



# A female super hero in the movie "Sri Asih": an analysis of public reception

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Film  
Gender  
Women  
Resepsi  
Sri Asih

This study intends to examine how the public perceives Sri Asih films featuring female superheroes. This study's methodology is qualitative using a descriptive approach. Observation while watching Sri Asih films, Sri Asih film file documentation, and literature studies by gathering books, journals, and other pertinent sources are some of the data collection techniques used. The reception analysis theory of encoding and decoding developed by Stuart Hall is used in this work to analyze data. According to the study's findings, there were two informants in the hegemony position, four in the negotiation position, and two in the opposition position.

## 1. Introduction

The media is incredibly significant and affects how people behave. The market for mass media products is expanding as technology progresses. goods used in mass media, from audio to visual. Media can serve a variety of objectives, such as analyzing and explaining past events in light of potential linkages with other things or in light of relationships between events and societal constructs. The purpose of entertainment is to reduce social tensions that are present in the community as well as to entertain the audience or readers and provide a form of relaxation.

Film appeared to be the second in the world to become a medium of mass communication after newspapers had a period of infancy in the late 19th century. In the early days of development, film was different from newspapers which experienced elements such as engineering, politics, economics, demography and social that hindered the progress of newspapers in their infancy, namely in the 18th and early 19th centuries (Sobur, 2003). People's lives are significantly impacted by film as a component of mass media. the function that film plays as one of the mass-media products, such as instruction, information, persuasion, and social control. In actuality, movies tend to be propaganda and often have an instructional component in addition to serving primarily as an entertainment medium. (McQuail, 2011).

Since the Dutch colonial era, film has existed in Indonesia as a desirable mass medium. Since the 19th century, Indonesia has started to acknowledge cinematic films. According to its history, the first Indonesian movie was called "Loetoeng Kasaroeng," and it was made by G. Kruger and L. Hueveldorp in Bandung in 1926. This movie is still in the form of a silent movie. Despite being made by a foreigner, it was the first Indonesian movie. This is due to the fact that Loetoeng Kasaroeng features a unique Indonesian narrative. (Pranajaya, 2005). If the number of productions from 1970 to 1980 is



used as the benchmark, Indonesian film production reached a peak during this time. This did not continue long, though, since there were only 6 to 9 national film productions per year in the post-New Order era, following three sharp decreases.

The theme of gender is a hot topic in today's movies and is frequently shown. Many *superhero* movies demonstrate how the protagonist takes control of the situation. Men play the main characters or major actors in many *superhero* movies. Male actors who become heroes predominate in Indonesian superhero films. *Satria Dewa: Gatotkaca* (2022), directed by Hanung Bramantyo; *Gundala* (2019), directed by Joko Anwar; *Wiro Sableng* (2018), directed by Angga Dwimas Sasongko; *Satria Heroes* (2017), directed by Arnandha Wyanto and Kenzo Maihara; are among the superhero movies produced in Indonesia. All films about Indonesian *superheroes* are dominated by male characters as heroes. There are not many Indonesian *superhero* films played by women. Is the view of the female gender that is considered unworthy of being a superhero because it is considered a weak gender. Discussion about gender in various ways, ranging from the power that men have over women, injustice or discrimination received by women from various aspects. Aspects that include, education, social life, culture, religion and even household aspects. The perspective of Indonesian society is that there are still many who consider women as weak, have no power, and often even become objects of sexuality for men (Sakina, 2017)

Men frequently treat women rudely because they believe they can't defend themselves. Due to the numerous forms of oppression that women face, a feminist movement that advocates for gender equality has evolved. Feminists put up a lot of effort to fight for women's rights, and one way they do this is by producing movies that they find offensive. (Ningrum, dkk, 2021). Zoonen adds that the ability of films to construct a female reality in a biased way and transform into a conservative force supporting patriarchal ideology is what spurred the development of feminist cinema (Sutanto, 2017).

