

# Representation of Gender Equality in the Film “Marlina The Murderer In Four Acts”

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

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The aim of this research is to understand how gender equality is represented in the film "Marlina" through character interactions, dialogue, and physical actions that occur in specific scenes. Gender equality is an important issue in contemporary culture, and its representation in media can influence societal perceptions of gender roles. This study uses a qualitative approach with Stuart Hall's Representation theory to analyze gender representation in the film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts". Data collection methods include observation, literature review, and documentation. Data is analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation techniques are used to ensure data validity. The analysis results show that the film "Marlina" provides a strong representation of gender equality through scenes highlighting women's courage, strength, and resistance against gender norms in culture. Through character interactions, dialogue, and physical actions, the film explores the complexity of gender dynamics in society and underscores the need to continue advocating for gender equality in contemporary culture.

## 1. Introduction

Fighting women's issues has always been an intriguing topic and will continue to be so throughout human history, especially in all future societal concepts and conceptions. The issue facing women is gender imbalance, fundamentally stemming from the gender differences between men and women. Since the opposition to English patriarchy in the 1550s, various efforts have been made to achieve gender equality. Nevertheless, gender discrimination or injustice against women continues to occur, and Indonesia is no exception. The strong patriarchal worldview in this country serves as a catalyst for the importance of discrimination (Nasution & Sahira, 2021).

The dichotomy between men and women ultimately arises from differences in the social life structure concerning gender concepts. The injustice of gender understanding recognized by both men and women contributes to this disparity. According to Nasution & Sahira (Nasution & Sahira, 2021), gender inequality is a system and structure that victimizes both men and women. Marginalization or economic deprivation, subordination or perceptions of insignificance in political decision-making, stereotypes or negative labeling, violence, increasingly long workloads, and socialization of gender role ideology are all examples of how gender inequality manifests.

Many initiatives, both official and unofficial, have been undertaken by feminist movements in institutional contexts to improve women's status and equalize them with men. Lerner (in Afifah, 2021) emphasizes that feminism can encompass emancipation and women's rights movements. Women's rights movements are interested in providing women with access to all opportunities and rights, as well as equality with men in all areas of society. In this regard, the goal of the feminist movement is to achieve gender equality as much as possible and justice between men and women in all areas of society. Additionally, raising awareness of this issue in the mass media and other domains is another strategy for advancing gender equality. This action is taken because mass media not only helps spread

information but also shapes public opinion. One mass media that can disseminate information widely and rapidly is film.

Film is one of the mediums that have a significant influence on shaping perceptions and reinforcing social representations in society (Fadilla & Wijaksono, 2020). In this research, gender roles become one of the aspects often represented in complex and often stereotypical ways in visual artworks. One of the films worth analyzing is "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts". The aim of this research is to study the representation of gender equality in the film, which is an important issue in contemporary social and cultural studies.

"Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" was released in 2017, with an audience reaching 150,000 viewers. The film also successfully distributed itself to 40 countries. This project film is also a joint effort between Indonesia and four other countries: France, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The film is set in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. Before its official release in Indonesia, the film made its festival debut at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival's Directors Fortnight. The film also participated in the Toronto International Film Festival, the Melbourne Film Festival, and the New Zealand International Film Festival. The film also brought home other awards, including the best screenplay at the 11th edition of FIFFS Morocco and the best Asian film NestWave from the Philippine Cinema Festival (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

Unlike films with similar topics, "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" uses four rhythmic acts to portray a different image of a female murderer. Marlina's secret identity is gradually revealed in each act. Her suppressed feelings upon seeing a group of people exhaustedly taking her livestock and her dignity, they are a very sadistic group of robbers. Marlina bravely exterminates the herd quite sadistically. The acts continue and end until Marlina seeks justice and redemption.

"Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" is a critique of gender discrimination, as seen from its brief plot synopsis. This is clarified by looking at the female characters in the film who face prejudice from men (Yustiana & Juanedi, 2011). This causes her to act against the stereotype of women in the media, that they are helpless and incapable of protecting themselves. This shows that from a film semiotics perspective, this film has an interesting sign system to be observed. The field of semiotics originates from structural linguistics. One of the figures who adhered to Saussurean semiotics is Roland Barthes. Ferdinand de Saussure is considered a follower of contemporary linguistics.

Previous studies have discussed gender representation in "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" from various perspectives. For example, research conducted by Lia Anggia Nasution and Nurul Sahira in 2021 describes this film as a narrative depicting women's struggle against gender inequality and cultural patriarchy. They highlight how the film portrays women's lives often being victims of verbal, sexual, and physical violence, and women's efforts to uphold justice and gender equality. In their feminist semiotic analysis, Nasution and Sahira highlight important aspects that depict feminist ideals through strong and independent characters in the film (Nasution & Sahira, 2021).

Furthermore, research conducted by Bella Nur Afifah in 2021 also investigates gender inequality in the film using a feminist approach. Afifah highlights various forms of gender inequality in the film, including subordination, marginalization, stereotypes, and violence, all of which are reflected in the narrative of "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts". In her analysis, she observes how violence against female characters, such as Novi and Marlina, becomes a tangible depiction of the still dominant gender inequality in society. Thus, both of these studies provide important insights into how this film projects complex social realities and the challenges faced by women in achieving gender equality (Afifah, 2021).


Based on the above, this research will further examine the representation of gender equality towards women in the film titled "Representation of Gender Equality in the Film Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts". The research is conducted using qualitative content analysis methods with the intention of depicting the phenomenon of gender inequality towards women portrayed in the film Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts using Stuart Hall's Representation theory, namely meaning, language, and culture.

## 2. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach to delve into a deep understanding of gender representation in the film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" using Stuart Hall's Representation theory. The qualitative approach allows researchers to obtain holistic data from participants or subjects, in line with Lexy J. Moleong's view that qualitative research is an effort to understand phenomena comprehensively through various natural methods (Sofyan, 2021). The object of this research is the film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts," chosen for its strong representation of female characters and the theme of gender equality it presents. The film portrays a narrative depicting Marlina's struggle against gender inequality and her harsh actions to defend herself and her honor. Marlina becomes a symbol of women's courage who rejects the patriarchal norms that bind her. This research was conducted from October 21, 2023, to April 19, 2023, with a total duration of about three months. The research process was conducted gradually with planned and structured data collection. Data collection techniques used include observation, literature review, and documentation. The collected data was then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing stages. To ensure data validity, this research used triangulation techniques, involving the comparison of data from various sources and different times to verify the authenticity and reliability of the information obtained.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Result

<p><b>Scene 1 minute 06:40 – 07:11</b></p> 	<p>In this scene, Marlina is talking to Markus in the position where Marlina is sitting behind Markus and the house is dark, only light from outside comes in through the window.</p> <p>Dialog</p> <p><b>Markus:</b> <i>utang penguburan yang lalu belum selesai, sekarang su tambah lagi pasti belum lama (The old burial debt isn't settled yet, and now you're adding more, I bet it hasn't been long)</i></p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> <i>bukan kau urusan! (That's none of your business!)</i></p> <p><b>Markus:</b> <i>kasian sekali kau (Such a pity for you)</i></p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> <i>sa urusan bukan kau ngurus! (That's my business, not yours)</i></p>
<p><b>Scene 2 minute 31:24 – 31:59</b></p> 	<p>In this scene, Marlina is waiting for the truck they usually ride in to travel to the city (carrying Markus' head)</p> <p>Dialog</p> <p><b>Sopir Truk:</b> <i>hey turun turun turun ko tidak bisa!! Turun! (Hey, get down, get down, get down! Why can't you? Get down!)</i></p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> <i>(takes out a machete and holds it against the truck driver's neck) sa mo pi kantor polisi (Let's go to the police station)</i></p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> <i>masuk sudah!! (Get in now!)</i></p>

