

THE MEANING OF NON-PRECIOUS MATERIAL JEWELRY AND ITS RELATION TO ANXIETY IN URBAN SOCIALITE WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

*The research entitled *The Meaning of Non-Precious Material Jewelry and Its Relation to Anxiety in Urban Socialite Women* is intended to analyze the non-precious material jewelry worn by these women in Jakarta and its relation to the state of anxiety they experience. This research is qualitative research that uses semi-structured interviews with six informants who are selected based on purposive sample criteria. The results of the interviews were analyzed utilizing Zygmunt Bauman's theory as written in *Liquid Fear* (2006). The conclusions of this study indicate that socialite urban women consider the ownership and use of non-precious material jewelry as not mere accessories but is associated to a deeper meaning. Socialite urban women experience a state of anxiety both internally and externally. The possession and use of non-precious material jewelry is an effort to overcome anxiety which is connected to identity and uncertainty. Socialite urban women make the possession and use of non-precious material jewelry as a way to have fun, an escape from "liquid fear", namely fear of uncertainty, including that of career, family, friendship, existential questions such as God and anxiety concerning death.*

Keywords: *anxiety, identity, non-precious material jewelry, socialite urban women, uncertainty*

1. Introduction

The bearing of jewelry on the human body has always had a variety of functions and meanings, ranging from to tidy hairs, beautifying appearance, elevating social status, indicating ethnic or religious identity, expressing feelings, to being believed that it provides protection and good luck (Manutchehr-Danai, 2009). Since especially the 20th century, materials used for jewelry must no longer be precious materials such as gold or silver, but these might also be of non-precious materials such as shells, glass, ceramics, rubber, plastic and cloth. René Lalique is the pioneer in using non-precious materials. He is an Art Nouveau artist from France who is also known as a stained-glass artist and perfume bottle maker (Ashelford, 1980). Lalique made jewelry with materials that were rare in his time, namely shells and glass, amid a society that was still infatuated with gold, platinum and diamonds as the main materials for jewelry (Forrer, 1907).

Other *non-precious material* media such as wood, stone, horn, shells, fossils, cultural artefacts, ivory, and rocks can sometimes look like *precious materials* when plated to look like silver and gold. Such is even more interesting when it is worn by certain groups, namely the urban women. Urban women are women whose discourse on beauty cannot be separated from the construction of a patriarchal culture. Whether admitted or not, what women display on their bodies is what men really want to see. Influenced by the *male gaze*, women are the target for various beauty advertisements that display the "ideal" figure of the female body (Prabasmoro, 2003: 54). On the other hand, although they have been under "*male gaze*", urban women are also independent women who no longer feel they must attach themselves to a disposition that has been constructed for a long time, especially by patriarchal culture. Women, who in a patriarchal culture are as if naturally constructed as people whose tasks are to do house works and educate their children, are no longer so strictly defined in the definition of urban women (Wibowo, 2011: 358).

The wearing of certain jewelry is closely related

to the categories of urban women who are called socialites. The term socialite was first introduced in 1928 in Time magazine (Sumner, 2010). The roots of socialites appeared in the 18th and 19th centuries and were limited to those from the royalties. Entering the 19th century and especially in the 20th century, the term socialite refers more to famous people who have wealth and power. In the 21st century, socialites are almost inseparable from celebrities.

Gunawan & Anwar (2012) writes that there is a state of anxiety related to *body image* in middle adult women. Anxiety is defined as an unpleasant emotional condition marked by subjective feelings such as tension, fear, worry, and is characterized by an active central nervous system (Post, 1978). Anxiety differs from fear. In fear, the source of the cause can be clearly identified, whereas in anxiety the source of the cause cannot be clearly and precisely identified (Wignjosoebroto, 1981). While *body image* is defined as a person's mental image of the shape and size of his or her body, including how he or she thinks in what way other people evaluate and see him or her. In reality what he or she thinks and feels does not necessarily represent the actual situation; it is rather a subjective self-assessment (Honigman & Castle, 2007). Responses to anxiety over *body image* can vary, including going on a diet, visiting beauty salons and clinics, fitness centers, taking anti-aging vitamins to plastic surgery (Gunawan & Anwar, 2012: 59).

Although Gunawan & Anwar's research (2012) does not specifically mention urban socialite women and focuses their studies more on certain age phases of women, the researcher assumes that such anxiety arises in women living in urban areas. This is shown from the various possible responses, such as visiting beauty clinics, fitness centers to plastic surgery, these facilities exist only in urban areas. This research will specifically examine urban women who come from the upper economic class or those who belong to the socialite category with the aim of analyzing the non-precious material jewelry they wear and its association to the anxiety they experience.

