
Power Relations and Patriarchal Ideology: The Agency of Madurese Women in Indonesian Novels through Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of Madurese women in contemporary Indonesian novels using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. It focuses on how power relations and patriarchal ideologies are constructed and negotiated in *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jeddah*. This study aims to identify discursive strategies that naturalise women's subordination while exploring the forms of agency embedded within the narrative structure. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, this comparative analysis investigates the textual, discursive, and social dimensions of the novels. The findings reveal that patriarchy is naturalised through morally evaluative lexical choices, metaphors of honour, and deontic modalities that frame women's obligations within the authority of custom and religion. At the narrative level, symbolic domination and the centralisation of male voices institutionalise power relations as the cultural norm. However, female characters are not portrayed as entirely passive; agency emerges through implicit resistance, domestic negotiation, and ambivalence between compliance and defiance in their lives. Theoretically, this study strengthens the application of critical discourse analysis in Indonesian literary studies and conceptualises agency as a discursive negotiation within ethnicity-based patriarchal structures

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Madurese women, patriarchy, power relations, Indonesian novels

A. INTRODUCTION

Gender representation in contemporary literature is increasingly understood not merely as the depiction of women in texts but as a site where social meanings, identities, and power relations are produced, reproduced, and contested through language and narrative practices (Alima Mudasir et al., 2025; Fivush & Grysman, 2022). Literary texts do not function as neutral reflections of reality; rather, they participate in the construction of social values and cultural norms through lexical choices, narrative structures, representations of social actors, and the distribution of narrative voices (Leotti et al., 2022; van Hulst et al., 2025). Consequently, literary representations of gender provide important insights into how authority, morality, and social order are constructed and legitimised discursively.

In many cultural contexts, women are frequently represented through narratives of domesticity, sacrifice, obedience, and family honour (Abdurahman et al., 2024; Warman et al.,

2023). Such representations are not merely descriptive but reflect broader patriarchal structures that regulate gender roles and establish unequal distributions of power between men and women. Previous studies have demonstrated that power relations in narrative texts are often embedded in the allocation of social roles, the moral evaluation of characters, and the privileging of particular perspectives as normative voices (Antoniak et al., 2019; Björninen et al., 2020; Gasser et al., 2022). Consequently, literary narratives may contribute to the naturalisation of gender hierarchies by presenting culturally constructed relations of authority as commonplace or social necessities.

This dynamic becomes particularly significant in literary representations of societies in which gender relations are closely intertwined with religious values, customary traditions, and the collective notion of honour. In many patriarchal contexts, women are simultaneously positioned as symbols of cultural identity and subjects whose behaviour is regulated through moral and social expectations (Hamamra, 2020; Loza, 2022; Sarsono et al., 2025). Such tensions are especially relevant in representations of Madurese society, where family honour, religiosity, and customary authority continue to influence social relationships and gender expectations. Consequently, novels set within Madurese sociocultural contexts provide a valuable site for examining how patriarchal power is represented, legitimised, and negotiated through discourse.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on gender representation in literature, existing studies have predominantly adopted thematic, sociological, or feminist approaches that focus on women's marginalisation, identity, and resistance (Abdulsahib et al., 2025; Jasmine Suja et al., 2024; Muslimat et al., 2025). Although these studies have generated important insights into gender inequality, relatively little attention has been devoted to the linguistic and narrative mechanisms through which patriarchal ideology is discursively constructed and normalised in literary texts. Similarly, research on Madurese women has largely concentrated on sociocultural realities and community practices rather than analysing literary discourse as a site of ideological production and negotiation. This limitation is important because patriarchal power often operates through subtle discursive strategies embedded in language, symbolism, modality, metaphor, and narrative organisation rather than through explicit statements of domination (Al-Furaiji et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2025; Simmie, 2023).

Recent developments in gender studies further suggest that agency should not be conceptualised solely as open resistance to patriarchal domination. Instead, agency is increasingly understood as a process of negotiation that occurs within existing power structures and social constraints (Barragan et al., 2018; Jack et al., 2019; Tiernan & O'Connor, 2020). Women may exercise agency through strategic silence, domestic negotiation, symbolic reinterpretation, selective compliance, or other forms of discursive positioning that challenge dominant norms without necessarily overturning them (Kawarazuka et al., 2019). This perspective is particularly relevant for analysing representations of Madurese women, whose experiences are situated at the intersection of patriarchy, customary authority, religious values, and collective honour.

