

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN INDONESIAN HORROR FILMS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER TOWARDS STEREOTYPES AND OBJECTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the research is to present an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of women in Indonesian horror films, with an emphasis on efforts to dismantle stereotypes and objectifications that are commonly found, as well as identify their sociological implications for the construction of gender and power relations. This study adopts the *narrative literature review* method, a systematic qualitative approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous studies related to the representation of women in Indonesian horror films. The method allows for the compilation of a comprehensive picture of existing scientific discourse, identifying key patterns, and highlighting underexplored areas in the literature. The findings of the study show that the representation of women in Indonesian horror films consistently reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes and objectifications that are deeply rooted in patriarchal societies. This indirectly reflects the socio-cultural values that place women in subordinate positions, as reflected in the patriarchal structure of Indonesian society. While creepy figures, women are often portrayed as having destructive supernatural powers, but they usually appear as a response to injustice or a manifestation of the suffering they experience, rather than as a form of autonomous and positive agency.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Horror films are fairly popular in Indonesia. This can be seen from the increasing number of viewers, even a film titled Pengabdian Satan, was able to reach millions of viewers in 2017 (Wardhani, 2025). This phenomenon is

strengthened by the success of another horror film, namely KKN in Desa Penari which not only dominates domestic cinemas, but also penetrates the international market, signaling the widespread popularity of the genre (Prasetyo et al., 2024). KKN in Desa Penari has even been screened in the United States, confirming that its appeal has transcended geographical boundaries (Prasetyo et al., 2024).

Remakes of various old horror films have also enriched the Indonesian horror cinema landscape, indicating that this genre has a lasting appeal in society and the potential for adaptation to the preferences of today's audiences (Luniar & Febriana, 2022). A *film remake* of Suzzanna, for example, explains how classic horror icons can be reinterpreted for contemporary relevance, often with a modern twist that seeks to retain the essence of the original while attracting new audiences. The sequels to popular films such as *Pengabdi Setan 2: Communion* show the strategy of producers to build a sustainable franchise, deepen the narrative, and maintain the audience's interest through the continuation of the story.

Every month there are new horror film titles produced or circulating in Indonesian cinemas (Wardhani, 2025). This intensity reflects the high demand of the domestic market and the film industry's strategy to continue to innovate in the horror genre, including by incorporating psychological, comedy, and supernatural elements. However, behind these popularity and innovations, there is a recurring pattern in the portrayal of women that deserves sociological attention, especially related to stereotypes and objectifications that are often raised by contemporary horror narratives (Tiwahyupriadi & Ayuningtyas, 2020) (Fadilah et al., 2021).

The phenomenon of women's representation in the media, especially horror films, has long been the focus of the study of Gender Sociology because of the crucial role of the media in shaping social perceptions and perpetuating gender construction (Wijaya et al., 2025). In the context of Indonesian horror films, the representation often frames women in a stereotypical way, such as helpless victims or threatening supernatural entities, thus reflecting or even reinforcing patriarchal values that are rooted in society (Wijaya et al., 2025). Implicitly, depiction patterns not only reflect, but actively influence how audiences understand the role and position of women in social structures (McDavid, 2020).

Indonesian horror films, with their rich narratives and mythology, often exploit women's bodies and emotions as central elements in the construction of tension or horror, without critically exploring their human dimension (Cahyani & Aprilia, 2022). In fact, such depictions have the potential to limit public understanding of the complexity of women's identities, and even justify continued objectification in social discourse (Afifah & Febriana, 2024). The depiction in question not only forms a biased perception of women's identity, but also limits a richer and more thorough narrative exploration of their role in contemporary society (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023).

Previous studies on gender representation in film have shown how mass media can be a powerful medium for channeling ideas, concepts, and ideas, as well as bringing out various effects from their screening (Afifah & Febriana, 2024). In the context of horror films, this representation often creates biased and even detrimental perceptions, especially for women, through objectification and repetitive stereotypes (Larasati & Wahid, 2020) (Cahyani & Aprilia, 2022). This research is relevant considering that Indonesian horror films, with their high popularity, have great potential to shape or overhaul public views on gender (Afifah & Febriana, 2024).

Although many studies have examined the representation of women in the media in general, including soap operas (Hua & Zhao, 2024) and non-horror films (Rachman & Febriana, 2024), it is still rare to find a comprehensive Gender Sociology analysis of Indonesian horror films, especially those that review stereotypes and objectification in depth. The focus on horror films allows for the exploration of dimensions of fear, vulnerability, and women's power distorted by patriarchal lenses, thereby enriching the understanding of gender dynamics in the uniqueness of cinematic narratives (Giswandhani, 2022) (Hua & Zhao, 2024).

