
The Patriarchal Culture in Michelle Kadarusman's *Girl of the Southern Sea*: A Feminism Study

Ainun Nur Fitriani ^{*1}, Nurhayati Sulasih²

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto. Indonesia

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto. Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Ainun Nur Fitriani E-mail: ¹fitriani.nurainun@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

*This study aims to reveal the kinds of discrimination due to the patriarchal culture experienced by the protagonist in the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea* by Michelle Kadarusman. To expose the kinds of discrimination due to the patriarchal culture experienced by the protagonist, this study uses a qualitative method that refers to a descriptive approach to collect primary and secondary data as material for problem-solving and is what it is. This study uses feminist literary criticism theory as a data analysis tool. This research is essential to study because the patriarchal culture inherent in society is the cause of women experiencing discrimination. Men and women play patriarchal culture, so it is oftentimes for women to experience discrimination from men and fellow women. The results showed that Nia, the protagonist in the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea*, experienced several situations where she was marginalized, subordinated, and stereotyped by men and other women. If literature (novel) is considered a reflection of society, the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea* critically represents the idea.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Michelle Kadarusman is an Indonesian-Australian female author. When she was twelve years old, Kadarusman traveled from Jakarta to Bandung with her family. She realized that there was life in the slums lined up along the railroad tracks in every town and village passed through on their journey.

The depiction of the journey haunted her for years, so Kadarusman was inspired to pour out her curiosity and experience through a novel entitled *Girl of the Southern Sea* (shortened later to GSS). This novel tells the life journey of a poor girl who lives in a slum area in Jakarta and struggles for the future she deserves. Kadarusman takes the story to Jakarta, one of Indonesia's big cities in Jakarta. Social inequality is evident to see. Girls worldwide also experience the problem of poverty experienced by Nia because it is a global problem, even in developing countries. According to Aprilianda and Krisnani, women in Indonesia still often get an unfair treatment by society, especially by men (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021). Through this novel, Kadarusman conveys a phenomenon of life in this country that deserves serious attention, namely the injustice of Indonesian women who are still shackled by patriarchal culture.

GSS tells the story of the girl's journey, named Nia, who has to drop out of school and become the family's breadwinner. She was forced to drop out of school because her parents did not have enough money to send her further. She helped her father sell fritters at the train station to continue her education through high school and achieve her dream of becoming a famous writer. Every effort has been made to sustain the continuity of her education and family life, but to no avail, because every bit of money Nia earns is always spent by her father on buying arak at Jango's Hut. Even so, Nia did not give up and continued to persevere in selling her fritters because it was her daily source of livelihood. The struggle for life that she undertook was nothing but to find a better position and role in social life in society.

People who have the perception that men's power is above women and people who still believe that men in various fields hold all control, so this creates injustice in access and opportunities for women to participate and advance in these spheres. As stated by Permana and Maulana, women are considered weak and stupid creatures. Often, women are shunned from activities that prioritize skills, intelligence, and knowledge because they have been domesticated for activities at home, such as cooking, washing, and caring for children. This point of view arises because of the habit of the patriarchal system in looking at men and women, so there is difficulty in distinguishing the nature of women from cultural constructions (female) (Permana & Maulana, 2020).

The Indonesian nation is a nation that adheres to a patriarchal culture. In this culture, all power is concentrated in the hands of men, and men have complete authority over all decisions. According to Hakim and Arsi, the patriarchal culture that developed in society has made men take control of women's lives. Male domination results in women not being able to voice their choices freely (Hakim & Arsi, 2019). Rahayu explained that patriarchal culture has existed since the days of the ancestors of the Indo-nesian people, and this culture has been ingrained in the lives of Indonesian people until now. Patriar-chal culture has the principle that every man is more powerful in all things than women. In this culture, women must obey men. Rahayu added that this patriarchal culture resulted in a gap be-tween men and women because men feel superior to women. As a result of this gap, women find it challenging to develop themselves. The patriarchal culture also prevents women from having the free-dom to make decisions both in the family and in the public sphere. This culture creates gender differences between men and women (Rahayu, 2019).

