



Discrimination against women in film “Gadis Kretek”

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ABSTRACT

The film "Gadis Kretek" highlights the issue of discrimination against women. This analysis employs Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to dissect how signs and symbols in the film reflect social realities. The film presents an engaging narrative that mirrors the social dynamics, particularly concerning gender roles in the kretek industry. Using a qualitative method with a critical paradigm, data were collected through observation and documentation, and analyzed using Barthes' semiotic technique, focusing on denotative, connotative, and mythic signs. The denotative analysis highlights the facial expressions of female characters, dialogues, and the depiction of women in the kretek factory environment. The connotative analysis examines visual and narrative symbols portraying the limited roles of women in society at that time, through elements such as clothing colors, specific symbols, and scene layouts. The mythic analysis addresses societal stereotypes and beliefs about women's roles in the tobacco industry, as well as the film's efforts to challenge these views. The findings indicate that "Gadis Kretek" successfully depicts the complex social reality surrounding women's roles in the kretek industry, including discrimination and stereotypes that are still relevant today. Through semiotic analysis, the film provides a profound insight into inequality, role limitations, and women's struggle against patriarchal norms. These insights contribute to understanding how films can serve as tools for conveying social messages and highlighting issues of gender discrimination. "Gadis Kretek" not only entertains but also educates its audience on the ongoing issues of gender inequality, making it a significant work in both cinematic and social contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Film as an amazing art form has become an inevitable phenomenon in social life. Its development as a key element in social life not only has a significant impact on the audience but also has the ability to convey messages explicitly or implicitly through audio-visual experiences. These messages can be received by the human mind and intellect, providing information, education, and entertainment (Lovita, 2019). The movie "Gadis Kretek" is an Indonesian original series released by Netflix in 2023 and gained public attention. Based on the novel of the same name by Ratih Kumala, the series attracted attention not only because of its interesting story premise and starring famous actresses but also because it raised the story behind the concoction of kretek sauce which is rarely raised by local films. The novel "Gadis Kretek" itself won an award in the Kusala Sastra Khatulistiwa event in 2012 (Hakim et al., 2024). Although this movie successfully presents an

interesting story and strong visuals, there is an underlying issue raised, namely discrimination against women. This discrimination is part of a patriarchal culture that involves unfair treatment based on certain categories such as gender (Sakdiyah, 2018). In the context of the kretek industry depicted in the movie, women face various forms of differentiation, rejection, or restrictions that result in the violation of their human rights to be equal to men.

Although this movie successfully presents an interesting story and strong visuals, there is an underlying issue raised, namely discrimination against women. This discrimination is part of a patriarchal culture that involves unfair treatment based on certain categories such as gender (Sakdiyah, 2018). In the context of the kretek industry depicted in the movie, women face various forms of differentiation, rejection, or restrictions that result in the violation of their human rights to be equal to men.

To understand more about this issue, we can look at previous studies that have discussed gender discrimination in various contexts. For example, Nia Lovita (2019) emphasizes how films can influence individual perceptions and attitudes towards social values. Sakdiyah H (2018) explains that discrimination against women is often systematic and embedded in social structures. However, research that specifically explores discrimination in the clove industry through film semiotic analysis is still limited.

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the signs and symbols in the film "Gadis Kretek" (Kristine & Sunarto, 2023). Through semiotic analysis, this research will identify denotative, connotative, and mythical aspects in the movie (Sanjaya & Fitriyah, 2020). The denotative aspect will highlight the facial expressions, dialog, and portrayal of women in the clove factory environment. The connotative aspect will discuss the use of visual and narrative symbols in depicting restrictions on women (Nurdiansyah, 2020). The mythic aspect will highlight societal stereotypes and beliefs about the role of women in the tobacco industry and the film's attempt to challenge these views.

This research combines semiotic analysis with a case study on the movie "Gadis Kretek". This research not only provides an in-depth insight into the discrimination of women in the kretek industry but also shows how film can be used as a tool to convey relevant social messages. As such, this research can make a significant contribution to our understanding of the role of media in shaping social perceptions and addressing issues of gender discrimination. Compared to other films that also raise gender issues in Indonesia, such as "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" and "A Copy of My Mind", "Gadis Kretek" offers a unique perspective against the backdrop of the kretek industry, which is rarely addressed in local cinema. While "Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts" focuses more on women's revenge against sexual violence in rural areas, and "A Copy of My Mind" depicts the lives of urban women facing social and political issues, "Gadis Kretek" focuses on gender discrimination in the workplace and social stigma in the context of the traditional tobacco industry. This provides an additional dimension to the discussion on gender and discrimination in Indonesia, enriching the narrative of women's struggles in various sectors of life.

