?" Zozi's answer was: "Leadership. This is something that has been missing in girls and young women for a long time – not because we don't want to, but because society has labeled Women. I think we are the most powerful beings in the world, and we should be given a chance. That's what we have to teach these young girls - to take up space."

Zozi's answer shows, and also represents, the courage of women to demand justice, and to seize leadership in various ways, both at the local, national and international levels. The girls must have the

courage to seize leadership. The facts show that the number of women and men who can become leaders is very unequal. Yet when viewed from the number and ability, women and men tend to be balanced.

Zozi's life is motivated by advocacy activities as she is actively involved professionally as an education advocate. Kindly professional monitor and evaluate that environment surrounding it, as for the findings in the form of standardization that has always been pinned on women for a long period of time coupled with the dilemma of the role of women who are still minimal in various sectors. It was the lack of involvement and participation of women in various lines that ultimately referred Zozi to take part in the 'Miss universe' beauty pageant, starting her career as the winner of 'Miss South Africa 2019' (Chaerunnisa, 2019). During his election process, Zozi spoke a lot about the inequality that was happening around him and was very sure that this problem also occurs equally in all countries.

As for the top 20, Zozi gave a short speech about an inspirational story he got from his grandmother. She feels very lucky as a 'black woman' who has an opportunity to get an education inside his family. Zozi mentions that:

"I got my first look ever from my grandmother who never got an opportunity to get an education. She gave me that book because she had hoped that I would have a future much better than hers. I come from a strong woman who fought, who not only wanted to be recognized as human but to be recognized as an intelligent and capable leader. Because of those women I am here today and it is now my responsibility to inspire others to be the best and to stay confident in everything that they do"

Construction social system which states that women's beauty is only given value if it has certain standards that have been set for a long time. Zozi's victory thus became a tool to influence society, this can be seen from the overall appearance of Zozi which was rarely found in other candidates at that time. Zozi indirectly creates a new standard in terms of beauty that is more representative of the variety of colors, body shapes, and hair styles owned by women (Palupi & Setyawan, 2021).

Like populist leaders who have the tendency to have a positive mindset under any circumstances and are able to minimize things that can affect the decision-making process based on instinct (Abhipraya et al., 2021). This is in harmony with the atmosphere created by Zozi who strives to have a positive impact on all public without being limited by the- gender. This is also motivated by the condition of the decision-making process that has minimal involvement of women in it. Thus, it is important to reconstruct the concept of leadership and women's involvement.

The feminist concept of Zozi's victory at Miss Universe 2019 is also described as glitter shine and glow work (Iqani, 2022), which provides novelty and new colors in creating a new order of thought, especially in women's issues that have long been neglected to be discussed. That, the event is no longer injure value of a woman but become a tool for building narratives of women's empowerment and eliminating stereotypes standardization in beauty pageants (Barry, 2022). The event no longer injures the value of a woman but become a tool for building narratives of women's empowerment and eliminating stereotypes standardization in beauty pageants (Barry, 2022).

Conclusion

As Miss Universe and Global Ambassador, Zozi has showed the importance of female leadership during her reign. She always thought that women should participate and taking up space in society. Nowadays, women have been received same opportunity in order to participate in politics, economic and society. Zozi witnessing women discrimination when she was young in South Africa that is why she always raised awareness to female leadership in order to transform women potential and taking up space in society (Malik, Azizah, & Aprilian, 2023).

She inspired to be bold with their own self to believe that in modern era there is a diverse woman that has their own strength, unique and determination. On her speech she delivered that she is the type of women that not consider to be beautiful, but she won Miss Universe 2019 with her dark skin, short hair and from South Africa. She is the icon of transformation of the concept of women's beauty and leadership.

Miss Universe platform made Zozi bravely speaks up about women leadership. In her final speech, she said that women must have a voice in society and to not be afraid of their power because women have a voice. Thus, Zozi made Miss Universe and her reign as a platform to increase women's power as a leader in various aspects. The belief of Zozi turned out to have an effect on women's participation in society (Malik, Azizah, & Aprilian, 2023).

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