

“How to Be a Man? Masculinity Construction in a Short Story *Mina's Eid Cake's Secret*”

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the masculinity construction between the characters in the short story *Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake*. The research data was gathered by a review of the literature. The descriptive analysis of the data obtained is the method adopted in this study. Data was gathered through a review of the literature. Following data collection, descriptive analysis was carried out as follows: (1) attentively reading literary works; (2) marking the part of the short tale that incorporates a masculinity narrative; (3) data were analyzed using a masculinity approach; and (4) data were interpreted. The analysis and interpretation results are then provided. The findings of this study reveal that patriarchy and the development of masculinity produce tension in the gender roles accepted by the characters in the short narrative. Patriarchy not only confines and creates women, but it also molds boys to conform to the "might" that men create and spread.

Keywords: *Construction of Masculinity, Gender role conflict, Humans, Flood*

1. Introduction

Masculinity is a fascinating topic in Indonesia. Of course, throughout the previous few decades, the development of roles and ideas of masculinity in Indonesia has witnessed considerable changes with the growth of society [1]. In line with this, the number of literary works including elements of masculinity is fast increasing, not only works about feminism, but many literary works about masculinity also fit the pattern of literary works in Indonesia [2]. As is well known, literary works can be utilized to channel ideas, concepts, and thoughts. Literary works depict a writer's inner feelings and social lives. Writers are members of society who contribute to the events and lives that take place in society [3], [4]. As a result, the ensuing literary works appear to imitate societal events and reality [5]. Literary works can be refined reflections that include aesthetic qualities. Literary works are a writer's interpretation of his social surroundings, which is subsequently captured by the reader following an interpretation process. Readers will interpret a literary piece using their perspective based on their expected horizon [6], [7]. As a result, the social aspect becomes significant as a signal or act of communication.

The community's role is critical in assessing and recognizing the presence of a work. A short story (short story) is a type of literary work in the form of a narrative that recounts a fictional story in such a way that readers can enjoy it in a single reading because the short story has no more than 10,000 words [8], [9], [10]. Despite the fact that they comprise short stories, short stories can emphasize prose features in a compact and straightforward manner [11]. This distinguishes short stories from longer literary works [12]. Short stories continue to be one of the literary works that readers may readily publish and enjoy by reading short story books, newspapers, and digital media like Kompas.id. Aliurridha is a writer who writes about the masculine establishment that society has long created.

In general, Aliurrida's short story "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake" narrates the story of the main character, Dafa, who enjoys cooking and stresses attributes that many people consider feminine. His father,

who did not accept that his son had feminine features and conducted labor that should only be done by a woman, put pressure on him because of his love for Dafa. Dafa's father did not hesitate to put pressure on Dafa to become a guy who was macho rather than feminine. The focus placed by Dafa's father demonstrates, that males appear to distance themselves from and distort women, that women appear to be inferior wildlife. Men are superior characters who are not permitted to conduct work that should be done by inferior individuals especially for women [13], [14], [15]. Aside from that, the short story highlights gender inequity, which is intriguing to debate via the lens of masculinity.

The construction of masculinity in Indonesian literature has become an intriguing topic to investigate further [16]. Over the years, Indonesian literary works have reflected and changed community understandings of what it means to be a man in varied cultural and historical circumstances. From classical literature to contemporary works, literary narratives frequently feature male protagonists who exhibit a range of masculine features, attitudes, and conventions [17], [18]. In this paragraph, how Indonesian literature has served to establish and demolish masculinity stereotypes, as well as how these images reflect changes in Indonesian society and culture over time. Several studies on masculinity have been conducted by various parties, like Solikha [19] on Masculinity in the Novel *Kembara Rindu* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, which takes a literary sociological approach in conveying masculinity in the novel. Ibrahim [20] investigated masculinity in Ramadhan's novel *The Permana Family*. Intan [21] performed research to uncover gender stereotypes and masculinity discourses in Ziggy Zezsya Zeoviennazabriskied's novel *Di Tanah Lada*. [22] investigates the ideology of hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical landscape for men's studies.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it pertains to gender values and relationships toward short stories, which serve as a model for the creation of masculinity in Indonesia. Through brief stories that must be analyzed because patriarchal culture still dominates in Indonesia. Men, particularly when they are still children, get marginalized as a phase produced by their dads in the setting of patriarchal culture. Gender awareness, on the other hand, is crucial and necessary in human interactions. Understanding the production of masculinity in Indonesia can be compared to the creation of femininity that occurs in society [23]. Femininity is found in the male character Dafa in this short story. Femininity in men is frequently rejected by society or viewed as a weakness, resulting in psychological stress and social humiliation. The portrayal of femininity in Dafa figures is an intriguing issue to investigate. The short story "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake" addresses the feminine side of male characters and demonstrates that tight and stereotyped gender constructions affect both men and women equally. The brief explanation of the short tale's contents gives a foundation for scholars to adopt a masculine method in studying Aliurrida's short story.

