

**“I always have to look attractive, but nobody cares on what I feel”:
Aesthetic labor on Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)**

**“Saya harus selalu tampak menarik, tapi tidak ada yang peduli dengan
perasaan saya”: Aesthetic labor pada Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)**

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Abstract

Aesthetic labor is a job that involves the display of aesthetic body appearance and emotions by the workers. Aesthetic labor practices are performed by service workers who interact directly with customers, including Sales Promotion Girls (SPGs). This qualitative research aims to reveal how aesthetic labor practices are carried out by SPGs and what burdens that they carry. A total of 10 SPG informants who have at least one year of work experience were involved. This research found that SPGs always have to maintain their body appearances and emotions to attract customers' attention and convince them to make purchases. They even spend money to maintain their body appearances, such as for buying healthy foods, cosmetics, skincare products, and going to the salon. SPGs are also expected to always display positive emotions in any situation. Furthermore, SPGs often experience sexual harassment at the workplace. It can be concluded that while performing aesthetic labor practices, SPGs actually experience the practices of being a docile body too. In addition, SPGs have a double burden, namely physical and emotional burdens, in doing their jobs. However, there are still many who underestimate SPGs and ignore the difficulty they face as aesthetic labor workers.

Keywords: aesthetic labor; docile body; service worker; Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)

Abstrak

Aesthetic labor merupakan pekerjaan yang melibatkan estetika penampilan tubuh dan emosi yang dilakukan oleh pekerjanya. Praktik aesthetic labor ditampilkan oleh pekerja pelayanan yang melakukan interaksi secara langsung dengan konsumen, termasuk Sales Promotion Girls (SPG). Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana praktik aesthetic labor yang dilakukan oleh SPG beserta beban kerja yang dimilikinya. Sejumlah 10 informan SPG yang memiliki pengalaman kerja minimal satu tahun terlibat. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwasanya SPG secara kontinu harus mengelola penampilan tubuh dan emosinya untuk menarik perhatian konsumen dan meyakinkan konsumen untuk melakukan pembelian. Mereka bahkan mengeluarkan biaya untuk menjaga penampilannya, seperti untuk membeli makanan sehat, kosmetik, produk perawatan kulit, dan pergi ke salon. SPG juga diharapkan untuk selalu menampilkan emosi positif dalam situasi apapun. Lebih jauh, SPG sering mengalami pelecehan seksual di tempat kerja. Dapat disimpulkan bahwasanya ketika melakukan praktik aesthetic labor, sejatinya SPG juga mengalami praktik pendisiplinan tubuh. Selain itu, SPG memiliki beban ganda, yaitu beban fisik dan emosional, dalam mengerjakan pekerjaannya. Bagaimanapun, masih banyak yang meremehkan SPG dan mengabaikan kesulitan yang mereka alami sebagai pekerja aesthetic labor.

Kata kunci: aesthetic labor; disiplin tubuh; pekerja pelayanan; Sales Promotion Girl (SPG)

Introduction

Sales Promotion Girl (SPG) is a female worker who works in the field of product marketing and plays a role in promoting products and convincing customers to buy the products they offer. In general, SPGs are required to have attractive appearance that meets the beauty standards of women in society, such as having a slim and tall body, white skin, and long hair, in order to attract the attention of customers (Luoh & Tsaur 2023). The ideal beauty or femininity standards is raised and promoted on television broadcasts, social media, and beauty events by

certain parties who have interests in it such as pageants. Pageants often display women's ideal beauty and convey toxic positivity to encourage women to have it (Prohaska 2023). Therefore, women's ideal beauty standards are increasingly widespread and are being imposed on female aesthetic labor workers including SPGs.

It is common knowledge that SPGs are required to have attractive appearance and must be able to represent the products they offer. Besides, they also have to show positive emotions to build interaction with customers. Warhurst et al. (2000) explained aesthetic labor as a type of work where workers must have 'embodied capacities and attributes' in themselves to be mobilized and developed by the company through recruitment, selection, and training process to turn them into a 'skill' that is aesthetically intended to create a style of interaction or service. Therefore, the aesthetics of body appearance holds an important role that needs to be maintained and improved by the workers, including the ability to control and display positive emotions (Wood 2024). Aesthetic labor was said to be "the new economy" since the important criteria in job recruitment is no longer their thinking and technical abilities, but aesthetic abilities (Wan 2023). This is somehow not surprising because in post-feminism, with its neoliberal sensibility, the focus of femininity is on the body (Dutta 2021).