This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by investigating how gender archetypes in the Indonesian horror genre reflect, as well as reproduce social power structures, thus offering a sociological perspective that has not been touched much on. Another uniqueness lies in the research efforts to identify repetitive patterns in Indonesian horror films that often place women as objects of fear or desire, rather than subjects with full agency, thus potentially reinforcing the gender bias that already exists in society (Tiwahyupriadi & Ayuningtyas, 2020). The study will

specifically investigate how these representations affect and are influenced by socio-cultural constructions of society that tend to place women in marginal and subordinate positions (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023). This approach is different from previous studies that tend to focus only on content analysis without delving deeper into its sociological implications for gender power relations (Haryanto et al., 2012) (Haryanto, 2016).

Based on the description of the background and the urgency of the research as explained, the study seeks to answer several core problems regarding the representation of women in Indonesian horror films, especially related to stereotypes and objectification. Specifically, the research will identify the forms of stereotypes inherent in female characters in horror films, as well as analyze the objectification mechanisms used to reduce the complexity of women into passive or symbolic entities. In addition, the research will also explore how these representations interact with cultural values or patriarchal structures in Indonesia, as well as their impact on the formation of gender identity in society (Khairah & Tambunan, 2019) (McDavid, 2020).

The main objective of the research is to present an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of women in Indonesian horror films, with an emphasis on efforts to dismantle stereotypes and objectifications that are commonly found, as well as identify their sociological implications for the construction of gender and power relations. This goal is achieved through a critical approach to Gender Sociology, through a qualitative analysis of the content of selected Indonesian horror films to reveal patterns of repetitive representation and their cultural implications (Hua & Zhao, 2024) (Susanti et al., 2023).

This study is expected to be able to contribute a new perspective to the study of Gender Sociology in Indonesia, especially in the media realm, through the presentation of critical analysis that has not been explored in depth. The research also bridges the gap between the study of feminism in the context of local media and global sociological theory, while providing a framework for cross-cultural analysis of gender issues in horror cinema. The study also enriches the understanding of how cinematic narratives, especially in the horror genre, can simultaneously reflect and shape gender-related social dynamics, as well as open up a space for discussion about the potential of film as an agent of change or reinforcement of existing structures.

METHOD

This study adopts the *narrative literature review* method, a systematic qualitative approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous studies related to the representation of women in Indonesian horror films. This method allows the preparation of a comprehensive picture of existing scientific discourse, identifying key patterns, and highlighting underworked areas in the literature (Damsar, 2012). The advantage lies in its ability to integrate various perspectives, theories, and research results from various sources, resulting in rich and insightful synthesis (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023).

Research data sources include national and international scientific journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, and relevant research reports, with an emphasis on Sinta 1 or 2 and Scopus publications to ensure academic quality (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023) (Martono et al., 2012). Literature searches will be conducted using relevant keywords such as "representation of women", "Indonesian horror films", "gender stereotypes", "women's objectification", and "Gender Sociology", both in Indonesian and English, through *databases* such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and DOAJ. The search process will ensure the inclusion of relevant and up-to-date literature, covering various theoretical and empirical perspectives on the topic being studied (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023) (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024).

The search strategy will also involve identifying key studies that may not immediately appear in the initial results, but are relevant, through checking the reference list of the articles that have been identified (Prasetyo et al., 2024). The search method seeks to produce comprehensive data, including previous studies that form the theoretical foundation, as well as recent research as a reflection of the development of academic discourse in this field (Haryanto et al., 2012) (Wardhani, 2025).

Inclusion criteria include studies that explicitly address the representation of women in Indonesian horror films, analyze gender stereotypes and/or objectifications, and are published within the last 10-15 years to ensure their

relevance to contemporary social and cinematic contexts. On the other hand, the exclusion criterion is applied to studies that do not focus on Indonesian horror films, do not explicitly discuss women's representation, or are only in the form of film reviews without in-depth sociological analysis. This rigorous exclusion method filters out the most relevant and high-quality data.

The collected data will be analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach, in which recurring themes related to stereotypical representation and objectification of women are identified, categorized, and interpreted. The approach will involve carefully reading each selected document to extract quotes, concepts, or narratives that are directly related to the formulation of the research problem, then grouping them based on common meaning. This process involves identifying thematic categories that arise inductively from the data, which are then linked to the theoretical framework of Gender Sociology (Wilhelm, 2020).

The analysis will also consider how the binary oppositional relationship between men and women, as Derrida argues, is manifested through horror film narratives, which often reinforce the dominance of the term "male" over "female" (Haryanto et al., 2012). This approach seeks to uncover the ideological mechanisms behind these representations, while highlighting how cinematic narratives can shape or reflect dominant gender social constructs (Rachman & Febriana, 2024) (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023). The interpretation of the data will be enriched with a critical perspective on cultural hegemony that may perpetuate certain images of women in the horror film genre, referring to critical theories that examine the relationship between media representation and societal ideology.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Representation of Women in Indonesian Horror Films

Based on literature analysis, the representation of women in Indonesian horror films is usually divided into several dominant categories, namely as passive victims, sexual objects, or threatening supernatural entities.