Method

The descriptive analysis of the data obtained is the method adopted in this study. The data was chosen in the form of the short story "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake" because it met the researchers' needs for data containing narratives of masculinity and male oppression. Data was gathered through a review of the literature. Following data collection, descriptive analysis was carried out as follows: (1) reading literary works carefully; (2) marking the part of the short tale that contains a masculinity narrative; (3) data were analyzed using a masculinity approach; and (4) data were interpreted. Following that, the findings of the analysis and interpretation employ masculinity theory to deconstruct the text's creation of masculinity. This study also employs one of Flood's [24] seven categories of masculinity, which focuses on three groups of relevant phenomena sometimes referred to as first masculinity, namely that masculinity refers to ideal beliefs, images, representations, and discourse. Second, masculinity refers to the characteristics that distinguish men from women. Third, masculinity relates to males in authority's strategy to maintain masculine power.

Result and Discussion

Men and Masculinities

In Indonesia, men play a variety of roles that reflect cultural diversity, customs, and societal advancements. Men in Indonesia play a vital role as the backbone of the family, economic supporters, and leaders in numerous local traditions and faiths, despite ongoing social transformation. Men's responsibilities, on the other hand, have evolved over time, particularly in metropolitan and more educated social groupings, where they are increasingly involved in domestic chores and strive for a balance between family and career roles. As more men recognize the value of gender equality, they contribute to more inclusive social change and

support topics such as family welfare, education, and gender justice. Men's perspectives in Indonesia, as in many other parts of the world, are adapting to changing times, reflecting the complex dynamics between tradition and social change.

The short story "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake" in general tells about Mina's cake recipe, which no one, including her family members, may inherit. Mina had intentionally created a special and special cake to improve bonds within the nuclear family ahead of Eid. No one, according to Mina's family, can compete with the taste of Mina's Eid cake. This short narrative does not only discuss family or Eid cakes, but it also contains feminism themes that emerge via many interactions. Dafa, Mina's grandson, frequently extols the delectable taste of his grandmother's cakes. Dafa believes that Mina cakes should be marketed to people outside of households.

Dafa's father, in fact, terminated the conversation by rejecting Dafa's idea since he believed Mina's cake recipe should only be enjoyed by the family. In truth, one of the reasons Mina's Eid cakes are not sold is that Mina is unable to create big quantities of cakes. Mina is elderly, and all she wants is for her children and grandchildren to eat her cake. The children and daughter-in-law have attempted and failed numerous times to replicate Mina's cakes. Dafa, in reality, wished to learn to cook from his grandma. His father, on the other hand, was vehemently opposed to this wish. Dafa's father thought what she performed was a woman's job. Dafa's father did not want Dafa's attitude and lifestyle to be skewed toward women, therefore he repeatedly reminded Dafa that men's and women's skills are distinct. Dafa's father's thinking was too narrow, putting pressure on him and making it difficult for him to explore his cooking abilities.

This short story is structurally similar to other short stories in terms of character development, storyline, setting, and overall appearance. The author's ability to see the other side of the character Dafa, who is depicted as a man who enjoys cooking and a father figure who defends patriarchal frameworks, giving rise to incorrect prejudices, is what makes this short story interesting. After carefully reading "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake," we discovered various masculinity narratives associated with patriarchy, which is perpetuated by one of the characters in the short story. The first can be seen in a remark from Grandma Mina's chat with her husband.