Against this background, the present study examines the representation of power relations, patriarchal ideology, and women's agency in three contemporary Indonesian novels set within Madurese sociocultural contexts, namely *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jaddah*. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How are power relations represented through social actor representation and narrative structures? (2) How is patriarchal ideology constructed and naturalised through lexical choices, metaphors, and grammatical patterns? and (3) How is the agency of Madurese women negotiated within the discourse of the novels?

This study contributes to the literature in three significant ways. First, it extends existing scholarship on Madurese women by shifting the analytical focus from sociocultural realities to

literary discourse as an arena of ideological production. Second, it demonstrates the analytical value of critical discourse analysis in examining how gendered power relations are constructed through linguistic and narrative strategies in culturally specific literary texts. Third, it conceptualises agency not as a simple opposition to patriarchy but as a discursive negotiation embedded within the very structures of power that shape women's lives. Through this perspective, the study positions literature as a dynamic site where patriarchal ideology is simultaneously reproduced, negotiated, and contested within local cultural contexts.

B. METHOD

1. Research Approach and Epistemological Position

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design situated within a critical paradigm and informed by a critical constructivist epistemological perspective. From this standpoint, social reality, including gender relations, is not regarded as objective or value-free but as socially constructed through discursive practices that are repeatedly produced, circulated and legitimised within society (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Language is therefore understood not merely as a medium of communication but as a social practice through which power relations, ideologies, and cultural meanings are constructed and negotiated.

Accordingly, literary texts are treated as discursive sites where social meanings regarding gender, authority, morality and identity are produced and contested. This epistemological position enables the analysis of novels not only as aesthetic artefacts but also as ideological practices embedded within broader sociocultural structures.

2. Methodological Framework

This study adopted Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary analytical framework. This model was selected because it facilitates the integration of micro-level linguistic analysis with macro-level social interpretation by examining three interconnected dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Compared with other CDA approaches that emphasise either sociocognitive or sociohistorical dimensions, Fairclough's framework offers a systematic procedure for analysing lexical choices, grammatical structures, representational strategies, and narrative organisation in relation to broader ideological processes. In literary studies, this approach is particularly useful because it allows power relations, patriarchal ideology, and forms of agency to be examined not only as thematic elements but also as outcomes of linguistic and narrative constructions (Lazar, 2005).

3. Data Sources and Corpus Selection

The data sources consisted of three contemporary Indonesian novels situated within the sociocultural context of Madura: *Rumah Jaddah* (Julian, 2019), *Damar Kambang* (Masyari, 2020), and *Paraban Tuah* (Suminar, 2021). The novels were selected purposively based on three considerations.

First, all three novels explicitly depict gender relations within a cultural environment strongly influenced by religious values, traditional customs, and collective notions of honour. Second, female characters occupy central positions within major narrative conflicts, enabling the examination of both patriarchal subordination and women's agency in the novels. Third, the

relatively recent publication period allows this study to explore contemporary representations of Madurese women in Indonesian literature.

The selection of these novels was intended to construct an information-rich corpus capable of providing insights into the discursive production and negotiation of patriarchal ideology within a culturally specific setting.

4. Data Collection and Corpus Construction

Data were collected through a systematic close-reading procedure. Each novel was read multiple times to identify textual segments containing explicit or implicit representations of gender relations, patriarchal authority, family honour, customary legitimacy, religious norms, and women's agency. The primary data consisted of narrative descriptions, dialogues, internal monologues, and commentary. During the initial reading stage, potentially relevant excerpts were highlighted, catalogued, and organised into a preliminary corpus. This process aimed to capture a wide range of discursive representations associated with gendered power relations.

A purposive data reduction process was subsequently conducted to ensure analytical relevance. Textual excerpts were retained when they met at least one of the following criteria:

1. Representation of male authority and female subordination
2. Construction of patriarchal values through lexical, metaphorical, or grammatical choices
3. References to religion, custom, honour, or family reputation as mechanisms of social legitimacy;
4. Manifestations of women's agency, resistance, negotiation, or ambivalence

Textual segments unrelated to these analytical categories were excluded from the analysis. The resulting corpus constituted the primary analytical dataset used in the CDA. The objective of corpus construction was not statistical representativeness but theoretical relevance and interpretive depth, which are the central principles of qualitative discourse research.

5. Units of Analysis

The units of analysis comprised words, phrases, clauses, sentences, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and internal monologues that represent gender relations and power dynamics within the novels.