This research is significant because it sheds light on how Indonesian films can serve as powerful mediums for addressing and challenging social issues, particularly gender discrimination. By analyzing "Gadis Kretek" through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the study demonstrates how films can go beyond mere entertainment to convey critical social messages. The unique focus on the traditional tobacco industry provides a fresh perspective on gender discrimination, enriching the narrative of women's struggles in various sectors of life. This contributes to the broader discourse on gender issues in Indonesian cinema and underscores the role of films in shaping social perceptions and promoting cultural and social change.

The main objectives of this research in understanding gender discrimination through film are as follows. First, the research aims to identify and analyze the denotative, connotative, and mythical aspects of the film "Gadis Kretek" to understand how signs and symbols convey messages about gender discrimination. The denotative aspect focuses on the explicit portrayal of women, such as facial expressions and dialogues in the clove factory environment. The connotative aspect examines the deeper meanings of visual and narrative symbols depicting restrictions on women. The mythical aspect explores societal stereotypes and beliefs about women's roles in the tobacco industry and the film's efforts to challenge these views. Second, the

research seeks to uncover how systematic gender discrimination is portrayed in the film by using semiotic analysis combined with a case study of the movie "Gadis Kretek." It examines how these portrayals reflect broader social structures and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Third, the study aims to demonstrate how films can be utilized as tools to convey relevant social messages, particularly regarding gender discrimination, emphasizing the importance of media in influencing individual perceptions and attitudes towards social values and issues. Fourth, the research is designed to be relevant across multiple disciplines, including communication, film studies, social, cultural, and gender studies. By doing so, it aims to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and provide valuable insights that benefit various fields of study, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of gender discrimination and the role of media in addressing it. This comprehensive approach not only deepens the understanding of gender discrimination in the specific context of the kretek industry but also illustrates the broader implications of how films can shape social perceptions and promote equality.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method (Sugiyono, 2010) with a critical approach to analyze discrimination against women in the film "Gadis Kretek". This approach was chosen because this research aims to understand the phenomenon of discrimination through descriptions of words and language in a natural context. The critical approach allows researchers to combine theory and action consciously, focusing on identifying and analyzing discrimination against women through Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (Fadhil Adhim et al., 2024). Semiotic theory was used to decipher the signifiers (denotation), signifiers (connotation), and myths contained in the movie.

The film "Gadis Kretek" is very relevant for the study of discrimination against women because it deeply illustrates the various forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in the kretek industry environment in the 1960s. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the film reveals how signs and symbols in the narrative and visualization depict the reality of discrimination. For example, through facial expressions, dialog, and representations of women in the clove factory, the film shows the denotative aspects of discrimination. The connotative aspects of the film are seen in the use of visual symbols such as the color of clothing and the layout of scenes that reflect restrictions on women's roles in society. In addition, the mythical aspects raised by the film highlight society's stereotypes and beliefs about the role of women in the tobacco industry as well as attempts to challenge these views. Thus, "Gadis Kretek" not only provides insights into gender inequality but also highlights women's struggles against patriarchal norms, making it an important resource for the study of discrimination against women.

This research uses Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. Data was collected through observation and documentation methods. Observation was done by watching and observing scenes in the movie "Gadis Kretek", while documentation involved collecting data from various sources such as books, journals, and relevant websites.

In the analysis of the film "Gadis Kretek," specific criteria are used to determine which scenes are discriminatory against women. These criteria are rooted in the semiotic analysis framework developed by Roland Barthes, focusing on three levels of signs: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotative aspects involve identifying scenes that explicitly depict discriminatory actions or policies. Connotative elements are analyzed by examining how cultural and social symbols within the film's visual and narrative structure convey deeper meanings of gender discrimination. Mythical aspects are explored by identifying underlying societal beliefs and stereotypes that the film perpetuates or challenges. This involves analyzing how the narrative and character arcs either reinforce or subvert traditional gender roles.

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which includes three main steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In addition, this study adopted semiotic analysis with a focus on three levels of signs: denotation, connotation, and myth. The denotation level examines the literal meaning of the sign, connotation explores cultural and personal meanings, while myth highlights the beliefs and stereotypes underlying the representations in the film.

Testing was carried out by ensuring the consistency and validity of the analysis results through triangulation of data sources, namely by comparing data from various sources. In addition, member checking was used to confirm the findings with other researchers or experts in the field of semiotics and gender. Data acquisition was done through documentation that collected written and visual data from various relevant sources, as well as direct observation of scenes in the movie to identify elements of discrimination.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study identifies the forms of discrimination against women in the movie "Gadis Kretek" by using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, which consists of three main aspects: denotative, connotative, and myth.