Maulana & Sukresna (2022) found that the aesthetic appearances of service workers can create positive emotions in customers. Body postures and gestures are very important since it can help the workers to build service interactions and special experiences for customers (Wan 2022). Wardah beauty products can provide a suitable example of this. As a beauty product that carries Islamic branding, Wardah SPGs always have a Muslim look by wearing a hijab, natural make-up to show the natural side of the face, and promoting the products with good attitudes without denigrating other products (Ghozali & 'Azmi 2019, Jaya et al. 2022). Other SPGs also experience similar things, where they are required to represent the products they offer to help customers in selecting the desired product or brand to buy (Wu et al. 2020, Chen 2023). When SPGs are still in working hours, promoting products with their maintained bodies and emotions, they are also being monitored by their superiors to make sure that they follow the regulations and do not have to get punishment.

Even though SPGs are always asked to perform in accordance with the beauty standards in society, there are special cases where they do not have to meet some criteria of the beauty standards. This can be found in retail stores that target particular groups, such as plus size clothing and cosmetics for Women of Color (Pospisil 2020, Oluyadi & Dai 2023). Pospisil (2020) said that plus size SPGs wore clothes that plus size women often avoided to motivate their customers wearing it confidently. In addition, Oluyadi & Dai (2023) found that Women of Color SPGs focused on their exotic appearances. However, it needs to be noted that they still have to maintain the beauty and neatness of their appearances to attract customers' attention, such as clear skin and face.

The importance of body appearance and positive emotions creates tremendous job pressure for aesthetic labor workers. To be able to appear in accordance with the beauty standards or company's wishes, SPGs must continue to control their bodies, both during and outside their working hours. They go on a diet, do exercise, go to the salon, wear make-up and skincare products only for the sake of the work they do (Crowley 2023). Not only does it drain their energy and emotions, the various methods used to maintain the aesthetic appearance of their bodies also cost some money (Boyle & De Keere 2019, Krismadani & Ansyah 2023). SPGs take this seriously because they will receive warnings if their body appearances are not attractive or

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cannot represent the products offered. Apart from the aesthetic of body appearances, the display of positive emotions also needs to be carried out by SPGs. Under any circumstances, SPGs are required to create positive emotions so that customers feel comfortable and interested in the products offered (Threadgold et al. 2021). This also applies when they are in danger, such as when they experience sexual harassment from customers.

Behind the obligation of SPGs to always maintain their body appearances and emotional display, there are many difficulties and tribulations felt by them (Tsaur & Hsieh 2020). SPGs, along with other aesthetic labor workers, find it difficult to continue maintaining their body appearances (Boyle & De Keere 2019). They keep maintaining their bodies even during the Covid-19 pandemic season where they do not directly interact with customers (Wood 2024). It was intended to ensure that their appearances remain optimal when they return to work after the Covid-19 pandemic season. Apart from needing energy to do it, they also need money to maintain their bodies, such as going to the salon, buying cosmetics, and clothes that can make them look attractive and appropriate (Katircioglu & Tekin 2021, Crowley 2023). Therefore, in aesthetic labor, it is important to hire workers who are passionate and able to internalize their work role within themselves (Lyndon et al. 2021). In this way, they will be able to negotiate more and deal with the various obligations and burdens they have.

As mentioned before, SPGs have to always maintain their body appearances and emotional display, which gives them physical and emotional burdens. Besides, there are other things that also gives them physical and emotional burdens, namely the stigma from society and sexual harassment done by customers to them. It is common in this society that many people still underestimate the job of SPGs just because they see it as a job that relies only on appearance. Furthermore, because SPGs are required to look appealing and even seductive, especially to men customers, they often get sexual harassment from customers, both verbal and non-verbal. The sexual harassment that SPGs experience are way too often that it comes to the point where they think that it is something normal in their jobs (Awalia 2018).