Five linguistic dimensions were examined in this study.

First, evaluative lexical choices were analysed to identify how women and men were categorised, valued, and morally positioned within the narratives. Second, cultural and honour-related metaphors were examined to reveal the symbolic constructions associated with femininity, morality, and social legitimacy. Third, deontic modalities, including obligation, prohibition, necessity, and permission, were analysed as indicators of authority and normative control. Fourth, grammatical structures such as active–passive constructions, agency assignment, and nominalisation were investigated to determine how power and responsibility were distributed among the social actors. Fifth, the representations of social actors and narrative voice distribution were examined to identify whose perspectives were privileged, marginalised, or legitimised within the narrative structure.

These dimensions were selected because patriarchal ideology frequently operates through subtle linguistic and narrative mechanisms rather than explicit ideological declarations.

6. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework through an iterative process.

6.1 Textual Analysis

The first stage focused on the linguistic features of the selected excerpts, including lexical choices, modality, metaphor, grammatical structures, and social actor representation. The objective was to identify how patriarchal ideology and gendered power relations were constructed at the textual level.

6.2 Discursive Practice Analysis

The second stage examined how meaning was produced and circulated within the narrative. Particular attention was paid to intertextual references, narrative voice distribution, legitimising strategies, and the positioning of readers in relation to dominant and alternative interpretations of gender relations.

6.3 Social Practice Analysis

The final stage connected the textual and discursive findings to broader sociocultural structures. This stage explored how the identified discursive patterns reflected, reinforced, negotiated, or challenged patriarchal norms, religious values, customary authority, and honour-based social systems within the Madurese cultural context. Rather than being conducted sequentially, these stages were applied recursively, allowing for continuous movement between textual evidence and social interpretation.

7. Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

To enhance analytical credibility, this study employed theoretical triangulation by integrating critical discourse analysis, gender studies, and narrative analysis perspectives. Peer debriefing was also conducted to examine the consistency of coding decisions and interpretive claims. Furthermore, the study acknowledges the researcher's role as an interpretive agent in the production of meaning. Consequently, reflexive awareness was maintained throughout the research process to minimise subjective bias and ensure transparency in analytical decisions (Lazar, 2005). An audit trail documenting coding procedures, category development, and interpretive reasoning was maintained to strengthen methodological rigor and trustworthiness.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Discursive Strategies of Patriarchal Representation

Patriarchal representation in the *Rumah Jaddah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Paraban Tuah* is not presented explicitly as a crude and overt system of oppression, but rather works through subtle, repetitive, and institutionalised discursive strategies in language. At the textual level, the three novels display consistent patterns in lexical choices, the use of metaphors of honour and women's bodies, and deontic modality and imperative forms in the dialogue of male characters. At the social practice level, these strategies serve to naturalise the subordination of women as culturally normal.

a. Naturalisation of Subordination through Lexical Choice

The lexical patterns across the three novels indicate a consistent tendency to position women as subjects requiring protection, regulation, and moral scrutiny. Terms such as "shame,"

honour, “obedience,” inappropriate, “must protect oneself,” and “family reputation” are recurrently linked to women’s bodies and conduct. By contrast, male characters are more frequently associated with expressions of agency and authority, including “decide,” “determine,” “protect,” and “defend.”

For example, in the context of Paraban Tuah, the discourse on marriage is articulated through an emphasis on family pride and social acceptability. Women are not only positioned as subjects who will marry but also as symbolic representations of family dignity. When debates arise regarding proposals and the suitability of prospective husbands, the discourse is not directed at the personal will of women but rather at ‘what people will say’ and ‘is this family suitable’. Lexical choices such as these shift the focus from individual agency to collective honour.

In Damar Kambang, the vocabulary surrounding marriage and customs is more subtle but still implies a form of control. The marriage ritual process is described using terms that emphasise patience, submission, and acceptance as ideal qualities for women. The religious and customary lexicon serves as symbolic legitimisation, indicating that obedience is not coercion but a virtue.

Meanwhile, Rumah Jaddah presents a harsher lexicon in the context of social and religious conflicts. When women are caught in a vortex of stigma or social violence, the vocabulary used by the surrounding community tends to reduce their position as sources of problems or disgrace. The repetition of terms related to sin, error, or impropriety serves to build an implicit association in which women are the locations of a community's moral vulnerability.