"It's getting late. We'll continue tomorrow. You don't feel sorry for your body. How long are you going to torture yourself?" said her husband in an annoyed tone. "The man couldn't stand hearing his wife keep wincing because her old legs and waist were twitching in pain"[25].

Grandma Mina cooked numerous sweets the night before Eid to give with her children and grandkids. Her husband admonished her and reminded her that the work may be continued tomorrow because she didn't remember the time to do it. Furthermore, tormenting herself would just make her already fragile body ache all over, not to mention that she would wince and groan all day. The husband's warning to Grandma Mina demonstrates that women are weak and will merely wince in agony after accomplishing hard effort. This is in contrast to men, who are physically built to be stronger and less susceptible to illness. The author appears to be describing the viewpoint that women are weak and foolish creatures in this phrase. It is men's responsibility to demonstrate strength and masculinity.

Masculinity Construction

First, masculinity looks to be a type of dream and imagination about what the ideal man's figure is, solely to please people's needs. Then, for the sake of their own interests, these dreams and pictures are turned into racial ideology capitalists who are projected as social reality through the media. In a patriarchal society, men are designed to be "strong, tough, don't cry, leaders, and are in the public sphere, not the domestic." [24]. This is not the case with women's construction. Women appear to be barred from activities that emphasize intelligence, persistence, and strength since women have been domesticated to do light housework such as cleaning, washing, and cooking [26]. This is due to the existence of a patriarchal system that errs in distinguishing the nature of women (*pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth, and breastfeeding*) rather than doing housework, which is truly regarded as part of the cultural construction (of womanhood). This is evident in the clip from Dafa's father's talk with Dafa.

Dafa was displeased with his father's response. Her father once prohibited her from learning to create cakes from her grandmother, saying, "You're not a girl, only girls make cakes!"[25]

Domestication of women is defined by the fact that women are classified as having the ability to cook, such as baking cakes and other baked goods. Dafa's father became a figure who worked to designate the cooking industry. Cooking is generally linked with women, implying that if men cook, they are performing domestic chores similar to women. Men are portrayed as the polar opposite of women. Cooking is deemed unsuitable for guys. As a result, societal conditions have become engrained, serving as the foundation for parents' thinking in delivering 'gender' education to boys and girls. Maleness is measured using cultural instruments steeped in societal stigma. Not only does the job of parents perpetuate the role of males, which is regulated in such a way that men and women's behavior is bound together.

Because of the stigma about 'sissies' who are quite similar to women, men cooking is deemed akin to women. The impotence of men as children to fight against the structure imposed and hegemonized by parents, particularly the power of the father, renders men as children unable to freely express their preferences and social identity. Dafa demonstrates that women's games are more interesting than men's games, both psychologically and in everyday life. The diction in the short story demonstrates that "Dafa prefers cooking to football." This comment illustrates that boys are evaluated as 'men' because they play football, the unwillingness to 'fight' is considered a feminine male model because of the stigma that 'men' have to like fighting to be known as 'men'.

"Do you want to be called a sissy?" The man's jaw tightened and twitched like the gills of a fish taking a breath. Dafa's father had long noticed different symptoms in his son. Since childhood, Dafa has preferred playing with girls' toys over boys' toys; He prefers playing cooking rather than playing football. Dafa is also soft-hearted and doesn't like fighting like most of his male friends. [25].

According to the remark above, Dafa's father is enraged by Dafa's desire to learn to bake cakes. Dafa is thought to have lacked the manhood that males should possess. Dafa Father defines masculinity as enjoying men's games and liking to fight among pals. This is in stark contrast to Dafa, who has a kind heart and enjoys playing games with ladies. The author appears to be describing a condition that still exists in Indonesia in the short story mentioned above. Misconceptions concerning the construction of masculinity in society create new difficulties that are exacerbated by these errors. According to this perspective, male aggression is the result of the conventional masculine character, which is portrayed as aggressive and reliant on violence.