According to information from the *Center for The Study of Women in Television and Film*, the proportion of women playing leading roles has remained largely consistent. 37% of all movie protagonists in 2019 were women. In movies, there are 61% of working women, 46% of married women, and 26% of women who are leaders of social and professional groups (Lauzen & Ph, 2020)

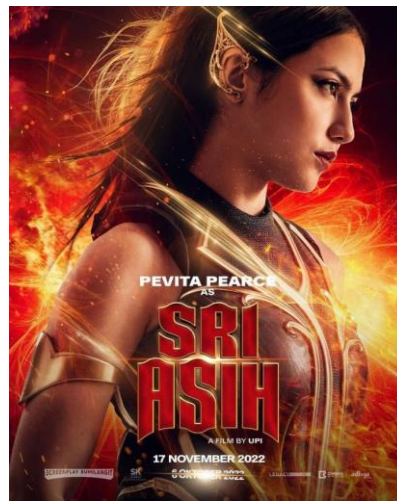
*Sri Asih*, a superhero movie from Indonesia, features a female lead. When women are portrayed in popular culture, like in the movie *Sri Asih*, they make an interesting subject of study. Film is a reflection of culture and is regarded as a secondary reality since patriarchal ideology is ingrained in society and even sustained socioculturally. Not criticizing Islamic views on women is the focus of *Sri Asih*'s movie, but rather the experiences of women like Alana/*Sri Asih*. (*Sri Asih* Film's main character) ability to move without restriction and not viewed as feeble by men. The goddess of justice is represented by the figure of *Sri Asih*. Power emanating from *Sri Asih* is transmitted from generation to generation. Before the goddess of justice's power entered the body of Alana, the movie's main character, it initially entered the form of Nani Wijaya, a social and environmental activist who served as the goddess' first incarnation. *Sri Asih* faces difficulties dealing with the patriarchal system as a female superhero who is present in the archipelago, both in the plot and the visual storytelling (Asih et al., 2022). This enhances *Sri Asih*'s film's portrayal of a powerful female character.

Research from Umuhidayah, et al. in 2022 that addresses the movie "Lovely Men" is only one example of how studies on gender equality have been discussed in the films below. The movie is about transsexual individuals who nevertheless raise their daughters in a patriarchal culture. It turns out that despite the transgender status of the masculine figure, patriarchal culture has always remained.

In addition, research from Ningrum, et al. in 2021 that examines the film *Birds of Prey*. The emancipation of repressed women in a large city is the subject of the movie. The main character, Quinn, protests in the face of heartache by teaming up with other women who share the same fate as her since the oppressed woman in the movie is still being pursued by male criminals.

Additionally, according to research by Ghassani & Nugroho from 2019, which addresses the movie *Get Out*, this movie shows how the phenomenon of black people facing discrimination that frequently occurs abroad in a more contemporary approach. The struggle of black people to avoid discrimination by white people is also depicted in this movie.

The film by Sri Asih stands out because it was released in 2022, a year when gender equality was a hot topic in Indonesia. Sri Asih is moreover the most recent Indonesian superhero movie to feature female leads.



**Fig 1.** Sri Asih Movie Poster

Source:[https://bumilangit.fandom.com/wiki/Sri\\_Asih\\_\(Film\)](https://bumilangit.fandom.com/wiki/Sri_Asih_(Film))

## 2. Method

Research is conducted using the qualitative research method. By using verbal and non-verbal descriptions in the form of natural language, qualitative research methods aim to comprehend phenomena that research participants encounter, such as motivation and perception (Moleong, 2016). . Stuart Hall reception analysis was employed in this study as a descriptive qualitative methodology. analysis of audience response or comprehension of the meaning-making process that viewers engage in when receiving media impressions, particularly Sri Asih films.

In-depth interviews served as the primary mode of data gathering in this study. Information from respondents is gathered using this technique. Four men and four women who have seen Sri Asih movies participated in this survey as responders. Additionally, observation techniques will be applied via watching Sri Asih films and directly witnessing Sri Asih films in order to supplement the interview data. Online movie files of Sri Asih are used as the documentation approach. In addition, a technique for gathering information for a literature study is used by gathering books, journals, and other studies on reception analysis.

