

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MISOGYNISTIC IDEOLOGY IN JOKO ANWAR'S HORROR FILMS 2017-2022 BASED ON RUTH WODAK'S APPROACH

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Abstract

This research examines the representation of misogynistic ideology in the horror films *Pengabdi Setan* (2017) and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022), directed by Joko Anwar, through Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study aims to analyze how misogynistic ideologies operate within the narratives of these two films and how they reproduce the patriarchal discourse embedded in Indonesian society. By investigating the male gaze, the research explores how this cinematic technique either reinforces or challenges misogynistic ideologies within the context of patriarchy. Furthermore, the study examines the role of symbolism and visual representation in these films, investigating how these elements are used to either create or resist the ideological framework of misogyny. Through a qualitative approach, CDA's three key dimensions cognitive, socio-psychological, and linguistic are applied to reveal how gender power dynamics are conveyed through both narrative and visual forms in contemporary Indonesian horror cinema.

Keywords : *Misogyny, Representation, Patriarchy, Pengabdi Setan, Critical Discourse Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Across many parts of the world, societies continue to struggle with overcoming gender inequality and injustice. Gender refers to the social and cultural distinctions between men and women, shaped by social norms rather than biological factors (Wodak, 1997). Feminism is a movement advocating for gender equality, challenging social systems that place women in subordinate roles (Aizid, 2024). Misogyny, defined as hatred or prejudice against women, manifests in various forms, from explicit violence to more subtle representations in culture and media (Kaul, 2021). This gender bias is deeply embedded in social systems, particularly within patriarchal cultures where men hold primary power in political, economic, and social spheres (Sakina & A., 2017). At its core, feminism relates to women's rights. However, the term originally referred to the theory of sexual (gender) equality and the movement for women's human rights. While both feminism and gender are closely related to women, they have distinct meanings. Thus, despite their close connection to women, feminism and gender have different connotations. Patriarchal culture has long dominated social structures, with men holding primary power, while women are often placed in subordinate positions. This imbalance is not only reflected in legal and economic aspects but also in daily attitudes and behaviors that disadvantage women. One of the most prominent manifestations of gender inequality is misogyny, which appears in various forms, from explicit discrimination to attitudes and behaviors that demean women (Kaul, 2021). Understanding the difference between misogyny and patriarchy is crucial. While both are interconnected, misogyny is an attitude or behavior emphasizing hatred towards women, whereas patriarchy is a social system placing men in dominant positions in various life aspects, including politics, morality, and social authority (Nurcahyo, 2016).

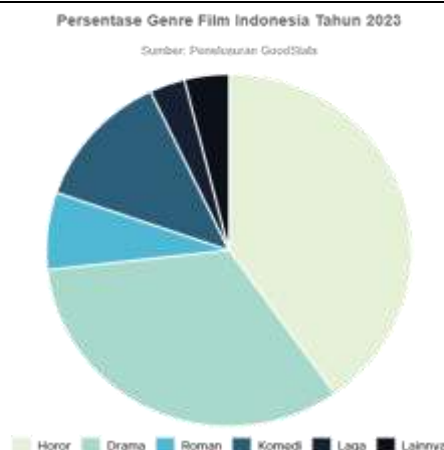


Image : Percentage Chart of Indonesian Film Genres in 2023
(Source: Good Stats Search)

The Indonesian film industry, particularly the horror genre, plays a significant role in depicting and reinforcing societal norms and ideologies. In horror films, women are often portrayed as passive victims or as dangerous, supernatural beings. This genre, rooted in fear, frequently uses women as central characters that represent societal anxieties, particularly about gender roles and violations of established norms. The works of Joko Anwar, *Pengabdi Setan* (2017) and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022), serve as powerful examples of how women are depicted within this framework. These two films present women in complex roles, not merely as passive victims but also as figures who challenge and question social norms, even though they are often framed within existing patriarchal structures. *Pengabdi Setan* (2017), directed by Joko Anwar, marks a significant return of the horror genre in Indonesia, blending supernatural elements with psychological horror. This film, a remake of the 1980 Indonesian classic of the same name, tells the story of a family haunted by the ghost of a deceased mother. As the family members face supernatural forces, *Pengabdi Setan* also reveals the social constructs surrounding gender, family, and the role of women. *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022), the sequel, continues the exploration of similar themes, delving deeper into the portrayal of female characters grappling with trauma, revenge, and familial obligations, further complicating their roles in the social and cultural context of Indonesian society.