It can be seen that aesthetic labor somehow tends to normalize and perpetuate beauty standards which is actually just a capitalist strategy that has the effect of monopolizing society. The study of aesthetic labor in service workers then becomes an interesting and important study to discuss. As a field of work that prioritizes the aesthetics of body appearance and emotional displays, aesthetic labor workers will continue to be required to maintain their bodies to suit the company's wishes, which generally conform to societal beauty standards. In other words, aesthetic labor perpetuates beauty standards that have long been considered detrimental to women. In addition to perpetuating beauty standards, forcing SPGs to always look attractive, even seductive, also harms them because it encourages sexual harassment to happen. This study then is important to explore how aesthetic labor practices are carried out by SPGs, discuss the docile body practices carried out by companies towards SPGs, and reveal the burdens experienced by SPGs as aesthetic labor workers.

Research Method

This research used qualitative methods aiming to dig up in-depth information and reveal how aesthetic labor practices are carried out by SPGs, as well as the burdens they carry. Two types of data are used in this article, namely primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from ten selected informants who were SPGs from different companies in Surabaya, young adults (18-26 years old), and have been working for at least one year as SPGs, so that the informants could give relevant answers

needed. The informants chosen were from different companies, including companies that sell products that men mostly buy, such as cigarettes, to help the researchers get diverse experiences and deep information regarding aesthetic labor on SPGs. The ten informants in this research were considered sufficient and enough as the data provided by them was diverse and detailed. The primary data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with the selected informants.

The collected data in this research were processed through three stages, namely verbatim writing, data classification, and data analysis. Firstly, the verbatim writing was done through the process of transcribing all of the in-depth interview recordings. Secondly, the process continued to data classification in which the data was classified into several categories to make it easier for the researchers to analyze the data. Lastly, the data was analyzed using relevant prior studies and concepts. By doing that, novel findings would be found compared to prior studies, also the relevance between field data and scientific theory could be made.

Results and Discussion

Some interesting findings were obtained from in-depth interviews with the informants. The data is divided into three sections here, namely aesthetic labor performed by SPGs, body and emotions maintenance carried out by SPGs, and burdens experienced by SPGs. These findings explain clearly the practice of aesthetic labor conducted by SPGs, the maintenance of body and emotions by SPGs, as well as the burdens they experience.

Aesthetic labor performed by SPGs

Body appearance and positive emotions are two important keys for aesthetic labor workers (Warhurst & Nickson 2009, Pospisil 2020). Generally, job recruiters will choose prospective workers who have attractive appearance and suit the beauty standards or companies' needs. These needs are adjusted to the products that the SPGs will sell to customers, for example cosmetics products, health products, or other products. Therefore, when looking for a suitable SPG, SPG job recruiters always have clear appearance criteria for job applicants, for example having a tall and slim body, long hair, and white skin.

“The (SPGs) body must be tall. There is an average height, at least 160 or 155 cm. The body weight must also be proportional to its height. Good looking appearance does not mean to have beautiful face, the important thing is that the appearance is clean, neat, and pleasing to look at...Appearance is really important in my opinion for SPGs.” (Informant MAH).

“SPGs at several events must not have acne on their faces. There are SPGs who have white skin with tall body, at least 160 or 165 cm. There are also SPGs who cannot wear their hijab or braces. It is different (the requirements) for every company or event.” (Informant BIN).

MAH stated that there was a minimum height that job recruiters usually used to look for SPGs. Another informant, BIN, mentioned how some recruiters also used white skin as a criteria for SPGs. Warhurst et al. (2000) explained this in their article on aesthetic labor for service workers in Glasgow. For them, aesthetic labor workers must have ‘embodied competences and attributes’ when entering the world of work, where those ‘embodied competences and attributes’ will be developed and modified according to the company’s needs into an ‘aesthetic skill’ to interact with customers.