## 3. Literature Review

### a. Stuart Hall's Reception Theory

The term "*reception theory*" is derived from the Latin word *recipere*, which means "*to receive*" or "*to welcome*" from readers. Reception is defined as providing a television program with meaning and text processing so that it can respond to it. The focus of reception theory is the reader, not the sender, of a communication. The reader's culture and life experiences serve as a point of reference for how to understand the message because they are a direct result of their own background. Stuart Hall's theory on audience research is as follows: a) analysis of the social and political environment that influences the creation of media material (*encoding*); and b) media consumption (*decoding*) in the context of daily living. Reception analysis concentrates on individual attention in the mass communication process (*decoding*), or on a process of meaning and in-depth comprehension of media texts and what kind of interpretation of media information from individuals (Baran, 2003). According to Hall (1980), viewers can choose one of three alternative positions when *decoding* a media message: the dominating hegemony perspective, negotiation, or opposition.

### 1) Dominant Hegemony Position

As an instance of dominant hegemony “*the media produce the message; the masses consume it. The audience reading coincide with the preferred reading*” (The audience hears the message; it is communicated by the media. Coincidentally, the audience likes what the media portrays). There are instances where the media leverages societal cultural norms to communicate messages.

### 2) Negotiation Position

The audience's negotiating position is when they accept the more prevalent ideology but disagree with how it should be applied in a particular situation. Although the audience is willing to accept the dominant ideology in general, they will allow for minor deviations from its application in order to conform to local cultural norms.

### 3) Opposition Position

The final method of audience decoding will result in hostility to the media message. This occurs when the audience critically replaces the media communication's message or code with a different alternative. Using their own perspective on the subject covered by the media, they replace the media's intended meaning.

## b. Gender Equality Theory

Three theories undergird gender equality: *nature, equilibrium, and nurture*. Because the phrase alludes to quantity equality and pursuing it, nurture theory believes that the tasks and responsibilities of men and women are the same. The sociocultural construct that causes the disparity between men and women will constantly keep women behind and at the top of the family, society, nation, and state food chains.

According to *Equilibrium Theory*, male and female relationships should be harmonious. According to this perspective, regardless of how men and women are positioned, they must work together for the good of the family, society, nation, and state.

According to *Nature Theory*, the difference between men and women is innate and part of the Almighty's nature. There are various roles and responsibilities associated with biological variances amongst civilizations. The duties of husbands and women within the family are diverse and serve to support and balance one another. If positions and tasks are evenly distributed and assigned according to their shares, a harmonious life can be achieved (Zham-Zham et al., 2022).

## c. Feminism

Latin *femina*, or woman, is the root of the word feminist. The phrase first used in the 1890s to describe an ideology of gender equality and a movement for women's rights. Many people now refer to this notion as a distinction against women's rights based on gender equality. Feminism is often viewed as a sort of awareness of women's subordinate status in society and a desire to reform or better it. Women have historically held a lower status in society than men, a situation that severely hindered women's personal growth. Feminism serves as a movement to improve the status of women in society because of this (Satria et al., 2021).

The patriarchal perspective holds that men and women are not the same as males, and vice versa. Stereotypes about men and women are created as a result of these distinctions. Men are known for their brave temperament, powerful bodies, and inability to cry easily, whereas women are nurturing, delicate, and sensitive. This isn't a requirement that applies to both women and men, though. As Indonesian women started to dare to free themselves from the chains that had for so long bound them, this thinking changed with the times.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The goddess of love, Sri Asih, is a mythology that dates back thousands of years. The drips of the goddess of love are being observed by a fire goddess. Although Alana is the manifestation of the Goddess of Mercy, the spirit of the Goddess of Fire has haunted and possessed her since she was a young kid, making it difficult for Alana to control her power. Alana was raised in an orphanage because her parents passed away before she was even born. Since she was a little child, Alana has

aided Tangguh, two male pals at the orphanage who are classified as weak lads and bullies, because of her bold personality. Alana was raised as a combat athlete by her foster mother after having a surrogate mother named Sarita Hamzah, and as a result, Alana developed into a powerful female role model. The mafia organization is led by Prayogo. Mateo, a lovely son of Prayogo, was born. In order to uphold the reputation of the Prayogo family, a police officer named Jatmiko always aids the mafia's horrific deeds. At first, Jatmiko was portrayed as a nice cop who didn't require money. However, he frequently receives sneers from his neighbors, and Jatmiko is also depicted as harboring resentment for what happened to him.