2. Metode

This qualitative research method was conducted utilizing semi-structured interviews involving several socialite urban women informants from several communities in Jakarta. They are enrolled using purposive sample criteria. The set criteria of selection were that informants must possess non-precious material jewelry, be of productive age and have an independent income (so that she can buy the jewelry on her own), in general always try to be stylish by living up to the latest trends both in terms of fashion and technology, and routinely conduct things that are considered important for physical enhancement such as visiting beauty clinics, fitness centers or plastic surgery. Those are important characteristics of urban socialite women.

3. Result and Discussion

The result of applying purposive sample criteria is a selection of six informants with the following profiles and information as seen on Table 1.

The semi-structured interview posed general questions about the meaning of using non-precious material jewelry and its association with anxiety. The interviews were conducted in a natural setting so that the informants would feel comfortable in conversing. Interviews were conducted in a public space designated by the informants and generally conducted in restaurants or cafes in Jakarta area. Each interview lasted for approximately two hours and if necessary, a maximum of two meetings were held.

The results of the interviews were analyzed using the Gioia method. The Gioia method is a method for analyzing interviews by placing them in stages starting from first-order codes, second-order codes to aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013). The code for the first degree and the code for the second degree are the process of abstracting the interviews in order to obtain significant statements or meanings in line with the referred literature and research objectives. Meanwhile, the aggregate dimension is the process of re-reading the interview transcripts to obtain certainty about the relationship between the

original data and the reinterpretation by the researcher.

To strengthen the research results, this research also makes use of literature studies referring to the text from Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Fear* (2006). Bauman writes that modernity has succeeded in overcoming fear which arises from human uncertainty in dealing with nature, but it has also created other fears. These other fears (which Bauman calls "Global Warnings") which are amplified by the media, have resulted the modern society to overcome them in one particular way, that is *having fun* (Bauman, 2006: 5).

The results of the interviews indicate that urban socialite women have other reasons for using non-precious material jewelry than just as accessories. Referring to Table 2, there are two categories of meanings in wearing non-precious materials, namely the internal category which refers to the feelings and thoughts of the wearer and the external category which refers to things outside the feelings and thoughts of the wearer, more related to the object of jewelry, people, and other external factors. The details of these categories are as follows (Table 2).

Internal category: provides serenity, reduces anxiety over scarcity of jewelry, increases self-confidence, the meaning lies with the wearer, affirms identity, reduces fear of loss, shows independence (because of buying on their own), gives pride and a sense of comfort, reduces dependency (on partner). **External categories:** not eye-catching, only some people understand, will not go out of style, materials are easy to get, exclusive because only certain people understand, are 'timeless' in material and design.

Based on the interviews, socialite urban women, are regarded to be always in a state of anxiety. If Gunawan & Anwar's research is to be considered as to conclude that middle-aged women are always in a state of anxiety due to *body image*, then the urban socialite women in this study are often in anxiety that is related to issues on identity and uncertainty. This can be inferred from the keywords which are revealed to be related to self-confidence, exclusivity (from the keywords 'some people only understand'), the importance of the wearer rather than the object of her jewelry, not going out of style, easily available

materials, and 'timeless'.

When considered from Zygmunt Bauman's thoughts, as written in his text entitled *Liquid Fear* (2006), it can be regarded that urban socialite women are a group of people who are wealthy, thus not preoccupied by fulfilling their primary needs, and they have entered a tertiary stage and are even trying to satisfy themselves through *having fun*. *Having fun*, when associated with Bauman's idea of "liquid fear", can be said to be an escape from various fears of uncertainty, including those concerning career, family, friendships, to existential problems such as God and anxiety about dying. It can be said that even though the character of modern society is characterized by certainty, the socialite urban woman, with her abundance of money, is still unable to answer questions that remain a mystery so that she escapes her anxiety states into a playful attitude which does not answer the real problem.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) Socialite urban women consider that the ownership and wearing of non-precious material jewelry is not just a matter of accessories but is associated with deeper meanings. (2) Socialite urban women always experience anxiety both internally and externally and make the ownership and use of non-precious material jewelry as a mean to overcome anxiety caused by issues of identity and uncertainty. (3) Socialite urban women make possession and use of non-precious material jewelry as a way to have fun as an escape from "liquid fear" namely fear of uncertainty, including career, family, friendship, and existential conundrums such as God and about death.

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