BIN also stated that SPGs in several places are not permitted to wear religious attributes such as hijab. Apart from religious attributes, the use of braces is also not recommended for SPGs. The use of braces is believed to disrupt the beauty of the SPGs’ appearances, even though the function of those braces is to maximize the workers’ appearances later. This was also experienced by another informant who stated that some job recruiters prefer SPG candidates who do not wear hijab. In fact, job recruiters sometimes do not even hesitate to ask SPG candidates to take off their hijab if they want to work as an SPG.

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"There are also some companies that do not want to hire SPGs who wear hijab, so if the product is not Islamic products, they usually prefer the ones that do not wear hijab. When you wear hijab, it is recommended to just take it off." (Informant ARE).

This can be linked to the findings of research conducted by Ghozali & 'Azmi (2019) and Jaya et al. (2022) where the SPGs of Wardah, a cosmetic brand with Islamic branding, wear hijab and natural make-up. On Islamic brands, such as Wardah, it is still very possible for the SPG candidates who wear hijab to be an SPG because the job recruiters must be looking for women with hijab too. However, for those who wear hijab and apply as SPGs in companies that sell non-Islamic products, it will be difficult for them to be accepted as SPGs or they will even be asked to remove their hijab when they are working. Warhurst & Nickson (2020) explained that the appearance of aesthetic labor workers must be adjusted to the products they sell. Attractive body appearance that meets the needs of job recruiters can be said as 'embodied competences and attributes' for aesthetic labor job applicants. The 'embodied competences and attributes' later need to be maintained and developed continuously to obtain maximum results (Luoh & Tsaur 2023). This research found that the aesthetics of SPGs' body appearances can be maintained by wearing facial make-up, clothing and accessories, going on a diet, and many more (Chen 2023, Crowley 2023).

During working hours, SPGs are found to be monitored by their superiors at work and they will receive warnings if they do not follow the regulations. When SPGs do not look attractive and do not display positive emotions, for example looking fat, wearing poor clothing and cosmetics, not being smiley and informative to customers, they will get warnings and even punishment from their superiors. This is certainly not easy to do, considering that they have to always be in 'On' mode from the beginning to the end of working hours.

"I was told that I did not wear enough make-up, it was not bold enough. I just wore my mascara and contact lenses before. After that, I wear my make-up more boldly, especially when I offer beauty products. The make-up has to be bold and 'On'." (Informant TIN).

TIN admitted that she had received a warning from her superior because her make-up looked just normal and basic, whereas as an SPG she should have worn her make-up more boldly. Wearing bold make-up is important, especially if the SPGs sell cosmetic products. As mentioned before, SPGs must be able to represent the products they offer to convince customers (Jaya et al. 2022). When SPGs succeed in looking attractive and representing their products well, customers will feel positive emotions, have an idea of the products the SPGs offer, and become interested in buying the products (Maulana & Sukresna 2022).

"I have to wear high heels and there are no seats for me. So from the start of work until I finish my shift, I have to stand wearing high heels. Actually it hurts my feet and it is so tiring for my legs too. It is even more tiring when customers reject me in impolite ways, sometimes they are even angry and scream at me. But yeah, we can only smile even though bad things happen." (Informant KIK).

As Warhurst & Nickson (2020) stated, superiors always give instructions about how the workers should present themselves, what to do while working, and even what to say to customers. KIK as an SPG experienced something similar where she had to stand in high heels from the beginning to the end of her working hours, which caused her feet to get scratched. KIK also has to approach customers who pass by her booth and promote the products in a good manner, just like what her superiors asked her to do, while in pain.

It has been mentioned several times before that positive emotional display is also an important key in aesthetic labor (Warhurst & Nickson 2009, Pospisil 2020, Threadgold et al. 2021, Crowley 2023). Therefore, not only do they need to maintain and develop their body appearance, SPGs also need to be able to manage their emotions (Warhurst & Nickson 2009, Crowley 2023). In any situation and condition, they must be able to display positive emotions, even when they are in a condition where they feel afraid and are threatened because of sexual harassment from the customers.