At the textual analysis level (Fairclough), lexical choices indicate the process of classification and evaluation. Language not only describes reality, but categorises women within a specific moral framework (Krendel, 2020; Zhao, 2025). At the social practice level, such lexical repetition naturalises subordination as a cultural norm (Chavez et al., 2024; Rauf et al., 2025). Patriarchy operates not through overt ideological declarations, but through linguistic conventions that are rarely questioned (Manaworapong & Bowen, 2022; Rauf et al., 2025; Suchana, 2024).

b. Metaphorisation of Honour and Objectification of Women's Bodies

The next discursive strategy emerges through the use of metaphors that associate women's bodies with symbols of honour, home, light, or spatial boundaries. These metaphors are not merely aesthetic ornaments but ideological mechanisms that obscure power relations.

In Damar Kambang, the symbol of ‘damar’ or oil lamp in the context of marriage refers to domestication. The light that must be guarded and maintained represents the continuity of the household and is implicitly imposed on women. Women are expected to be the guardians of this flame, a symbol of family harmony and stability. This metaphor frames emotional and moral responsibility as a natural obligation of women.

In Paraban Tuah, metaphors for the house and yard are repeated as spaces for social representation. The presence or absence of gifts is not merely a material issue but a symbol of self-esteem. Women's bodies and marriages become the meeting point between private spaces and public judgment. Thus, women are symbolic intermediaries between families and society.

Rumah Jaddah metaphorizes women's bodies in the context of death and stigma. Women's bodies are not only objects of narrative but also arenas for the production of social meaning. Visual and narrative descriptions of bodies found or viewed by society demonstrate how women's bodies become social texts read and interpreted by the public. Honour and shame are attached to women, not to the actions of men.

This metaphor of honour works by shifting structural issues into symbolic issues (Shroff, 2021). The power relationship between men and women is not expressed as domination but rather

as a responsibility to preserve symbols (Loza, 2022). Women's bodies are reduced to collective representations, so that every personal action has magnified social consequences (Keyser-Verreault, 2025).

From a CDA perspective, this metaphor illustrates the strategies of representation and reification. Women's bodies are represented as symbolic objects, not autonomous subjects (Malik & Hassan, 2025). At the discursive practice level, cultural and customary symbols reinforce the legitimacy of this metaphor. At the social practice level, this metaphorisation supports the patriarchal honour system that controls women's mobility and choices.

c. Deontic and Imperative Modalities as Control Mechanisms

The most explicit strategy is seen in the use of deontic modality and imperative forms in dialogues between male characters. All three novels show a tendency for commands, prohibitions, and affirmations of obligation to be uttered more frequently by male figures, such as fathers, prospective husbands, religious leaders, or village elites.

Modalities such as 'must', 'must not', 'should not', and 'ought to' frame women's actions within a horizon of moral obligation. In *Paraban Tuah*, debates about marriage are often accompanied by normative statements about what women 'ought' to do for the sake of the family. In *Damar Kambang*, gentle advice still contains normative pressure that directs women to accept customary decisions.

In *Rumah Jaddah*, the imperative form appears more emphatically, especially in situations of social conflict. Women are reminded, reprimanded, or directed using direct sentence structures that place men as agents of action. The active syntactic structure shows who gives the command and who receives it. Interestingly, control does not always involve verbal violence (Frascarelli & Jiménez-Fernández, 2021). In many cases, imperatives are wrapped in guising their advice or concerns. This strategy makes domination appear to be a form of protection (Barreto & Doyle, 2022). Thus, patriarchy is reproduced as a rational and thoughtful act rather than coercion. At the textual level, the use of modality indicates the distribution of speaking rights and the right to determine norms (Ghangale et al., 2025). At the discursive level, this dialogue shows how authority is legitimised through custom and religion. At the social level, this structure affirms that men have the position of guardians of norms, whereas women are enforcers of norms (Sikweyiya et al., 2020).

2. Mechanisms of Power Relations in Narratives

If the previous section explains how patriarchy works through linguistic strategies at the lexical, metaphorical, and modal levels, this section analyzes how power relations are organised in the narrative architecture of the three novels. Power relations appear not only in direct speech but also in the way the story is structured, who is given the authority to speak, and what values are positioned as indisputable. In *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jaddah*, these mechanisms are evident through symbolic domination, religious and customary legitimacy, and narrative structures that tend to centre male voices as the determinants of norms.

a. Symbolic Dominance in Story Structure

Symbolic domination in the three novels through social recognition of authority figures. Fathers, religious leaders, traditional elders, and prospective husbands are not always physically repressive figures, but rather centres of moral legitimacy. These are the sources of definitions of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, worthy, and despicable.