	(The driver then gets into the car and immediately starts the engine).
<p><b>Scene 3 minute 53:50 – 55:55</b></p> 	<p>In this scene, it appears that Marlina was initially ignored by the police officers who were playing tennis. After one of them had played, Marlina was served. Here, too, the police seemed to underestimate Marlina's complaint.</p> <p>Dialog</p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> dua orang memperkosa sa (Two men raped me)</p> <p><b>Polisi:</b> tapi tidak jadi toh? (But it didn't happen, right?)</p> <p><b>Marlina :</b> jadi, Markus (It did, Markus)</p> <p><b>Polisi:</b> ciri-cirinya? (Can you describe them?)</p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> pakai motor, umur 50 su sudah kakek-kakek, rambut panjang, beruban, kerempeng, bertato di tangan (Riding a motorcycle, around 50 years old, already looking like grandfathers, long hair, gray, curly, tattooed on the hands)</p> <p><b>Polisi:</b> kawan-kawan nya? (His companions?)</p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> lebih muda, Markus yang paling tua (Younger, Markus being the oldest)</p> <p><b>Polisi:</b> kalau dia kurus kenapa kau biarkan dia perkosa kau (If he was skinny, why did you let him rape you? )</p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> berkawan (He's friend)</p> <p><b>Polisi:</b> mereka membantu Markus? (Did they help Markus?)</p> <p><b>Marlina:</b> hoo (yes)</p>
<p><b>Scene 4 minute 01:08:30 – 01:09:08</b></p> 	<p>In this scene, Umbu, Novi's husband, is seen arguing, where Umbu asks when his child was born, along with accusations that Novi often sleeps with other men, so Novi immediately refutes this spontaneously.</p> <p>Dialog</p> <p><b>Umbu:</b> kenapa tak lahir juga? (Why hasn't the baby been born yet?)</p> <p><b>Novi:</b> Marlina punya anak su mati tahun lalu (Marlina had a child who died last year)</p> <p><b>Umbu:</b> maksud kita punya anak Novi (I mean, our child, Novi)</p>

	<p><i>Novi: mana sa tau, sa bukan dokter bukan bidan, ko pikir tuh anak bisa kirim SMS kasih kabar kapan dia lahir, su potong sa punya cerita ini lebih penting Umbu!! (How would I know? I'm not a doctor or a midwife. Do you think the child can send an SMS to let us know when they'll be born? Cutting me off with your stories is more important, Umbu!)</i></p> <p><i>Umbu: anak kau sungsang, makanya tidak mau lahir dia, betul sudah orang ngomong (Your child is breech, that's why he doesn't want to be born)</i></p> <p><i>Novi: tidak sungsang!! Jangan kau pikir begitu (He's not breech! Don't think like that).</i></p>
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### 3.2 Discussion

The analysis of Scene 1 interprets Marlina's seated position behind Markus as a reflection of traditional gender power hierarchy within the film's context. This rear position is often associated with weakness or dependency, while Markus, positioned in front, symbolizes strength or control. This aligns with conventions commonly seen in the film's culture, where male characters tend to dominate interpersonal relationships. However, through her dialogue, Marlina demonstrates courage and verbal strength. She firmly rejects Markus's claims, asserting her authority and showing that she is not dependent on him. This dialogue challenges gender stereotypes that typically position women as passive or dependent on male characters. The dim lighting with light streaming through the window may create a tense or mysterious mood, adding emotional depth to the scene. Although not directly related to gender equality, this lighting can reinforce the narrative of equality by creating a visual background that supports Marlina's conflict and resistance against conventional gender dominance.

In Stuart Hall's Representation theory, in this scene, meaning is understood as the message conveyed through character interactions and their dialogue. Although Marlina is in a seemingly physically weaker position, the meaning conveyed through her dialogue demonstrates courage and strength, challenging common gender stereotypes in the media. Language, in this context, refers to how characters communicate and use words to convey their messages. Marlina uses firm and assertive language to assert her authority, reinforcing the narrative of gender equality by showing that women also have verbal power and courage in facing conflicts. Culture plays a role in how gender conventions and social norms are reflected in the scene. Although this scene reflects conventional cultural hierarchies, Marlina challenges them through her behavior and dialogue, highlighting how culture and social norms can be debated and modified through media representations.