Derana also argues that in Indonesian culture still has an imbalance of position between women and men. This seems to have taken root and become a habit. Gender-related discussions about women cannot be separated from the social construction that regulates and places women in a different position than men (Derana, 2016). With the existence of social structure, it appears that men and women must obey an obligation and provision. So that it will create limitations for the role of women in a patriarchal culture that will subject them to discriminatory treatment. Some previous studies also studied about patriarchal culture in literature to reassure injustice experienced by women through discrimination depiction. Some studies mention that patriarchal domination in society is the cause of occurrence injustice experienced by women. Gender injustice is an act that was born because

of the preservation of patriarchal culture, so that men are more powerful than women, both in society and in the household, which results in women experiencing discrimination (Yunitha & Wartningsih, 2013). Making women marginalized (Wiyatmi, 2019), subordinated (Nirwana, 2018), and stereotyped (Agustina, 2021). This means women experience discrimination in society. As Shastri said, women are unable to understand their own rights and freedom (Shastri, 2014). Poverty is also a factor in women experiencing discrimination and social exclusion so that women's lives are controlled by society and culture (Sumanjeet, 2016). Regarding the research problem, all the references are beneficial to study the power of patriarchy represented in the novel. Hence, the feminist movement appears to raise women's degrees to be equal to men and better in various aspects.

The novel not only tells about the life struggle of the main character in achieving her dream but also relates to the domination of patriarchal that occurred and was experienced by the main character as a woman in the novel. The unfair treatment of the people around her makes the main character experience marginalization, subordination, and stereotypes.

Feminist literary criticism is one component of literary science that emphasizes literary research from a feminist perspective. Feminist literary criticism does not mean female critic, criticism of female, or criticism of female authors. The simple meaning that can be used is that critics (readers) view literature with a particular awareness that there are genders that have a lot to do with culture, literature, and life. It is the gender that makes the difference between all of them, which also makes a difference to the author, reader, work, and the universe he refers to (Sugihastuti, in Istanti, 2012). The goals of feminist literary criticism, according to Kolodny, are: 1) with feminist literary criticism, we can reinterpret and reassess all literary works produced in the past century; and 2) help us understand, interpret, and assess stories created by women writers (Kolodny in Herianti, 2019). In this regard, this study seeks to reveal the problems faced by women, especially the main character in the GSS. This study will look at kinds of patriarchal culture experienced by women are expressed by Kadarusman in the GSS.

2. Method

The research applies a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the problem. Palmer and Bolderston argue that qualitative methods use descriptions and categories (words) to study human experiences and realities from the subject's perspective (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). In other words, the research aims to understand something specifically with non-numerical present data in the form of explanation to its report. Accordingly, the study uses GGS as a primary source of data. It is a novel written by Michelle Kadarusman and published in 2019. This data source provides the preliminary data, particularly narrations and dialogues relating to the problem statement. The secondary data of the study are all the related information taken from articles, internet webs, journals, and other essential sources to support the analysis. There are several steps for the technique of collecting the data: 1) doing the in-depth reading to comprehend the story; 2) Identifying the primary data related to the problem; and 3) verifying the data necessary for the analysis. The data analysis is done analytically and inductively using the theory of feminism as a grand theory.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Kinds of Discrimination Due to Patriarchal Culture Seen in GSS

3.1.1 Women Marginalization

Permana and Maulana explained that marginalization is a process in which women are marginalized. There are restrictions that make it difficult for women to act, express, and actualize themselves (Permana & Maulana in Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021). In line with the opinion of Permana and Maulana, Fakihi also explained that the process of marginalization that resulted in poverty was, in fact, a lot that happened in society and the state that afflicted men and women, caused by several events, such as evictions, natural disasters, or exploitation processes (Fakihi in Badriyah, 2021). As shown in the following quote:

"Do you think you are better than us?"

It is martabak seller. He stands in front of the cart, blocking my path as I try to leave the market. "I heard that your customers asked for their money back. You're a cheat. First, you say you are magic. Then you charge double for this so-called good-luck magic. Now you think you can just leave without paying your debts?"

"I-I'm sorry," I say. "It was wrong. I didn't mean to make trouble. I-"

"You are a thief and liar," he says. He moves closer to me and points his finger between my eyes. "Thief!" he says louder. Now he is shouting "THIEF!" (Kadariusman, 2019, p.152-153).