In Paraban Tuah, decisions regarding marriage and the suitability of prospective partners are made by male figures who represent the family and community. The narrative rarely provides women with space to define happiness or honour. When conflict arises, the story focuses more on the social impact on the family than on the women's inner struggle. Thus, power relations are framed as collective normality rather than personal domination.

In Damar Kambang, symbolic domination appears subtler. Male characters do not always rule explicitly; their existence as guardians of customs and traditions gives them the weight of legitimacy that is difficult to challenge. Rituals and cultural symbols have become instruments for reinforcing their positions. Women who participate in these rituals often accept decisions as part of the cycle of tradition. The narrative does not present open ideological debates but rather allows traditional symbols to function as accepted authority.

Meanwhile, Rumah Jaddah displays symbolic domination in a harsh social context. Stigma and moral judgment of women by society are constructed through a collective voice that is rarely questioned. Male figures and their surrounding social structures determine the interpretation of events. Women are in a position where they are judged and discussed rather than being subjects who determine meaning. Within the framework of symbolic domination theory, power works effectively when it is recognised as normal by the dominated party (Parvez, 2022). All three novels show that legitimacy is not always asserted through violence, but rather through acceptance of established normative structures (Emmett, 2022). The narrative tends to present men's decisions as a logical consequence of the social system, thereby making power relations appear natural (Akinseye, 2025).

b. Religious and Customary Authorities as Discursive Legitimacy

The next mechanism is seen in the intersection of religion and custom as sources of normative legitimacy. These three elements are not merely cultural backgrounds but function as discursive devices that regulate women's choices.

In Paraban Tuah, family customs form the main framework for determining the direction of the story. Honour is not understood as an individual value but as a collective reputation that must be maintained. When differences of opinion or potential violations of norms arise, custom becomes the final reference that ends the debate. The narrative rarely provides space for the reinterpretation of customs from a female perspective. Thus, custom functions as a stable structure that closes off the possibility of open resistance.

Damar Kambang demonstrated the integration of ritual symbols with religious values. Wedding ceremonies and traditions were presented as a form of respect for ancestors and social norms. Here, religion and customs do not appear as two separate systems, but rather reinforce each other. When female characters face choices, references to religious values often become arguments that silence negotiations. Religious authority is present in the form of advice, wisdom, or moral reminders that appear caring but simultaneously limit freedom of movement.

Religion is a powerful source of collective morality in the Rumah Jaddah. Stigma against women who are considered to have violated norms is often associated with the violation of religious values. The narrative shows how religious interpretation can be a tool for social control. Religious authority is articulated through the voices of certain figures who hold highly symbolic positions, making their arguments difficult to challenge. Interestingly, the three novels do not explicitly criticise religion or customs but show how both can function as instruments of patriarchal legitimacy. This authority works not by will, but rather by framing norms as universal

truths. In this context, power relations become obscured because they are based on transcendent values (Agha, 2024).

c. Centralisation of Male Voices in Narrative Structures

In addition to the symbolic and normative levels, power relations are evident in the distribution of the narrative voices. The story structures in all three novels tend to focus on men as decision-makers and the main interpreters of the events.

In *Paraban Tuah*, dialogues concerning important decisions are often led by males. Women are often in positions of listening to, responding to, or adapting to men's needs. Although the narrative occasionally presents female perspectives, it revolves around social consequences formulated by men.

Damar Kambang presents a more empathetic narrative regarding female characters; however, the decision-making structure remains in the hands of male authorities and traditional institutions. Women are given space for inner reflection; however, when it comes to the final decision, legitimacy still comes from the outside. Thus, the narrative divides the roles between women as emotional beings and men as decision-makers.

In *Rumah Jaddah*, the distribution of voices is complex because it presents the collective voice of the community. However, this collective voice remains oriented toward a masculine perspective. Women often become objects of discourse and are discussed, judged, or debated without fully controlling the narrative.

This narrative structure shows that power is not only present in the content of the conversation, but also in the architecture of the story (Forchtner, 2021). Individuals who are given space to explain norms, conclude conflicts, and determine the ending of the story are indicators of power distribution. When men become the centre of moral arguments, while women become the centre of social consequences, the narrative has structurally reproduced patriarchal relations (Vaccarino Bremner, 2022; Vink et al., 2024).