“In facing it (verbal harassment) I try to stay calm. I have to remind myself that I am still at work, so I usually respond to the customers ‘If you want to talk about this, please do it outside of my working hours’. I have to be consistent with my job, so I always refuse them politely.” (Informant NON).

NON stated that she always rejects her customers in a polite manner when the customer starts to verbally harass her. From her experience, it can be understood how SPGs must be able to manage their emotions and suppress their feelings to always look fine from the outside. They have to remain calm and polite when experiencing undesirable events.

“For example, if she looks good but cannot explain the products she offers, it is useless. According to my experience, many of my friends are just ordinary beauties, but they can interact. They are good at attracting customers and convince them that their products are good and worth it.” (Informant NIP).

To end it, what was said by NIP make it clearer that SPGs’ skills to maintain body appearance and emotional display then are equally vital for SPGs. If SPGs only have one of those two things, it is certain that their job as an SPG will not last long. SPGs will not be able to convince customers to purchase the products they offer only by their attractive body appearances without the ability to manage their emotions when interacting with customers. On the other hand, SPGs will also not be able to attract customers’ attention only with positive emotions displayed without an attractive body appearance (Pospisil 2020).

Body and emotional maintenance carried out by SPG

Aesthetic body appearance and emotional display conducted by SPGs certainly requires body and emotional maintenance. Body maintenance carried out by SPGs is an activity where they maintain their bodies so that their appearances can meet the beauty standards or company’s wishes. Crowley (2023) found that SPGs often do diet, exercise, and even go to the salon to maintain their body appearances. This research found similar things where SPGs do diet, use skincare products, and even come up with the thoughts of changing their natural appearances.

“I have to control my body weight and face. I cannot have acne on my face, especially when I have to offer beauty products. We have to be smart about taking care of ourselves, especially since SPGs are really seen physically. It is different from people who work at the office because they work with their brains, meanwhile we work with our physical appearance to talk to customers and promote our products, so our appearances always come first.” (Informant NON).

“In my opinion, we have to take care of our bodies...staying at home makes us get fat. Later when we have to work again and wear our uniforms, the uniforms become so small because we gain weight. That is why we have to be slim. We eat healthy foods, do diet, and even exercise.” (Informant MAH).

MAH explained the reason why she needed to go on a diet was because of her uniforms. If she gains weight and her body cannot fit the uniforms, of course she will receive warnings from her superiors. MAH also does exercise in her spare time to keep her body slim. Apart from going on a diet and doing exercise, other informants admitted that they take care of their skin by using skincare products and reducing the frequency of leaving the house when it is so sunny outside.

“I do not think I have any problem with body weight. For now I am trying to whiten my skin. I just want to have white skin now because my workmates have it. So yes, I do skin care, make sure that the foods I consume are all healthy, and I rarely leave the house now if it is so sunny outside.” (Informant TIN).

“I used to not be able to diligently use skincare products, but now I routinely use hand body, face cream, and body scrub...I wanted to get my eyebrows embroidered because my workmates were like that. I was afraid to be left out and not looking attractive anymore because if that happened, someone else could easily replace me.” (Informant SEL).

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TIN stated that she wanted to whiten her skin because many of her workmates have white skin. She does various skin treatments and even reducing the frequency of leaving the house when it is sunny outside. Similar to TIN, SEL said that she had thought about getting eyebrow embroidery because her workmates did eyebrow embroidery to maximize their aesthetic body appearances. For SEL, trying to keep up with her workmates is important so that she will not be left behind or even lose her job as an SPG. The attractive appearance of workmates seems to create a new standards of beauty at the workplace which has the potential to threaten another SPG's position.

As has been mentioned many times, the display of positive emotions is also an important key to aesthetic labor. Therefore, SPGs must be able to manage their emotions well. In any situation and condition, SPGs are expected to continue to display positive emotions or energy towards customers to maintain the interactions they build. Some informants admitted that they had experienced sexual harassment at work and they were unable to respond excessively because they had to continue displaying positive emotions to customers.

"I once cried (after experiencing sexual harassment). At that time, I was selling cigarette products then someone grabbed my ass and hand. When I came home, I cried...It is fine to refuse the customers when they do things like that, but the only way to refuse them is to do it politely and gently." (Informant BIN).