From the illustration above, what happened to Nia's character shows jealousy from the martabak seller, who incidentally is a man, towards women. According to him, Nia's way of earning money is a lie. In this case, he feels that Nia should be punished for what she has done, and the martabak seller thinks that he has the power to control the mob to bring Nia down. Because, basically, men do not want to be defeated.

Fakihi explained that not every form of marginalization is caused by gender inequality, but what is questioned in the gender analysis is marginalization caused by gender differences (Fakihi in Arbain, Azizah, & Sari, 2015). Thus, the description above is gender discrimination because the dominance of the patriarchal culture adopted by martabak seller causes women to be marginalized, as experienced by Nia when the cart that Nia uses to earn a living has to be simply destroyed by the mob at the provocation of the martabak seller who is jealous of Nia.

Even though Nia has her own reasons why she has to charge double for her fritters, one of which is because of Rudi, her young brother. It started when she had just arrived and saw many customers already in long queues to buy Nia's fritters. She looked confused by what was happening in front of him, but Oskar explained that everyone was waiting for her. Everyone wants her magic. There is a control from the man (Oskar) over the woman (Nia) by telling her to charge double for her fritters. Thus, Nia followed Oskar's advice to charge double for her fries. It was not easy for Nia to make this decision, but Nia tried to convince herself that what she was doing was not entirely wrong for the reasons illustrated below:

Charging double for the fritters is not cheating. I keep telling myself. I have to do this for Rudi. I have to take care of us. (Kadariusman, 2019, p.125)

Nia's main reason for survival is Rudi. Because all responsibilities are Nia's duties, and what she does is only to meet their daily needs. However, this did not last long. Nia realized that what she did was wrong by charging double for her fritters and had to end it immediately. Everything that happened to her during the accident was not a magic but just luck.

1.1.2 Women Subordination

Nia's character experiences gender injustice in the form of subordination, which is a belief in which women's positions and functions are lower and considered weaker than men's (Syafe'i, 2015). Similar to Fakihi, he argues that subordination occurs in one gender, generally in women. Many policies or decisions are made without involving women because women are considered unimportant (Fakihi in Arbain, Azizah, & Sari, 2015).

*Three things a girl from the slum are told never to do.
Never go out after dark.
Never walk alone.
Never disobey your father. (Kadariusman, 2019, p.11).*

As Nia's character, if she wants to do something, she must first get permission from her father. Nia has no freedom in terms of expression and decides everything before discussing it with her father. This shows clearly how the position of women is subordinated in a patriarchal culture. Women are given the opportunity to have desires and will but do not have the power to express opinions or make decisions based on their wishes. According to Ashworth, the family is often seen as a place for the institutionalization of "female inferiority" and "male superiority" because, traditionally, men are considered worthy of being the head of the family. The traditional family structure creates a different distribution of rights, obligations, time, and values for each family member, where the head of the family (usually a male) occupies the top position (Ashworth in Prantiasih, 2016). As shown in the following quote:

"Your father said he needs to go back to his family village in Lembang to see about his land," she says. "He said to tell you to take care of Rudi and the cart, and that he will be back soon." (Kadariusman, 2019, p.131).

Women are under the power and control of men, so women are treated as "unimportant." Even when a man (Nia's father) decides to make a decision, he doesn't need to ask for an opinion from the woman (Nia). With this, men are more dominant in their role as superiors, feeling they have the authority to make decisions, benefit from decisions taken, and control existing production sources, while women, as subordinates, must accept existing decisions. As shown in the following quote:

Later, once Rudi is asleep and the dinner dishes are washed and put away, I check the old kettle where the money is kept. I unfold the cloth and count the bills. All of yesterday's earnings are gone.

....

Exhausted, I lie on the mattress next to Rudi and think of ways that I can stop bapak from buying arak. (Kadariusman, 2019, p.79).

In the quote above, it describes the behavior of Bapak who spends the money Nia's work earns on buying arak without thinking about his children. As a father who is irresponsible and instead abuses his power to do anything to Nia, Apart from Nia, his father did the same thing to "the girl" as in the quote that appears below:

"We are hungry. He promised he would marry me and that he would take care of us. But all he does is drink arak and spend the money I earn mending clothes. We have barely enough to buy rice." (Kadariusman, 2019:189).