Mateo challenges Alana to a fight, which sparks the start of Alana's war with the Prayogo crime family. To induce Alana to accept the match, Prayogo's men visit Sarita, Alana's mother. Sarita refused, though, calling at Prayogo's soldiers to make them back off from engaging in combat. Alana, who is aware of this, decides to engage Mateo in combat without her mother's knowledge. Infuriated after losing the battle, Mateo gathers his friends to attack Alana's mother. Alana, who is enraged because her mother was attacked by a group of people, seeks retribution but is stopped by a man by the name of Kalla. Kalla is successful in stopping Alana from exacting revenge. However, Mateo passes away, and Alana is charged with his murder. Prayogo is motivated by this occurrence to seek retribution from Alana.

The hospital where Alana's mother is receiving treatment is bombed by Prayogo, but Alana's mother is saved by Kalla and her grandmother Mariana, who are members of the jagabumi tasked with looking after Alana. Alana immediately went into her old buddy Tangguh, whose apartment was currently being overrun by Prayogo messenger boys. Alana helps hard-working, flat-filled locals. It turns out that Prayogo, the commander of the goddess of fire, will sacrifice the occupants of the flat with an offering of 1000 souls. Alana, Tangguh, and Kalla go to save the apartment's occupants from being sacrificed. Alana believes Prayogo is responsible, but Prayogo has been discovered dead. While Alana looks for the perpetrator of this whole situation, Kalla and Tangguh are tasked with saving the tenants of the flat. While Alana tracked out the perpetrator of this tragedy, Jatmiko, Kalla and Tangguh were able to save the tenants of the apartment. The chief commander in charge of resurrecting the Goddess of Fire is Jatmiko. When Alana and Jatmiko fight, Alana prevails.

a. *Encoding*

Gender equality is discussed in Sri Asih's film, particularly in terms of social and political issues. Women prevail over sexist or criminally inclined men. Women are depicted to be in charge of men in Sri Asih's movie as well. Starting with Alana, who has stood up for Tabah since she was a young child, Alana's mother, who was able to get Prayogo's men who mistreated her to leave, and the police chief, who was a woman and was able to get Jatmiko to obey her orders in order to defend Prayogo's family. The strategy who overcame Prayogo was Kalla's grandma, who was able to learn a lot of information.

b. *Decoding*

This study's stage involves analyzing the data and then interpreting the findings of in-depth interviews that were done prior to.

Regarding Sri Asih's movie, Isna Mar'atus Sholihah expressed her opinion, saying that it promotes gender equality and avoids using the idea of an oppressed woman to its advantage.

*“This movie actually demonstrates gender equality thanks to the heroic female character who can compete with males in combat. This movie demonstrates that, with rigorous training, women can actually defeat males in combat. Despite Alana's difficult upbringing, she has not become weak and is capable of developing strength even in the absence of parents.”*

It can be said that Isna Mar'atus Sholihah is in a *dominant Hegemony* position in this situation because she is receptive to the media's message that women can defeat men in all spheres, including boxing matches, where men have traditionally been depicted as being physically more powerful than women. According to Isna, this is possible in his surroundings if there is strong preparation and diligent labor. According to informants, women hold the same position as males.

While Emilia Putri acknowledged that gender equality was present in Sri Asih's film, she felt that it went too far.

*"I took away from Sri Asih's movie that it does seem to promote gender equality, which is beneficial for the audience because it means society would no longer undervalue women. However, I believe that Sri Asih's surrounding environment makes it challenging to apply gender equality. But if men and women fight in real life like in a boxing match, women will still struggle to prevail, especially if both parties are strong and skilled in martial arts. Just look at the martial arts; women will always fight other women. However, I firmly concur for women who get to positions of leadership, such as police chiefs, Sri Asih's adoptive mother, and her grandmother from Kalla".*

Emilia Putri is in a compromising mode in this situation, accepting the idea of gender equality in Sri Asih films but rejecting its applicability to martial arts. For Emilia, Putri, however, male strength will be more effective if the martial arts industry, particularly when those being fought are fellow fighters. For Emilia Putri, it would be hard to establish gender equality in military issues in her day-to-day activities. Princess Emilia is more receptive to the freedom to dream and to think. Although not all aspects of gender equality must be equal, some of them must.