3. Forms of Agency and Negotiation among Madurese Women

If the previous section demonstrated how patriarchy is naturalised through linguistic strategies and institutionalised through narrative architecture, this section examines how women in *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jaddah* negotiate their spaces within this power structure. It is important to emphasise that agency in these three novels does not present itself as a total reversal of the patriarchal system but rather as a practice of negotiation that operates within the boundaries of religious legitimacy, custom, and family honour. Thus, agency is understood not as a binary opposition to domination but as a strategy of survival, adaptation, and occasionally breaking through cracks in the established system.

a. Implicit Resistance

The most consistent form of agency in all three novels is implicit resistance. This strategy manifests through strategic silence, subtle irony, and domestic negotiations, which are not always visible in open resistance.

In *Paraban Tuah*, female characters do not always directly reject family decisions regarding marriage or honour. However, the narrative reveals a gap between public discourse and inner turmoil. The silence chosen is not merely a sign of resignation but rather a social calculation in the face of a strong traditional structure. By not directly opposing it, female characters maintain the stability of family relationships while preserving space for internal reflection. Silence becomes a

strategy to avoid heavier social sanctions while maintaining critical awareness of the decisions made on their behalf.

In Damar Kambang, implicit resistance emerges through female characters' engagement in ambivalent rituals and traditions. They follow traditional ceremonies and accept religious advice; however, the narrative implies personal reflections that are not entirely in line with norms. In the domestic sphere, they negotiate the boundaries of their roles, indirectly influencing decisions through informal conversations and emotional approaches. This strategy shows that private spaces are important arenas for agency, even though formal decisions remain with male figures or traditional institutions. Meanwhile, Rumah Jaddah presents implicit resistance in a harsher context, where women face social stigma. Amid moral pressure and collective judgment, female characters choose to selectively regulate their responses. Instead of openly challenging society, they utilise quiet spaces to maintain their dignity. Silence here is not a sign of helplessness but a form of self-control that allows for survival in an unfriendly environment. In all three novels, implicit resistance works through the separation between public expression and internal awareness. At the discursive level, the narrative often provides access to the female characters' inner monologues, which differ from their outward attitudes (Vink et al., 2024). This difference shows that apparent compliance on the surface is not always synonymous with the full internalisation of patriarchal norms. Agency, in this form, is latent and contextual (Rea-Hedrick, 2025).

b. Explicit Resistance

In addition to implicit strategies, these three novels demonstrate moments of explicit resistance, albeit with varying consequences. Explicit resistance arises when female characters express verbal refusal, make personal decisions that deviate from family expectations, or challenge the legitimacy of certain authorities.

In *Paraban Tuah*, there is a moment when the female character attempts to voice her preferences regarding life choices. However, this rejection does not immediately change the structure of collective decision-making. The narrative shows that any form of open resistance is immediately confronted with strong social pressure, whether in the form of moral arguments or threats to a family's reputation. Explicit resistance creates tension but remains within the circle of negotiations controlled by male figures.

Damar Kambang displays subtle resistance but remains explicit at certain points. Female characters question several aspects of tradition and attempt to redefine the meaning of their happiness. However, the final decision must be aligned with customary norms and family legitimacy. Thus, explicit resistance does not lead to total liberation, but rather to a negotiated compromise.

In *Rumah Jaddah*, explicit resistance manifests itself in the form of rejecting stigma and maintaining one's identity amid social pressure. However, the narrative consequences are severe: exclusion, conflict, or tragedy. This finding indicates that the patriarchal system has corrective mechanisms for deviance. Narratives do not always provide a safe space for open resistance; on the contrary, they reveal the social costs that must be borne (Idriss, 2022). Comparatively, explicit resistance in the three novels shows a pattern in which open resistance rarely results in structural transformation. This often triggers renegotiation or reveals limits that cannot be exceeded. Thus, explicit agency is situational and vulnerable to symbolic sanctions (Ayodele Onanuga & Olajumoke Onanuga, 2024).

c. Ambivalence between Compliance and Resistance

The most complex form of agency in the three novels is the ambivalence of the tension between obedience and resistance in female characters. This ambivalence does not indicate inconsistency but rather reflects the position of the subject between collective norms and personal desires. In *Paraban Tuah*, female characters often carry out customary obligations while questioning their meaning. They accept family decisions but the narrative reveals an awareness of their limited choices. Their obedience is not total submission but rather a strategy for survival within a system that is difficult to challenge. In *Damar Kambang*, ambivalence is evident in how female characters interpret rituals. They respect tradition and undergo customary processes, yet maintain a critical reflection on their position within that structure. This narrative provides space for inner conflict, allowing readers to understand that obedience is not always synonymous with full consent.