This, when viewed from a gender perspective, is an act of subordination carried out by men towards women. First, regarding the licensing rights that men (Nia's father) have over women (Nia), the second relates to the use of production resources that occur to men (Nia's father) against women ("the girl"), which is a symbol of patriarchal culture. This is an act of the control system carried out by men to show that their position is not equal so that women do not have the same rights, freedoms, and justice as men, and women must accept these decisions.

In addition, patriarchal culture does not only control the mindsets of men but also women. So, it is not uncommon for women to be looked down upon by those around them and receive unfair treatment from fellow women. This can be seen from the following quote:

Ibu Wangi studies me with eagle eyes. She stares me up and down, no doubt assessing if I am still a "good girl." She's let it be known that she can tell at a mere glance as soon as a young girl falls from grace. "People talk," she's said. "Not me, you understand. But other people around here are terrible gossips." (Kadariusman, 2019, p.29).

Born into a poor family, lacking education, and living in a slum area with an environment that is not conducive to development for a child at Nia's age, she is often looked down upon by those around her. The poverty that she and her family experience will not make Nia drop her dignity and make her have no morals as a woman. She will do everything to survive, but not in a "dirty" way. Putri revealed that moral values are a central point where virginity is a valuable form of sacredness as a symbol of a woman's self-esteem, especially for those who are not married. Putri also added that not being a virgin for unmarried women will get them labeled as "bad women" by the patriarchal construction society. On the other hand, women who still maintain their virginity until they get married and are offered only to men who are lawfully for them will be labeled as "good women." (Putri, 2019). This makes women subordinated to stereotypes based on "bad girls" and "good girls".

Another form of subordination experienced by Nia comes from Big Sula, who was her school friend when she was in middle school. Due to low economic factors, Nia will not be able to become a famous writer as she had hoped. She has to drop out of school. Many know that Nia's father is a drunkard. That's why Nia is often looked down on by people around her. This is evidenced by the following quote:

"High school is wonderful, Nia," she rasps in my ear. "We have beautiful uniforms and thick textbooks." She grins. "And the teachers are so intelligent! They are teaching us many subjects. Subject that will make us smart just like them." Big sula makes a clucking sound as she towers over me. "Too bad your bapak drinks away you high-school fees. Just as well you know how to cook fritters. I guess you will never be a writer like you always bragged about."

Not only from the people around, Nia also gets unfair treatment and is looked down upon by Oskar's mother. As shown in the following quote:

"I told you this was a bad idea," she says to Oskar. "Why would we get mixed up with their kind? They do not even know the value of a promise." Oskar bows his head like a chastised child.

"Good reddance to garbage." She says, swatting the air. "How dare you come here and insult my son? Go! Be gone with you."

"We will go once you return our money and my mother's gold comb," I say.

"The insolence! To think we offered a girl like you a place in our home, and now you dare to throw it back in our face. We owe you nothing."

"A girl like me?" I ask her. (Kadariusman, 2019, p.199).

From the illustration above, Oskar's mother has the view that poor girls like Nia are weak, not have choice and powerless girls so that they get unpleasant treatment and discrimination from Oskar's mother. This shows that the position of women is subordinated in a society that adheres to a patriarchal culture so that not only men demean women, but fellow women can also demean each other.

3.1.3 Women Stereotypes

In Indonesia, precisely in the Madurese community, one of which is in the village of Sepulu, most of the girls are ordered to marry immediately by their parents on the grounds of obeying and following the teachings of customs that have existed since the time of their ancestors and in accordance with religious advice (Miswoni, 2016). This causes many girls in the village to be forced to drop out of school, so they do not have the opportunity to achieve their goals and lose their right to freedom to choose and determine their own lives.

According to Hardianti and Nurwati, the tradition of early marriage occurs in girls because of a strong stereotype in society that thinks that if girls do not continue their education to a higher level, the possibility of early marriage is greater. There is an assumption in society that a woman does not need to go to high school because, in the end, she will become a mother who takes care of the household and her needs are borne by her husband (Hardianti and Nurwati, 2020). Many factors that affect early marriage occur in girls, for example, education and low economic factors.