According to Ayu Kusuma Astuti, Sri Asih's film vividly portrays gender equality because the proportion of each gender character is highly equal. The equality of men and women cannot, however, be equaled in all areas.

*"In Sri Asih's movie, each gender is represented in almost equal amounts. Women are typically weak characters who require assistance in previous superhero movies. However, this movie has the perfect amount of men and women helping each other out. However, there is an exaggerated equality in this movie that I have never seen in real life, where women fighters can always defeat males. Even while women may compete with males who are skilled in martial arts without having superhuman abilities, there are also situations in which Sri Asih struggles to control her strength. Despite lacking strength, Sri Asih is an excessively skilled martial artist".*

In terms of the negotiating position, Ayu Kusuma Astuti is in a similar situation to Emilia Putri. According to Ayu Kusuma Astuti, equality does not have to be the same in all respects. While it is true that women and men must be treated equally, some things are inalienable. Women's rights must be equal to men's rights, but men will always be stronger in energy-related subjects.

Nofridha contends that Sri Asih's movie does advocate for gender equality and promotes the status of women as perpetually persecuted individuals. However, he holds a similar viewpoint to Emilia and Ayu, namely that there are restrictions on the equality of men and women, particularly when it comes to martial arts, and that it is very challenging to apply in daily life.

*"I absolutely enjoy the female characters in this movie, especially when Alana's adoptive mother is being harassed by Prayogo's goons. Even though there was no physical aggression present, she could counteract masculine intimidation with her words, her way of thinking, and her brave attitude. For this reason, I liked her. Every woman needs to have this level of equality and thinking, and it needs to be used in daily life. Although Alana was a young girl who protected Tangguh by abusing those who bothered Tangguh, the equality in this movie felt forced. This appears too extreme when applied to actual life, and I believe it to be impossible".*

Nofridha is in the same situation as Emilia and Ayu, i.e. the position of negotiation, where she accepts the theory of gender equality but recognizes that there are some limitations to how it should be implemented in real life. Although feminism must be implemented, it is a philosophical issue and concerns women's equal rights.

The gender equality argument is made by Ahmad Wildan in Sri Asih's movie. Ahmad Wildan thinks Sri Asih's film is crucial to achieving gender equality and is very entertaining. It is evident that the roles assigned to each character are equally balanced, and that male characters that are oppressed by women are just as prevalent as persecuted female characters. However, Ahmad Wildan shares the same viewpoint as Emilia, Ayu, and Nofridha, namely that equality is overly forced and extremely challenging to implement in reality.

*"This movie has an excellent balance of both genders. Typically, we see a lot of downtrodden female characters, but not in this Sri Asih movie. However, there are several points about gender equality that must be made clear, including how little Alana can be in the same room as men in the*

scene. Even though there is equality, it is important to remember that children of different sexes should not be treated equally in these situations”.

When it comes to issues involving Alana when she is a young child, sharing a room with another boy cannot be referred to as equality since even if they are children, men and women still have differences. Ahmad Wildan is in the position of *negotiation*, which is to agree on the philosophy in Sri Asih's film on gender equality. Despite the fact that the rooms were in an orphanage, Ahmad Wildan could not accept that girls should be put in them with boys.

According to Adi Rahmandanu, Sri Asih's movie opposed the idea of gender equality. Despite the fact that the main character is female, it is evident in various situations that there is still discrimination towards women.

“Because to the moment in which Alina's surrogate mother is attacked by a mob and the sequence in which Mateo beats her lover until she is bloodied, this movie hasn't advanced gender equality. Violence against women is still depicted in the movie. If contrasted to men who are beaten, it is obvious that it cannot be referred to as equality because they are both beaten. More women are beaten to the hospital even as it is happening”.



**Fig 2.** News scene of Mateo's persecution of his girlfriend  
Source: Screenshot Sri Asih films

News regarding Mateo's persecution of Karista, a lady who is his girlfriend, is revealed in the scenario. The karista is seen withdrawing his report on the abuse case in the scene at 16:36 seconds. There, it is claimed that Karista withdrew his report after being charged with fabricating details of the persecution case in order to gain notoriety. Despite the fact that it was clear to see his damaged face. This is because Mateo is a well-known individual due to the wealth of his parents. This demonstrates that there is still gender discrimination.