Denotation

The denotative meaning in this study refers to the literal or direct meaning of the scenes and dialogues that show discrimination against women in the film "Gadis Kretek." At this level, the analysis focuses on the literal meaning of the scenes and dialogues. At this level, the analysis is focused on what is explicitly shown on screen without further interpretation of hidden meanings or deeper social implications.



Figure 1. Scene at 06:16 in the movie "Gadis Kretek"

There are scenes that clearly show the prohibition for women to participate in certain activities in the kretek factory. The dialogue "women can only be rollers" directly states that women are restricted to certain roles that are considered appropriate to their gender. This scene displays discrimination in the form of explicit rules that limit women's roles and responsibilities in the work environment.



Figure 2. scene at 32:38 in the movie "Gadis Kretek"

Another scene shows the dialog "women can't be in the sauce room," which again illustrates the policy that prohibits women from accessing certain work areas. This is another example of gender discrimination shown denotatively in the movie, where women are prohibited

from participating in parts of the production process that are deemed unsuitable for them. This prohibition reinforces the stereotype that women are incapable or inappropriate for certain tasks.

Connotation

The connotative meaning in this study refers to the implicit or hidden meaning of the scenes and dialog in the film "Gadis Kretek" that show discrimination against women. At this level, the analysis focuses on a deeper interpretation of the symbolism, emotions, and cultural associations represented by elements in the film.

The color of the clothes worn by female characters in films is often used to convey certain connotative meanings. For example, darker and duller colors may reflect the emotional and social burdens they have to bear as a result of the discrimination they experience. Their simple and less flashy clothing may also indicate a lower social status or lack of freedom to express themselves freely.

The facial expressions and body language of the female characters also have significant connotative meanings. When women in the movie show expressions of discomfort, fear or disappointment, it communicates their feelings about an unfair and discriminatory situation. For example, facial expressions that show despair when denied access to certain workspaces illustrate the feelings of marginalization and powerlessness experienced by women.



Figure 3. scene at 21:30 in the movie "Gadis Kretek"

The use of certain symbols such as cigarettes in the dialog "Cak Wedok kok mainannya rokok" carries connotative meanings about traditional views that consider certain activities inappropriate for women. Cigarettes here are not just physical objects, but symbols of a world that is considered to belong to men and taboo for women. The connotation is that women who try to engage in this world violate rigid gender norms and face social rejection.

MYTH

The meaning of myth in this study refers to a deeper and abstract concept that describes the belief system and ideology underlying gender representation in the movie "Gadis Kretek." Myth, in Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, is the way in which deeper cultural and social meanings are transmitted through narratives and symbols. In this movie, the myths reflect and reinforce stereotypes and social norms that limit women.

The movie reinforces the myth that women are only suited for traditional and subordinate roles in society. The scene where women are only allowed to work as clove rollers reflects the myth that women are naturally better suited for manual labor that does not require high skills or responsibility. This myth reinforces the view that women's roles are limited and secondary compared to men.

The myths displayed in this movie also reflect the belief that men are the main decision-makers and leaders in all aspects of life, including industry. Dialogues and scenes that show men dominating the workspace and making important decisions without involving women illustrate the patriarchal ideology that considers men as the legitimate authority. This creates a narrative that women do not have the capacity or right to lead or make strategic decisions.

Discussion

This research adopts Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze discrimination against women in the film "Gadis Kretek". This approach emphasizes three levels of signification: denotative, connotative, and mythical. The denotative level refers to the literal meaning that is clearly visible in the movie scene, the connotative refers to the hidden and implicit meaning, while the myth describes the meaning that develops in society based on culture and history. By combining these three levels, semiotic analysis provides a deep insight into how signs in films reflect complex social realities related to gender discrimination.

At the denotative level, this study found that scenes in the movie "Gadis Kretek" explicitly show forms of discrimination against women. Dialogue such as "No women allowed in the sauce room" directly emphasizes the prohibition for women to access certain areas of the kretek factory. The facial expressions of the female characters showing confusion and dissatisfaction also illustrate the existing gender inequality. These scenes show workplace rules or norms that inhibit women's participation in the kretek industry, indicating a real discriminatory policy.

At the mythical level, the movie "Gadis Kretek" highlights the existing stereotypes in society regarding the role of women in the tobacco industry. Dialogue such as "Women can only be rollers" reflects the view that certain jobs are only suitable for men. This view is rooted in the myth that jobs in heavy industries such as tobacco require physical strength that is more in line with masculinity. This mythology not only limits individual freedom but also perpetuates gender inequality in the workplace, narrowing opportunities for women to develop.

