

Empowering Women Amidst Gender Inequality and Marital Prejudice in “Yuni”

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INTRODUCTION

1. Why empowering women, gender inequality, and marital prejudice?

Gender inequality and marital prejudice have persisted as significant challenges for women throughout history, shaping societal norms and perpetuating unjust expectations

2. Why representation in film?

Fims are a powerful tool through which attitudes of individuals in societies can be altered

3. Why 'Yuni' ?

The film "Yuni" provide realistic examples of women's struggles against gender inequality and marital prejudices in Indonesia.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender inequality and marital prejudice in Indonesia with no doubt is a real issue, Women who have not been married by a certain age, women who have no children; and women who cannot cook; are all often perceived as incomplete, causing these women to be frequent targets of criticism, humiliation, and belittling comments (Yuarsi, Dzuhayatin, & Wattie, 2002, p. xiv)

Indonesian society gives very high priority to marrying and having children, and an unmarried woman is seen as “incomplete.” (Retnaningsin Umi, 2013)

With the vigorous promotion of the film industry, the image of women constructed by inequality in movies undoubtedly reflects the status of female roles in real society to a certain extent (Smith, S.L,et.al, 2023).

METHOD

Object

Primary: Yuni (2021)

Secondary: Journals, Articles, Paper

Method & Theories

The research approach of this study relied on the movie analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods. This included watching the movie and taking note of several scenes and dialogues, connecting its implicit and explicit meaning with several feminist film theories, and finally making interpretations or drawing conclusions about its meanings. In particular, the study enhances existing analysis in the fields of film, women's cinema, and messages of both empowered and oppressed female lead in movies, here are some examples of the concept utilized in analyzing this research:

- How movies reflect reality (Mayne, 1990, Mulvey, 1975)
- 'Keyhole' theory by Judith Mayne
- Elements of refutation of male gaze, as discussed by Teresa de Lauretis—such as prioritizing women's subjectivity, agency, and experiences (Lauretis, 1996).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Gender Inequality and Marital Prejudice representation in 'Yuni' and how it reflects the reality

- "Yuni" follows a seemingly ordinary teenage girl in Banten who attends school, hangs out with friends, and enjoys live music. However, as the story unfolds, it reveals that Yuni lives in a patriarchal society, where men hold power over women (Israpil, 2017). Her school prohibits music, citing Islamic principles, and plans virginity tests for female students.
- Yuni dreams of earning a scholarship but faces societal pressure to marry young. She rejects proposals from a construction worker and an older, married man offering a \$3,500 dowry. Her grandmother warns her that refusing two proposals will label her as a spinster, a myth deeply rooted in local wisdom and oral tradition in Indonesia (Raharjo, R.P, et al., 2021). This conservative mindset also forces girls to marry young to avoid premarital sex, often resulting in abusive relationships and limited opportunities, as seen with Yuni's divorced friend and the beautician Suci.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research by Ita Muflihah in Banten:

- Underage marriage persists in Serang.
- Factors include economic conditions, education, and arranged marriages.
- Efforts by the Department of Women's Empowerment include:
 - Socialization and education on the impact of underage marriage.
 - Activities in schools and communities.
 - Public awareness of the consequences of underage marriage remains low.
- Relevant legislation: Marriage Law No. 16 of 2019 (amending Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974) (Muflihah, 2022).

Research by Ayu Budiprayowo et al. (2023):

- Women often viewed as secondary, unable to make their own decisions.
- Higher education for women often seen as unattainable.
- Traditional roles emphasized: kitchen, well, and bed (Budiprayowo et al., 2023).

Mayne's Theory:

The private sphere has traditionally and historically been considered women's place (Mayne, 1990).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Breaking the Gender Stereotype

Yuni's Actions:

- Challenges patriarchal culture and myths.
- Refuses virginity tests.
- Supports friends in rejecting marriage proposals.

Judith Mayne's Keyhole Metaphor (Mayne, 1996):

- Analyzes how women's perspectives and experiences are controlled in cinematic narratives.
- Keyhole symbolizes a limited, voyeuristic perspective.
- Women's voices and agency often marginalized or obscured.

Laura Mulvey's Voyeuristic Spectator (1975):

- Concept introduced in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."
- Audience, typically male, derives pleasure from looking at female characters.
- Female characters presented as passive objects, lacking agency.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

“Yuni” and the Refutation of Male Gaze:

- Film does not follow the usual voyeuristic spectator formula.
- Adopts a "female gaze," challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes (Loftis, Alexis: 2023).
- Scene where Yuni pleasures herself:
- Camera prioritizes Yuni's subjectivity and agency.
- Viewers, especially women, empathize with her experience.
- Non-exploitative and non-judgmental portrayal.

Impact of Yuni's Portrayal:

- Challenges traditional gender roles and power dynamics in cinema.
- Affirms the importance of female desire and agency.
- Offers a glimpse into Yuni's inner world and emotional landscape.
- Invites audiences to empathize with Yuni, relate to her struggles, and understand her desires.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Yuni effectively portrays gender inequality and marital prejudice ingrained in Indonesian society, depicting oppressive structures like early marriage, myths, and forced marriages. The film illustrates the impact of patriarchal norms on women's agency and opportunities, aligning with Mayne's keyhole metaphor and Mulvey's voyeuristic spectator concept. *Yuni* reflects reality and critiques societal norms, showing the ongoing need for education and advocacy despite legal efforts. By challenging patriarchal culture and adopting a female gaze, the film prioritizes female subjectivity and agency, offering a narrative that fosters empathy and understanding while subverting traditional gender stereotypes and empowering female characters.

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