Adi Rahmandanu disagrees with the gender equality message of Sri Asih's movie. This is connected to the ongoing violence against women, even to the point where they are shown leaving the house for the hospital after being beaten. Even the fictional Mateo, the woman's boyfriend, beat her. There is still discrimination against women in the movie, and it is extremely evident.

In his defense of Sri Asih's film, Badhi Fadlul Rahman refutes the idea that it promotes equality. His viewpoint, that there is still discrimination and exploitation of women, is essentially same to Adi's.

“Gender equality is still weak in this movie. There is still a lot of discrimination against women, as evidenced by the beating of Mateo's boyfriend and Alana's surrogate mother, as well as the continued frailty of employed women. Paid women who can be taken advantage of by males are depicted in the scene where Mateo is in the café. Additionally, the female police chief can get compensation in addition to her duties as a police officer.”



**Fig 3.** Scene showing comfort women  
 Source: *Screenshoot Sri Asih films*

At 38:19 of the video, Mateo freely yells at a comfort woman, illustrating the exploitation of women. The woman gets yelled at in the nightclub scenario since she is viewed as paid.

Due to her belief that prejudice and exploitation of women still exist, Badhi Fadlul Rahman holds the same position as Adi Rahmandanu in *opposition*. Due to ongoing presentations of women's flaws, gender equality is not very obvious.

Lalu Atwi Suparman has opinions about the movie starring Sri Asih. This movie illustrates gender equality extremely well, showing that women are truly not weak and can defeat males.

*“While not all aspects of gender equality can be observed in daily life in Sri Asih, we can infer from this that women are not weak beings. As a result, this Sri Asih movie is excellent to see because it contains numerous sequences that demonstrate how equal men and women are”.*

The viewpoint shared by Lulu Atwi Suparman and Isna, who hold *Hegemonic* power, is the same. Then, Atwi Suparman believes that Sri Asih's film's message is particularly representative of female equality. The scenario that demonstrates that women are not inherently weak beings who are susceptible to male oppression.

**Table 1.** Position of Informant Acceptance of Gender Equality Sri Asih Film

No	Informant	Acceptance position
1.	Isna Mar'atus Sholihah	Hegemonic Position
2.	Lalu Atwi Suparman	Hegemonic Position
3.	Emilia Putri	Negotiation Position
4.	Ayu Kusuma Astuti	Negotiation Position
5.	Nofridha	Negotiation Position
6.	Ahmad Wildan	Negotiation Position
7.	Adi Rahmandanu	Opposition Position
8.	Badhi Fadlul Rahman	Opposition Position

Informants' perspectives on how Sri Asih's film portrays female characters differ significantly. There were two informants who did so hegemoniously, namely Isna Mar'atus Sholihah and Lulu Atwi Suparman, according to Stuart Hall. Both said that the crowd enjoyed the message and received it positively as a whole. According to Stuart Hall, the four informants in the negotiation position—Emilia Putri, Ayu Kusuma Astuti, Nofridha, and Ahmad Wildan—help the audience accept the ideology of gender equality in the Sri Asih film. However, there are some exceptions based on the informant's environment that prevent the implementation of the ideology of gender equality in some circumstances. According to Stuart Hall, the informant was forced to substitute media messages with



his own way of thinking because there were two other informants who held the position of Opposition. Adi Rahmandanu and Badhi Fadlul Rahman believe that from this vantage point, only the exploitation of women constitutes gender equality.

## 5. Conclusion

Researchers discovered from their research that although some informants grappled with the message of gender equality in Sri Asih's film, there were also individuals who expressed a hegemonic point of view and were opposed to particular circumstances. Some informants assert that in order for the complete film tale to function as a campaign for gender equality, gender equality must continue to be represented in film media, but in storylines whose applications can be applied to daily life. Other informants' opinions can also be taken into account, including the total abolition of discrimination against women so that the portrayal of gender equality in media is not skewed.

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