"Men, don't cry. You're embarrassing. " Said his father with bulging eyes! [25].

According to the dialogue excerpt above, the character Dafa Father emphasizes that in order to be labeled a masculine man, males must be tough and not cry readily. "Crying" is seen as a sign of weakness in men, despite the fact that crying is a natural occurrence in humans. Crying can happen when someone's heart and intellect are overly sensitive, and they need an outlet to relieve their pain. As a result, the societal notion that males are not allowed to cry in order to safeguard the dignity of manhood is incorrect and should no longer be believed. Because males have sentiments and can freely express them, including crying. The most fundamental distinction is purely biological.

The creation of masculinity tied to the Dafa character by the father figure demonstrates that the dominance of "father" is very strong in regulating the lives of boys. Although the Dafa figure obeys the Father figure's instructions, he does not forgo his own desires and passion for cooking. Dafa, on the other hand, continued to study physics as instructed by his father. Dafa, who had a boyhood passion of being a cake entrepreneur, frequently encountered opposition from his own father. Dafa demonstrates his existence, particularly his goals of becoming a cake entrepreneur, which he continues to pursue even as an adult. However, when Dafa was still a child, the figure of his father was the determinant of his manhood. Beauvoir [27] says that men, particularly fathers, have the ability to construct children. Patriarchy not only binds and produces women, but it also develops males to conform to the "might" that men form and disseminate (Firdaus, 2022)[28]. It is not enough to just shatter Dafa's masculine construction.

Patriarchal culture's existence

During a period of time, Indonesian society has been defined by a strong patriarchal pattern [29]. The term patriarchal society refers to a socioeconomic order in which men have the majority of power and influence [30], [31]. In the Indonesian setting, patriarchy reflects societal and familial arrangements based on traditional norms that regard men as family heads responsible for money, decision making, and family protection [32]. Although there are cultural and geographical changes across the country, this paradigm still applies to the majority of Indonesia. Women are often held in high regard in patriarchal countries, and women frequently face barriers to gaining equality in areas like education, employment, and access to resources. In Indonesia, patriarchal society has put enormous pressure on the formation of masculinity [33]. In this setting, masculinity is frequently described by traditional characteristics such as physical power, dominance, and situational control [24]. In Indonesia, men can sometimes feel bound by these conversions, which leave little room for greater self-expression and freedom. Expressions of emotion or vulnerability are frequently perceived as indicators of weakness in a society that encourages assertiveness and authority as recognized attributes of masculinity. This can cause severe psychological stress in men, who may feel pressured to meet excessive social ideals of masculinity. In a patriarchal culture, the discourse of masculinity is a discourse of dominance [22], [34], [35].

On the other hand, changes in patriarchal society have also triggered reflection on the concept of masculinity in Indonesia [29]. More males are getting involved in household and family responsibilities, providing opportunities to better understand their masculinity [30]. Increased awareness of the necessity of gender equality has also prompted some men to become active champions for gender equality, viewing equality as an essential component of their male identity. Although patriarchal traditions still persist in Indonesia, an increasing number of men are looking for new ways to define their masculinity, such as being more compassionate, open to other kinds of expression, and supporting constructive social change.

Conclusion

Masculinity is a theory that examines social life and human experience through the eyes of a man. After reading the short story "The Secret of Mina's Lebaran Cake" in depth, it was determined that there is a misunderstanding about what gender roles should be and what society currently believes. Men, for example, cannot bake cakes because baking is a woman's work. This is clearly incorrect, because women's natural instincts are to menstruate, give birth, and breastfeed, not to bake cakes. The strictness and incorrect stereotypes appear to exist today, which is aggravated by men's gender role conflict, as males cannot cry and must be forceful. The result of this mistake has had a negative impact, causing certain parties to feel colonized when asserting their rights. Gender role inequality as a problem, as well as the dark side of behaviors associated with masculinity, must be tackled empathically from both a woman's and a man's perspective. Patriarchy not only confines and creates women, but it also molds boys to conform to the "might" that men create and spread. It is not enough to just deconstruct Dafa's macho construct.

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