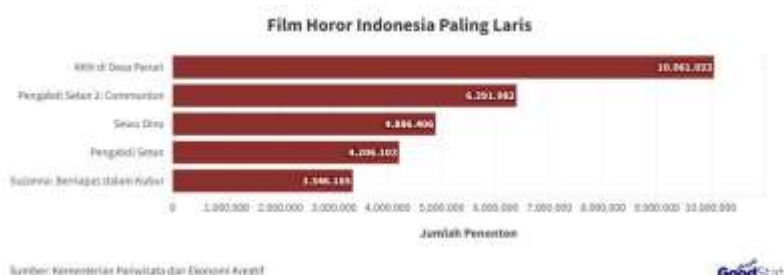


Image: Highest-Grossing Horror Films in Indonesia from 2017 to 2023
(Source: Good Stats Search, cited from the Ministry of Tourism)

Through the lens of Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study aims to explore how *Pengabdi Setan* and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* reflect and challenge misogynistic ideologies within their narratives. The research focuses on understanding how misogynistic ideologies operate within the narratives of these films to reproduce patriarchal discourses. It also examines how the male gaze is utilized in these films to either reinforce or challenge misogynistic ideologies within the context of patriarchy. Furthermore, the study investigates how symbolism and visual representation are employed to either create or resist misogynistic ideologies. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in exploring how gender representations in contemporary Indonesian horror cinema reflect and challenge social norms related to gender and power. The practical contribution is to provide insights for filmmakers on the importance of engaging with gender issues more critically in their work. The findings of this research can also influence broader discussions on gender

equality in media and provide a deeper understanding of how popular culture, particularly film, shapes societal perceptions of women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Representation in Film and Media

Gender representation in film has long been studied for its role in reinforcing societal norms. (Hall, 1997) argues that media representations are active in shaping social understandings of reality. In horror films, women are often depicted as passive victims or threatening figures, reflecting societal fears about female power. Feminist scholars like (Mulvey, 1975) introduced the concept of the "male gaze," which suggests that women in film are objectified for the pleasure of the male viewer, reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics. In horror, the male gaze limits women's agency, positioning them as either victims or threats.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), offers a framework for understanding how media perpetuates power structures. DHA's three dimensions cognitive, socio-psychological, and linguistic help analyze how gender is constructed in film. These dimensions explore the mental frameworks that shape gender roles, the power relations reflected in discourse, and the linguistic and visual elements that convey gendered ideologies. This research uses DHA to explore how *Pengabdi Setan* and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* reflect and challenge patriarchal ideologies in their narratives and visual elements.

Male Gaze in Horror Films

The male gaze theory (Mulvey, 1975) is essential for understanding how horror films represent women. In horror, the gaze often portrays women as either vulnerable victims or powerful, supernatural figures. This research aims to analyze how Joko Anwar's films utilize the male gaze to either reinforce or resist misogynistic ideologies. While there has been little application of the male gaze concept to Indonesian cinema, this study seeks to fill that gap.

Symbolism and Visual Representation of Gender

Horror films often use visual symbolism to portray gender, with lighting, framing, and mise-en-scène accentuating women's vulnerability or power. (Creed, 1993) discusses the "monstrous-feminine," a trope where the female body becomes a site of horror. In *Pengabdi Setan* and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion*, visual elements are used to construct female characters as both vulnerable and powerful, reinforcing or subverting patriarchal ideologies.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the gender representations in *Pengabdi Setan* (2017) and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022). DHA is particularly suited for analyzing how discourse reflects and perpetuates power relations, including those related to gender and patriarchy. The approach involves three key dimensions: cognitive, socio-psychological, and linguistic, which are used to analyze the verbal and visual elements of the films. The research sample consists of the two selected films, *Pengabdi Setan* (2017) and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022), chosen for their cultural significance in contemporary Indonesian horror cinema. The study focuses on key scenes and dialogues, as well as visual representations, to understand how gendered power structures are portrayed and how these films either reinforce or challenge societal norms. The data collection technique involves transcribing and coding the dialogues and visual cues from the films. Using DHA, the verbal and visual data will be analyzed to identify recurring themes related to gender and power dynamics. The data analysis will focus on understanding how the films construct gender roles, with particular attention to the male gaze and how female characters are portrayed within a patriarchal context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pengabdi Setan (2017)

Pengabdi Setan (2017), directed by Joko Anwar, is a remake of the 1980 Indonesian horror film. The film's portrayal of gender, particularly in relation to women, reveals both conventional and subversive elements of patriarchy. Using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the film was analyzed through three dimensions: cognitive, socio-psychological, and linguistic.