The movie "Gadis Kretek" seeks to challenge patriarchal norms that limit women's roles. Through the character of Dasiyah or Jeng Yah, the movie depicts women's struggle against discrimination and stereotypes. Dasiyah, despite being underestimated by men in the kretek industry, shows perseverance and an extraordinary ability to make the best kretek sauce. Her character shows that women have the same potential as men to achieve success, and the movie invites the audience to question existing patriarchal norms.

Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this study shows how signs in the media can reflect and reinforce social norms about gender. The results support the argument in feminist theory that the media often reinforces gender stereotypes that disadvantage women. In addition, this study also highlights the importance of women's representation in the media as a way to challenge and change society's views on gender.

This research shows that the film "Gadis Kretek" successfully portrays gender discrimination in the tobacco industry and serves as a critique of existing patriarchal norms. The film emphasizes the importance of gender equality and inclusion in the workplace, as well as the need to remove discriminatory policies that limit women's roles as they occur. This research is relevant to today's life because there are still gender inequalities that occur in various sectors of life. One of them is gender inequality in the workplace. Women often earn less than men for the same work, and they may face barriers to promotion or leadership positions. In addition, women often face discrimination in the form of sexual harassment and gender bias that deems them less competent or less suitable for certain jobs.

4. CONCLUSION

The research conducted shows that the issue of discrimination against women raised in the film "Gadis Kretek" has been successfully analyzed in depth through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. From this analysis, it was found that there are various signs and symbols that represent complex social realities related to gender discrimination in the kretek industry.

In the denotative aspect, this research highlights scenes in the movie that explicitly display forms of discrimination against women. For example, the dialog that shows the prohibition for women to access certain areas in the kretek factory illustrates the real discriminatory rules and work norms that limit the role of women. These scenes show explicit rules that hinder women's participation in the kretek industry, demonstrating the discriminatory policies that still exist in society.

The connotative aspect reveals the hidden meaning behind the use of visual and narrative symbolism in the film, which reinforces society's view of women's limited role in the industry. For

example, the use of colors and scene layouts that depict women's traditional roles, as well as facial expressions and body language that show women's discomfort and helplessness in the face of discrimination. These symbols depict the emotional and social burdens that women have to bear due to the discrimination they experience.

At the mythical level, the film successfully highlights social stereotypes regarding the role of women and attempts to challenge existing patriarchal views through strong and inspiring characters such as Dasiyah. The myths presented in the film reflect the belief that women are only suited for traditional and subordinate roles in society. The film criticizes the view that women are incapable or inappropriate for certain tasks that are considered more suitable for men.

The limitations of this study include several aspects. First, this study only focuses on one film, namely "Gadis Kretek," so the findings and analysis may not be generalizable to other films that raise the issue of discrimination against women. Secondly, this research uses Roland Barthes' semiotic method which is subjective in nature, so the interpretation of signs and symbols in the film may vary depending on the researcher's perspective. Third, limited time and resources also limit the scope of the analysis, so not all aspects of gender discrimination in films can be discussed in depth.

For future research, it is suggested that the research expand the scope by comparing several films that raise similar issues to get a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of discrimination against women in Indonesian films. In addition, the use of other analytical methods, such as discourse analysis or feminist analysis, can provide additional perspectives and enrich the research results. Research can also involve respondents from various backgrounds to get a broader and deeper view of the interpretation of symbols and messages conveyed in films.

"Gadis Kretek" is not only a film narrative, but also discrimination against women and norms that limit women. The film underscores the need for inclusion and equality in the workplace, emphasizing that policies that discriminate against women must be abolished to achieve social justice.

The findings from the semiotic analysis of "Gadis Kretek" offer a rich foundation for influencing policy in the kretek industry and other relevant areas by addressing gender discrimination. Firstly, these insights can be pivotal in raising awareness and advocacy efforts. By showcasing the explicit and implicit forms of discrimination depicted in the film, stakeholders such as industry leaders, workers' unions, and policymakers can gain a deeper understanding of gender inequalities that persist in the workplace. Advocacy campaigns can leverage these findings to push for meaningful reforms and promote gender equality within the industry.

These findings can inform the development of robust policy frameworks aimed at eradicating gender-based discrimination. Policymakers can derive guiding principles from the film's portrayal of discriminatory practices to ensure that women have equal opportunities in all roles, from entry-level to leadership positions. Regulatory frameworks can be established to enforce gender equality standards, such as equal pay for equal work, safe working conditions, and protection against gender-based harassment.

In addition to policy development, these findings can be utilized to enhance training and educational programs. Employee training programs can be designed to educate workers and managers about the importance of diversity and inclusion, fostering a more equitable work environment. Furthermore, incorporating these insights into educational curricula can empower future generations with a thorough understanding of the historical and ongoing challenges faced by women, equipping them to advocate for change in their professional lives.

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