"Cigarette products SPGs have their own strategy or way to sell their products by being flirty to customers and some customers usually take advantage of it by grabbing the SPGs or something. We as an SPG cannot get angry or scream to customers. We do not have the power. Screaming to customers is absolutely not allowed. We have to remain friendly, always put a smile on our faces, even if inside we are angry or whatever it is, that is not allowed." (Informant ARE).

From BIN and ARE, it was discovered that they were actually allowed to refuse the customers when they do unwanted things to SPGs, but in making this refusal they had to still display positive emotions by being friendly and all smiley, even though they are not in a good mood and condition. If we look at Hochschild's (1983) explanation of emotional labor, it was stated that emotional labor workers must suppress their feelings and put aside various emotional turmoil they feel in order to provide maximum performance and service for customers. Aesthetic labor workers feel something similar to what Hochschild said regarding emotional labor, considering that aesthetic labor also includes the management and display of workers' emotions.

"Definitely the beautiful one is being chosen (as an SPG). So, if you have been accepted for this job (SPG), you cannot just enjoy it and have fun. If your appearance or work performance goes down, you can be replaced by someone else who is younger and looks more attractive. If it was not like that, I would not take care of my skin this serious." (Informant SEL).

What was said by SEL is actually the point of this section. This study found an interesting finding similar to Elfving-Hwang (2021) where workers, here is SPGs, routinely maintain their bodies not only to display aesthetic body appearance, but also because of the emergence of fear that they feel. They are afraid that if they no longer maintain their bodies and leave it untreated, their position will be threatened. Since body appearance is important for SPGs, their position will be replaced by another SPG who looks better and more attractive. Therefore, maintaining the body and emotions must be carried out by aesthetic labor workers continuously. An SPG who has been accepted for work cannot neglect their body appearance and positive emotions that need to be displayed while working.

Burdens experienced by SPG

Every job can be guaranteed to have its own burdens that burden the workers. This is also felt by SPGs as aesthetic labor workers. From various findings that have been presented, it can be seen that SPGs carry a double burden, namely physical and emotional burdens. Various warnings or comments from superiors regarding body appearance or emotional display often become a burden for SPGs.

“Once my workmate asked me to eat because I was so skinny. I was told to eat a lot so that I would not look so skinny. I was also confused about how to gain weight and make my body looks proportional so it would be nicer to look at. It was really a burden for me.” (Informant NIP).

“There was an event that time and when the event was about to end, my boss said something like ‘Your work is good, but can you make your body lose weight? Make it skinnier’. That is such a warning and demand for me, he likes the way I work but he wants me to look skinnier.” (Informant NON).

Some informants admitted that comments and warnings from superiors regarding body appearance were such a big burden. The warnings from their superiors have the potential to threaten their positions at the workplaces. Therefore, maintaining body appearance is also important to secure a job (Elfving-Hwang 2021). In addition, the warnings that SPGs received do not only come from their superiors, but also from their workmates. Vonk (2021) found that comments about body appearances conveyed by workmates can be interpreted as a warning too because the way it is delivered tends to be less than subtle. This research found it different because the informants stated that their workmates tended to remind them or give them suggestions subtly, even helping them to find solutions.

“I am afraid that the products I am selling will not sell. I am afraid that I will misrepresent my products and will not be able to convince customers to buy it... What makes me stressed is if I cannot achieve the target because I have to keep pushing until I can achieve it. The problem here is if the products do not really make people interested, then it is so difficult to sell the products. That is really a mental burden for me.” (Informant NIP).

It was also found that the sales target SPGs have to achieve daily causes an extraordinary burden. This sales target counts as emotional burden for SPGs since it makes them feel constantly afraid for not achieving their targets and later will only receive low pay. Achieving sales targets is indeed hard, especially when the products offered are products with low demand.

Another physical and emotional burdens felt by SPGs is sexual harassment that occurs while working. It is common for SPGs to receive unpleasant treatment, such as sexual harassment, from customers because of their aesthetic body appearance and positive emotional displayed. Some SPGs consider that sexual harassment is just something normal in their jobs (Awalia 2018).