- 1) Passive victims, i.e. women portrayed as helpless in the face of supernatural forces or physical threats, are waiting to be rescued by male characters (Kania & Hamdani, 2023). This condition reflects traditional gender stereotypes that place women in vulnerable positions and need protection, in line with the analysis of women's roles in various social institutions (Haryanto et al., 2012). Representation inherently reinforces patriarchal constructions that emphasize women's dependency (Hamdy & Hudri, 2022). Some horror film titles that place women as passive victims are Pengabdi Satan and Danur, where the main female characters are often faced with invisible terror without significant ability to defend themselves.
- 2) Sexual objects, namely the depiction of women that are reduced to mere physical attraction, usually through scenes emphasizing their appearance or body, without taking into account agency or character complexity (Ihwanny & Qeis, 2022). This depiction is often found in Indonesian horror films, where female characters, often in minimal clothing, function as visual sweeteners or plot triggers that do not substantively contribute to the narrative, in line with the concept of objectification that ignores individual subjectivity (Martono et al., 2012). Some horror film titles that exploit women as sexual objects are Arwah Goyang Karawang and Kuntilanak Kamar Corpse, which clearly highlight the female body as the main element in the film's marketing strategy.
- 3) Threatening supernatural entities refer to how female characters transform into horror figures or terrifying supernatural beings, such as ghosts or demons, often in response to injustice or oppression experienced in life. This representation includes figures such as Sundel Bolong or Kuntilanak which are manifestations of anger or resentment of persecuted women, reflecting local myths and social fears of uncontrollable feminine power (Adiprasetyo, 2023). The shift in narrative from passive victim to horror agent shows the complexity of gender representation in Indonesian horror films, which sometimes also provides space for women's subversive power in the face of patriarchal systems (Adiprasetyo, 2023). Some horror film titles that feature women as threatening supernatural entities are Makmum and Suzzanna: Breathing in the Fortress, where female ghost characters are at the center of the horror narrative, usually against the background of a tragic story that triggers their appearance (Izharuddin, 2015) (Rahmi, 2025).

This kind of representation pattern does not only exist as a passive reflection of societal stereotypes, but also actively reproduces and reinforces existing gender images, especially in the context of patriarchy (Afifah & Febriana, 2024). Furthermore, such representations often present women as helpless entities in the face of threats; or conversely, as a scary figure because it goes beyond traditional gender boundaries (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023).

Horror films are undoubtedly a powerful medium to explore the tension between established gender norms and the inherent potential for subversion in "other" or "deviant" feminine representations (Izharuddin, 2015). Horror films are not just entertainment, but also a cultural arena where gender ideologies are negotiated, reproduced; It is even sometimes challenged, reflecting the collective fear and expectations of society for the role of women in the social sphere. That is why, Gender Sociology's analysis of this representation is essential in order to unpack the layers of meaning behind these images and understand their implications for the formation of gender identity in society (Haryanto, 2016).

Sociological Analysis of Gender on Stereotypes

Gender Sociology's analysis of stereotypes in Indonesian horror films specifically examines how images not only reflect, but also shape social expectations for women. This phenomenon is rooted in the framing of narratives that often construct femininity as passive or hysterical, according to traditional gender images in various forms of media (Dhusiya, 2014). This depiction reinforces the gender dichotomy that places men as active and rational subjects, while women are reduced to emotional or reactive objects. Thus, the stereotypical representation of horror films is not just entertainment, but a social reproductive mechanism because it subtly instills and perpetuates gender norms that limit the role and potential of women in society (Anggraeni et al., 2024).

For example, the stereotype of hysterical women by horror films can affect public perception of women's ability to make rational decisions when faced with pressure, a view that even has historical roots in the stigmatization of women's collective behavior (Sukmana, 2016). This reinforces the narrative that women's emotions are a sign of weakness, as opposed to men's rationality, thus ultimately limiting their space for participation in the public domain (Martono et al., 2012). These restrictions, which are manifested in various aspects of life, show how the impact of film representation does not only stop at the realm of entertainment, but permeates the broader social structure, limiting women's agency in real life (Haryanto et al., 2012).

The stereotype of women as sexual objects directly reduces women's values to visual commodities, ignoring their intellectual and emotional dimensions (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023). The reduction then promotes the view that women's bodies are for visual consumption, not as part of individuals who have their own autonomy or mind (Afifah & Febriana, 2024). Such narratives then contribute to a broader culture of objectification, where women are treated as instruments for the satisfaction of others, not as subjects entitled to dignity and full autonomy (Myrlinda, 2020).