Due to low education and economic factors, this is also experienced by Nia, a girl who is only fourteen years old in the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea*, who is the victim of an arranged marriage by her own father. This matchmaking occurs because of stereotypes that have long existed in society. According to Fakihi, in general, stereotypes are labeling or marking of a certain group. Unfortunately, stereotypes are always detrimental and cause injustice. One type of stereotype that comes from a gender perspective is Fakihi in Badriyah, (2021). This can be seen in the following quote:

"Do you know what you have done? What has been happening here? You lied to Rudi. You left me to take care of everything." My hands are balled into fists. "And you promised me in marriage to Oskar."

Bapak nods. "Yes, I did. It is a good opportunity for you."

"A good opportunity for you, you mean. How could you do that without asking me? How could you give me away without even thinking about what I want?" ... "Haven't I always been a good daughter? Haven't I always taken care of Rudi and done everything that Mama would have done?"

"He is a kind man, a good man. He has prospects. He can give you a better life. I was only thinking about your future."

"I don't want a life with Oskar. I want my own life. I want to go to school. You know this. I have dreams. I want to become a writer one day."

"We all want things, Nia," ... "But it's not possible. We have no money. Oskar's offer makes good sense. He will take care of you-and Rudi as well. You will never be hungry and you will be protected." (Kadariusman, 2019, p.192-193).

From the quote above, it shows that there is gender discrimination in the form of stereotypes because it explains the labeling or marking of men (Nia's father) against women (Nia) by saying that women who marry men are good, rich, etc., will make her lives happy, will not be looked down upon by others, will not need to work because there is already a man to depend on, and her lives will be guaranteed and they will get protection and a sense of security from a man. On the other hand, this proves that there is a stereotype that women are weak creatures and cannot live independently, so they need supervision and protection from men on whom they depend for their lives.

Stereotypes generally occur in societies that adhere to a patriarchal culture. Stereotypes that occur are usually negative, such as women who are weak, sensitive, often cry and so on (Yusalia in Apriliandra and Krisnani, 2021). Patriarchal culture is the cause of gender inequality in women, and it has happened since the colonial period. Convention Watch argues that when Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch and Japanese, women were only used as sex slaves by foreign soldiers who were serving in Indonesia. And there are regulations that prohibit women from receiving education unless they come from aristocratic or aristocratic circles (Convention Watch in Sakina, 2017). The "disease" of gender inequality does not only affect the mindset of men due to patriarchal culture but also women. This is reflected in the words of Ibu Merah, Nia's teacher, to Nia, her student:

According to Ibu Merah, a girl like me did not need so much information and knowledge. Ibu Merah thinks that the girl in the slums will be married off young like our mothers, soon carrying our own babies around. She thinks it's a waste of time for us to be educated. While I was in school, if I asked to borrow a book, she would say that she did not want the library books to get dirty. (Kadariusman, 2019, p.98).

Ibu Merah's sentence clearly illustrates that there is no "girl support girl." The discrimination carried out by Ibu Merah against Nia is the result of a patriarchal cultural mindset that has been formed in society. Coming from a poor family living in a slum area, Nia had to drop out of school because of economic factors, so she could not get a higher education. Judging from the gender discrimination in the form of stereotyping that Ibu Merah did, it led her to think that girls who live in slums should marry young, do not need to go to high school because it would be a waste of time, and women who have such a background in life are very rare. success. The data above is evidence that women do not only experience unfair treatment from men, but also from women.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that in this novel, the main character experiences injustice due to patriarchal culture, which is still inherent in society, so that patriarchal culture is not only played by men, but also played by women. This makes Nia as the main character experience a form of discrimination from men and fellow women. The forms of injustice found in the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea* against the main character are women's marginalization, women's subordination, and women's stereotypes. If literature (novels) is considered a reflection of society, then the novel *Girl of the Southern Sea* has reflected that. Hence, the novel is essential to be studied further and the researcher hopes that this study inspire other researchers to analyze more deeply about *Girl of the Southern Sea* from another point of view, such as psychoanalysis theory. This theory may be applied to analyze Nia's relationship with her father or her psychological conditions for encountering circumstances in her life. The researcher also hopes that the research can give encouragement to every English literature student, and give them more interest in analyzing novel.

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