“Firstly they (naughty customers) will ask for my number, and since I am selling cigarette products now, there are so many of the customers who flirt me and make me feel uncomfortable. They usually say ‘Come on, I will buy the products, but let’s go karaoke later’, ‘I will buy your products but let me kiss you’. It is like they think that I am easy to be tricked.” (Informant BIN).

Furthermore, SPGs also get unpleasant stigma from society (Awalia 2018). Somehow it is common for them to be underestimated because many people see that their job only prioritizes body appearance, when in reality they also have to be skilled in maintaining their bodies and emotions, as well as finding strategies to promote their products. People tend to think that SPGs do not have any working ability. SPGs are only seen as puppets that companies use to promote company products and convince customers to purchase it.

“There are those (who judge me negatively) like ‘You are just an SPG, you must be like this or that’. Maybe they judge me because of my work uniforms. You know, SPG uniforms most of the time always look sexy and attractive, such as a short dress or skirt that is above the knees.” (Informant NON).

“For many people, SPGs are usually seen as something negative, often being underestimated and insulted. Sorry, some even say that SPGs are used as affairs, this, or that, everything about SPGs is just negative. It is just not all of us like that.” (Informant MAH).

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NON and MAH admitted that they received stigma from the surrounding community. Not only do they respond negatively to the appearance of the informants' bodies, they also call the informants as someone's affair. The stigma on SPGs in society causes them to often keep their job a secret. They stated that they only told their family and close friends that they work as an SPG. Therefore, by keeping it a secret, they will not get stigmatized by society.

From the findings presented above, this study found several important findings. Firstly, aesthetic labor practices begin at the job registration stage, which was proven by the existence of aesthetic criteria required by the company. In the early days of work, specifically when they were still applying for jobs, the informants in this study admitted that there were aesthetic criteria that were required by the company, for example tall body, proportional weight, clean face without acne, and white skin. The aesthetic criteria requested by the company are a collection of worker's 'embodied attributes or capacities' that will later be developed by the company (Warhurst et al. 2000). After they are accepted to work, the collection of 'embodied attributes or capacities' that they possess will undergo a process of development, modification, and adjustment to suit the beauty standards or company's wishes. The standards that companies have generally follow the beauty standards that exist in society, for example, beautiful woman is a woman who is tall, has long hair, and white skin. It should be noted that beauty standards is a product of contemporary capitalism and its existence will only harm women (Aqilah & Trihandayani 2024). Thus, when carrying out the process of developing, modifying, and adjusting body appearance to suit the company's wishes, SPGs are actually being disadvantaged as women.

The processes of developing, modifying, and adjusting body appearance carried out by SPGs were found to be carried out continuously as long as they are still working as SPGs. Several informants stated that they were required to have a thin body and white skin, which then encouraged them to maintain their bodies by undergoing diet and skin whitening programs. The aesthetics of workers' body appearance plays an important role because it is expected to be able to create a new style of service interaction between SPGs and consumers. In addition, Hatfield & Sprecher (1986) also argued that employee appearance is indeed vital when they have to interact directly with the public. This is because employee appearance is something that is easily noticed and assessed (tangible) by customers compared to their work abilities which are less visible (less tangible).

Besides body maintenance, the informants are also required to maintain their emotions. Previous studies have stated that emotional displays are also an important key in aesthetic labor practices (Warhurst & Nickson 2009, Pospisil 2020, Threadgold et al. 2021, Crowley 2023). Some informants stated that they were prohibited from showing excessive emotions that were detrimental, such as shouting or getting angry at customers. They are required to always display positive emotions to attract customers' attention, even when they are not in a good mood or in danger. They admitted that they were required to always smile, be informative, and display positive emotions. It should be understood that the main focus of aesthetic labor lies on sight and sound or visual and aural (Warhurst et al. 2000). A body appearance that has been maintained will be in vain if the emotions displayed by the SPGs are not pleasant for customers.