Rumah Jaddah presents ambivalence in an even more extreme situation. On the one hand, the female character is under strong moral pressure; on the other hand, she tries to maintain her self-respect and personal integrity. Compliance with social norms is performed for the sake of safety, but awareness of injustice remains unchanged. This ambivalence shows that female participants are not completely absorbed in the dominant discourse. Theoretically, this ambivalence indicates that agency does not exist outside the power structure but is formed within it. The women in the three novels are not subjects who are either completely free or completely dominated; rather, they are subjects who constantly negotiate their positions. Agency emerges in small spaces: in word choice, in silence, in compromise, and in decisions that may not be radical but are meaningful for self-sustainability (Cervantes-Soon, 2026).

Discussion

A reading of *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jaddah* shows that the representation of Madurese women in these three novels cannot be understood in binary terms as either a reproduction or a critique of patriarchy. Instead, these texts present a complex ideological field of negotiation, in which patriarchal structures are naturalised through language and narrative architecture, yet simultaneously open up reflective spaces that allow for critical readings (Lazar, 2005). Thus, the position of the three novels is more accurately understood as ideologically ambivalent: reproductive at a certain level, but also containing the potential for criticism within controlled limits, as argued in studies on ideological ambivalence in narrative texts (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

1. Ideological Ambivalence

At the discursive representation level (4.1), all three novels consistently display the mechanism of patriarchal naturalisation through lexical choices that emphasise obedience, family honour, and moral control over women's bodies. The metaphors of honour and the distribution of deontic modality show how women's obligations are framed as social norms, a strategy that, from a CDA perspective, is understood as a form of symbolic legitimation. At the narrative level (4.2), symbolic domination, religious and customary legitimacy, and the centralisation of male voices reinforce this power structure, as explained in studies on the distribution of agency and narratives of power in literature. From this perspective, the texts appear to reproduce an established, patriarchal framework.

However, reducing the three novels to texts that merely reinforce patriarchy ignores the internal dynamics discussed in Section 4.3. Implicit resistance, inner ambivalence, and moments of negotiation show that female subjects are not completely absorbed into the dominant norm, in line with the conceptualisation of agency as discursive negotiation within power structures. The

narrative provides access to women's internal conflicts, which opens up a gap between performative obedience and critical awareness. It is this gap that becomes a space for potential criticism, as explained in the study of embedded resistance in narrative (Lazar, 2005).

In *Paraban Tuah*, the reproduction of patriarchy appears strong under the pressure of collective honour. However, the narrative does not completely rule out the possibility of reflecting on the symbolic burden borne by women. *Damar Kambang* presents ritual and customary symbols as a normative foundation but slips into ambivalence that makes readers question the harmony between tradition and personal happiness. *Rumah Jaddah* even shows the harsh impact of social stigma on women, directing readers to become aware of existing structural inequalities.

Thus, the criticism of patriarchy in these three novels is both partial and implicit. It does not always appear as a total deconstruction of customs and religion but rather as a revelation of the social and psychological consequences of the system. Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, these texts can be understood as discursive practices that simultaneously reproduce and subvert the dominant ideology (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This ambivalence is not a weakness but rather a reflection of the complexity of the social terrain represented.

2. The Author's Textual Position within the Ideological Structure

The question of whether a text criticises or reproduces patriarchy cannot be separated from the author's textual position within the ideological structure. In discourse analysis, the author's position is mediated through narrative strategies, the distribution of perspectives, and evaluative constructions within the text (Wodak, 2009). Therefore, this analysis does not aim to judge the author's personal intentions, but rather to examine how ideological positions are mediated through representational choices and narrative structures (Elsoufy, 2024).