In Scene 2, through Marlina's physical position carrying Markus's head, which she had beheaded while waiting for the truck to pass, the scene shifts the power dynamics that usually tend to dominate male characters. With Marlina taking on a strong and physically active role, this scene demonstrates a shift from traditional gender norms in media. Furthermore, through her firm dialogue and physical actions, Marlina displays uncommon courage and strength in life representations. Marlina's threat to the truck driver with a machete asserts her authority in the situation, turning her into a protagonist taking initiative in facing the conflict. This highlights how women also have the power and courage to act in challenging situations, raising awareness of women's potential often underestimated in traditional media representations. In terms of meaning, language, and culture, this scene conveys a message about women's courage in facing challenging situations and refusing to be victims. Marlina's language asserts her authority and demands fair treatment, showing that women also have the ability to act and take initiative in situations requiring strength and courage.

Next, the analysis of Scene 3, the meaning in this scene lies in the police officer initially ignoring Marlina as she waits while playing tennis reflects a dismissive and unappreciative attitude towards the

complaints raised by women. This depicts inequality in the treatment of reports or complaints raised by women, which are often ignored or not taken seriously in many cases. Language in this scene is displayed through the dialogue between Marlina and the police officer, showing how skeptical and doubtful the police are about Marlina's report of the rape she experienced. The police officer seems to doubt the truth of Marlina's report, creating an unsupportive and unappreciative atmosphere. In terms of culture, this scene highlights gender norms still ingrained in society that often ignore or dismiss women's experiences and reports in cases of sexual violence. The police show a demeaning and doubting attitude, highlighting a culture that still minimizes women's experiences and reports in cases of sexual violence. Overall, this scene depicts representations that raise awareness of gender inequality in the legal system and society in general.

Lastly, in Scene 4, meaning is displayed through the dialogue between Umbu and Novi, where the gender stereotype is manifested in expectations of women's roles in the reproduction process. Umbu blames Novi for her inability to give birth to a child in a timely manner, creating unfair pressure on Novi as a woman. This depicts gender norms still ingrained in society that place the primary responsibility of reproduction on women. Language in this scene is displayed when Novi responds to Umbu's accusations firmly and rejects the idea that the failure to give birth to a child is her fault. She asserts her right not to be blamed for reproductive issues, highlighting the injustice in blaming women for issues often beyond their control. Thus, in terms of culture, this scene depicts how gender norms embedded in culture influence interactions and perceptions in marital relationships. Umbu places the primary burden of reproduction on Novi, reflecting traditional views of gender roles within the family. However, Novi rejects this view and asserts her right not to be blamed for reproductive issues, highlighting the importance of reviewing and rectifying existing gender norms

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the researcher's analysis of the film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" using Stuart Hall's Representation theory, the researcher draws the conclusion that women in this film are depicted as agents who challenge traditional gender norms with courage and strength, and show the capacity to take control in challenging situations. This representation strengthens the narrative of gender equality by presenting female characters who are not only victims, but also as active and empowered perpetrators. The following is the conclusion of the analysis results:

1. Meaning

Through the scenes in the film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts", the meaning conveyed can be seen from how the female characters, especially Marlina, challenge and change conventional gender power dynamics. The female characters' dialogue and actions emphasize courage, strength, and rejection of inhibiting gender norms, highlighting the importance of gender equality in society.

2. Language

The language used by the characters in this film reflects the courage and strength of women in facing conflict. Marlina's firm and sharp language, as well as her rejection of unfair accusations and expectations, strengthens the narrative of gender equality by showing that women also have the ability to act and take initiative in challenging situations.

3. Culture

The film "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" presents a debate about gender norms in culture that often hinder women's progress. By highlighting various situations that display gender inequality and oppression, this film invites viewers to reflect on the patriarchal culture that still exists and the need to overhaul these norms to create a more inclusive and fair society for all individuals.

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