Secondly, it was found that the informants maintain their bodies and emotions optimally even though they felt uncomfortable and had to spend their own money doing it. This is apparently caused by the companies who keep monitoring them. What the informants experienced as SPGs here can be explained using Foucault's concept of docile body. Foucault (1979) explained docile body as a body that has been subjected, transformed, modified, trained according to the wishes and policies of the institution. He used the example of soldiers' body appearances and the criteria used in army recruitment. Docile body can be created through the process of control and surveillance. In the case of the informants as SPGs, it can be seen that they maintain their bodies and emotions because it is regulated by the company. Besides, they are also monitored by their superiors at their workplaces and if they do not follow the regulations they will be punished. By doing this continuously, SPGs then normalize the body and emotional maintenance required by the company. They have no power, even over their own bodies, within the institution compared to their superiors at the workplaces.

As mentioned before, this study found that the informants are required to adjust their body appearances according to the beauty standards or company's wishes. While doing that, they are actually being domesticated to be a docile body. They are forced by the company, as the power holder in their workplaces, to obey the company regulations (act of control). In addition, they are also being monitored by their superiors (act of surveillance). The informants who do not follow the company regulations then will receive punishment. Several informants admitted to receive warning letters when their body appearances began to not match the beauty standards or company's wishes. For Foucault, beauty standards are simply a game of capitalism caused by various discourses related to the body, such as discourses on how to define an ideal body and a beautiful appearance (Suyanto et al. 2023). The process of being a docile body experienced by the informants are intended to make them look like the ideal image of women, which is the company strategy, to create a 'style' of service interaction in order to drive company profits. This is in accordance with Foucault's opinion that making bodies docile is a vital thing that can encourage individuals to be more manageable and productive.

Lastly, this study found that SPGs often receive sexual harassment from their customers. This tends to happen possibly because they are required to appear attractive and even seductive to men customers, especially those who offer products that men generally like, such as cigarettes and cars. The lack of attention and protection for SPGs as aesthetic labor workers and the frequent sexual violence that occurs to them causes SPGs to normalize the sexual harassment they get while working (Awalia 2018). Furthermore, the informants admitted that they often received stigma from society because their job was considered easy for only relying on the aesthetics of their body appearance. As a result, many people underestimate their job, even though they actually bear a double burden by being an aesthetic labor worker. From the obligation to continuously maintain body appearance, show positive emotions in any situation, to experience sexual harassment, this study found that all of these have an impact on the feelings or emotions of SPGs.

Conclusion

From the interviews conducted with all informants, this research found several findings, namely the practices of aesthetic labor experienced by SPGs, the docile bodies of SPGs created by companies, and the burdens that SPGs have as aesthetic labor workers. The practices of aesthetic labor carried out by SPGs can be seen in the body and emotional maintenance they do daily and how they perform themselves when they work. SPGs' body appearances and positive emotions need to be maintained in order to maximize their body appearances and positive emotional displays. While SPGs practicing aesthetic labor, they are actually turning themselves into docile bodies. With the control and surveillance from their superiors, they are transformed into docile bodies under the company's power. Lastly, SPGs often experience sexual harassment in performing aesthetic labor, especially those who are required to look seductive to men customers in selling products that are liked by men, and still get unpleasant stigma from society.

It can be concluded that as aesthetic labor workers, SPGs carry a double burden, namely physical and emotional burden. Both massively impact the SPG's feelings, as they must always maintain their body appearance, show positive emotions in any situation, and experience sexual harassment and being stigmatised by society. Moreover, while performing aesthetic labor, SPGs actually experience the practices of being docile bodies. This is because they have to follow company's regulations regarding their body and emotional display, being monitored by the superiors, and get punishment if they do not obey the regulations. However, there are still many who underestimate SPGs and ignore the difficulty they face as aesthetic labor workers. Based on this study, it is recommended for companies to be more open and are able to hold routine evaluation with their SPGs. Through this, it is hoped that a negotiation process will occur between the companies' superiors and SPGs. SPGs can also make a community in their workplaces to get together and be more courageous in speaking up or doing negotiation with their superiors when it is needed.

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