In all three novels, the narrator does not explicitly declare a feminist agenda or rejection of tradition. However, there are indications of critical distance in the way female conflicts are depicted, which, in CDA studies, is understood as a form of ideological positioning that is not always explicit. Narrative empathy is often directed toward female characters, especially when they face social pressure or moral dilemmas. The space given to inner monologues and internal reflections shows that women's experiences are considered significant, not merely the backdrop to conflict, in line with the analyses of narratives and the construction of gender subjectivity (Karthiga et al., 2025). However, conflict resolution remains within the orbit of collective legitimacy. Reconciliation often occurs through compromise with norms rather than through structural transformation. This shows that the author operates within the boundaries of representation that still recognises customary and religious authority as the social foundation, a form of embedded critique that works through ambivalence rather than radical opposition (Esposito et al., 2023).

Textually, the author appears to position himself in an ambivalent space: he does not fully affirm patriarchy nor does he deconstruct it head-on. This strategy can be understood as a reflection of a complex social reality in which criticism of norms cannot always be carried out in a confrontational manner (Li, 2025). In this context, the text becomes a space for mediation between critical consciousness and attachment to cultural structures. Thus, the author's position within the ideological structure can be understood as embedded critique and criticism in the narrative, without explicitly dismantling the system. Criticism works through the revelation of impacts and contradictions and not through political statements.

3. Implications for Gender Discourse in Indonesian Literature

These findings have important implications for gender discourse in contemporary Indonesian literature. The representation of Madurese women in the three novels shows that

literature no longer portrays women solely as passive victims but as subjects with reflective capacities and complex negotiation strategies (Muslimat et al., 2025). However, the text has not yet fully liberated women from the framework of collective honour and patriarchal legitimacy, as is often found in contemporary gender discourse. This study also shows that ethnic and gender identities are intertwined in the production of meaning. The representation of Madurese women cannot be separated from the construction of family honour, customs, and religiosity. This affirms that gender analysis in the literature must consider contextual cultural dimensions, as suggested in CDA studies on identity and power.

Methodologically, the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to literary texts demonstrates the potential of this approach in reading literature as a dynamic ideological practice (Muslimat et al., 2025). By integrating micro linguistic analysis and macro social context, this study shows that literature is not merely a reflection of culture, but also an arena for the production and negotiation of ideology (Mohammad & Najim, 2025). Finally, the ambivalence found in the three novels shows that contemporary Indonesian literature is in a transitional phase of gender discourse. Although patriarchy no longer appears as a completely unchallenged structure, it has yet to be fully deconstructed. Literature becomes a space where norms are negotiated, questioned, and occasionally reproduced in more subtle forms, a dynamic that is consistent with recent findings in critical discourse and gender studies.

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the representation of Madurese women in *Paraban Tuah*, *Damar Kambang*, and *Rumah Jaddah* cannot be simply understood as a reflection of social reality but rather as a discursive construction that both produces and negotiates patriarchal power relations. Through Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis, it was identified that patriarchy in the three novels operates on two main levels: linguistic naturalisation and narrative institutionalisation. At the linguistic level, lexical choices, metaphors of honour, and deontic modality situate women within the framework of moral obedience and collective responsibility in the name of the family. At the narrative level, symbolic domination, the legitimisation of religion and custom, and the centralisation of male voices shape the story architecture in a way that reinforces this power structure as a cultural norm. Nevertheless, this study also showed that the women in the three novels were not entirely reduced to passive subjects. Agency emerges in the form of contextual discursive negotiation, both through implicit resistance, such as strategic silence and inner ambivalence, and through moments of explicit resistance, which, although limited, still demonstrate subjective awareness. Thus, the representation of Madurese women in these three texts is ideologically ambivalent: patriarchy is reproduced through language and narrative structures, but at the same time, reflective spaces are presented that open up possibilities for critique.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of CDA in Indonesian literature. This approach enables the integration of microlinguistic analysis with macrosocial contexts, allowing literary texts to be understood as ideological practices that shape social meaning. Furthermore, this research conceptualises agency as negotiation within structural boundaries rather than as total opposition to domination. This perspective enriches gender studies by positioning female subjects in complex and dynamic roles. Practically, the findings of this study have implications for the development of gender literacy in Indonesian literature. Critical readings of texts set in local cultural contexts, such as Madura, can encourage a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between tradition, religion, and gender. This research also opens opportunities for further studies

based on the CDA of other ethnic literary texts to broaden the mapping of power relations in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Thus, this study affirms that contemporary Indonesian literature is not merely a space for cultural representation but a discursive arena where gender ideology is negotiated. Patriarchy in the text does not appear as a monolithic and unassailable structure but as a system that is continually produced and negotiated within language and narrative.

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