Cognitive Dimension:

- In *Pengabdi Setan*, the characters' understanding of the supernatural and family dynamics is influenced by societal norms, including gender roles.
- Female characters are often positioned as either victims or bearers of supernatural power, challenging traditional family roles but also reinforcing the fear associated with female power.
- The protagonist, Rini, is depicted as both a victim and a heroine, balancing agency with vulnerability.

Socio-Psychological Dimension:

- This dimension examines how the film reflects the power relations within Indonesian society.
- In the film, women are subjected to violence and control, yet their involvement in supernatural forces suggests a deeper societal anxiety about women challenging patriarchal norms.
- The film portrays a patriarchal family structure where the father figure is central, but the mother's ghost, who holds power over the family, complicates this structure, reflecting both patriarchal authority and female rebellion.

Linguistic Dimension:

- The linguistic dimension explores the language and visual representations used to construct gender roles.
- Dialogues in *Pengabdi Setan* often depict the male characters as protectors or authoritative figures, while women, especially the ghostly mother and the protagonist Rini, are given less control over their narratives.
- Visual cues, such as framing and lighting, emphasize Rini's vulnerability and isolation but also highlight her strength, particularly in scenes where she confronts the supernatural.
- The use of darkness and shadows in the film symbolizes the power that women wield, even when they are marginal figures in the family structure.

Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion (2022)

Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion (2022), the sequel to the first film, continues the exploration of gender roles, power, and the supernatural. This film deepens the depiction of female characters, further complicating their roles within the societal and supernatural structures. As with the first film, DHA's three dimensions were applied to analyze its representation of gender.

Cognitive Dimension:

- In *Pengabdi Setan 2*, the cognitive frameworks of the characters are shaped by both their traumatic pasts and the lingering influence of supernatural forces.
- Female characters, particularly Rini and her mother, are represented as both victims and agents of terror, challenging their passive roles in the family and supernatural hierarchy.
- The characters' understanding of family duty, survival, and revenge is heavily influenced by gendered expectations, where women are expected to protect the family but are also viewed with suspicion when they assume power.

Socio-Psychological Dimension:

- The socio-psychological dimension explores how the societal power structures in the film reflect gender inequality and resistance.
- *Pengabdi Setan 2* portrays women who are caught between familial duty and supernatural retribution. The film continues the theme of women being controlled and possessed, yet it also suggests that the supernatural power they hold is a form of resistance to patriarchal control.
- The relationships between female characters and their male counterparts further reinforce patriarchal expectations, where women's strength is often suppressed or manipulated for male interests.

Linguistic Dimension:

- The linguistic dimension in *Pengabdi Setan 2* reveals how language and visual imagery reinforce or resist misogynistic ideologies.
- Dialogue and narrative structure emphasize the isolation of female characters, but their defiance is also portrayed in key scenes, where they challenge both the family structure and the supernatural entities controlling them.
- Visually, women in the film are often framed within confined spaces, symbolizing their marginalization, but their moments of agency are highlighted through strong camera angles and contrasting lighting, particularly during confrontational scenes.
- The language used in the film conveys the tension between women's roles as both victims and powerful figures who break free from patriarchal constraints.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Pengabdi Setan* (2017) and *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* (2022) using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) reveals significant insights into the representation of gender, particularly in the context of patriarchal power structures. Both films, while situated in the horror genre, offer complex portrayals of female characters who both conform to and resist traditional gender roles. In the cognitive dimension, both films depict female characters as navigating societal gender expectations, with Rini serving as a protagonist who embodies vulnerability but also challenges her predetermined role as a passive victim. In the socio-psychological dimension, the films reflect the broader societal power relations, where women are positioned within patriarchal frameworks but are also shown to possess supernatural power, symbolizing resistance to male dominance. The linguistic dimension further emphasizes the interplay of power and vulnerability through dialogue and visual representation. In both films, male characters are depicted as protectors and authoritative figures, while women are framed as either victims or powerful forces that challenge the status quo. The strategic use of lighting, framing, and camera angles highlights the marginalization of women but also moments where their agency is visibly asserted. Overall, both films highlight the tension between patriarchy and female agency. While the films reinforce traditional gender roles at times, they also subvert these roles, offering a more complex view of gender in contemporary Indonesian cinema. The findings from this study underscore the importance of critically analyzing media representations, as these films reflect and challenge societal norms related to gender and power.

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