This not only affects public perception, but also has an impact on women's internalization of their self-image, which can lead to self-objectification or limitation of self-potential. Self-objectification risks causing various psychological problems, such as excessive anxiety, depression, and body image disorders that are detrimental to the subjective well-being of individuals (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). This means that horror films are not just a medium of entertainment, but a powerful instrument to shape and strengthen the social construction of gender that has real consequences for women's lives (Giswandhani, 2022).

Meanwhile, stereotypes as menacing supernatural entities, even if seen as a role reversal, often place women in a framework that reinforces patriarchal fears of unbridled or "deviant" feminine power (Joy, 2013) (Balraj et al., 2021). This manifestation is usually interpreted as a manifestation of social anxiety towards women who reject traditional roles or dare to defy societal norms (Damsar, 2012). This underscores how even when embodying antagonists, women in horror films remain entangled in narratives that reinforce social control over their feminine identity and expression.

Representation as a threatening supernatural entity often ignores the complexity of women's experiences, reducing them to symbols of fear or danger, instead of trying to explore their human dimension. It is as if when women dare to 'threaten', then they must be dealt with with violence. This reinforces the idea that any deviation from traditional

gender norms, especially if it involves women's power or agency, must be immediately neutralized or punished, in order to reaffirm the existing hierarchy of power in society (Eed, 2019).

Going deeper, the perspectives of various theories can be used to examine the representation of women in horror films.

a) Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory

It becomes a crucial analytical tool to dismantle the system of signs and meanings that work in the representation of women in horror films (Parastuti et al., 2024). Through semiotic analysis, researchers can decipher how visual elements, such as costumes, facial expressions, and gestures; and auditory elements, such as dialogue and music, work together to create "myths" about femininity in the context of horror, revealing the ways in which such representations construct social reality (Khan & Akhtar, 2024). In addition, the semiotics approach also allows for the identification of hidden denotations and connotations, thus being able to reveal the ideologies underlying the depiction of women, both as vulnerable victims and frightening supernatural entities (Rachman & Febriana, 2024). This approach also helps explain how audiences interpret these messages, which often unconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in the culture (Sugiarti & Lestari, 2023). It can be concluded that horror films use visual and narrative language to build social constructions about women, which then has the potential to influence viewers' views and behaviors (Rachman & Febriana, 2024).

b) Feminism Theory

With its various branches such as radical feminism (Haryanto et al., 2012) and postmodern feminism, it offers a critical lens to analyze how gender power relations are reproduced or challenged through horror film narratives (Angjaya, 2021). Radical feminism, for example, can highlight how horror films often exploit and reinforce the fear of women as victims, while postmodern feminism can reveal the fragmentation of gender identity and the subversion of norms in this genre (Rachman & Febriana, 2024) (Dirgantardewa & Pithaloka, 2021). This feminist approach is particularly relevant to identify patterns of objectification, victimization, and demonization of women; At the same time, evaluate whether horror films have the potential to break the cycle of stereotypes. Thus, the theory of feminism allows a comprehensive study of the representation of women in horror films, both as reflections and instruments of social change (Haryanto et al., 2012).

c) Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

It offers a framework to understand how the meaning of women is produced and consumed through film media. This approach focuses on the process of cultural mediation, where representation is not only a reflection of reality, but also shapes it through marking and convention. It allows for an in-depth analysis of how the image of women in horror films is selectively constructed, highlighting the role of ideology in the formation of dominant stereotypes and narratives. Hall's approach helps to uncover how certain representational practices are able to perpetuate or even challenge existing social orders, especially in relation to gender and power (Haryanto et al., 2012). Thus, representation theory provides an important lens to deconstruct the implicit meanings presented by horror films about women, as well as highlight the dynamics of power as the shaping of these interpretations (Budiman et al., 2023).

d) Psychological Theory and *Gender Stereotypes*

It provides a different perspective, because it focuses on the psychological impact of gender stereotypes presented by horror films on the audience. Studies in this area analyze how repeated exposure to stereotypical images affects the formation of cognitive schemas and social attribution related to femininity and masculinity in the minds of audiences (Romacho, 2023) (Hernández-Santaolalla & Bravo, 2021). The theory also investigates how these representations impact women's self-perception, social interactions, and even their life choices in the context of the broader society (Dreyer, 2018). That way, it can be understood how the media, especially horror films, can subtly influence the formation of gender identity and stereotype reproduction through psychological mechanisms.

Objectification of Women in Horror Narratives

Women's objectification, especially in horror narratives, refers to the treatment of women as objects, both visually and narratively, thus ignoring their subjectivity and humanity. The practice is manifested through various forms, ranging from the visual exploitation of women's bodies to the reduction of their characters to plot tools solely to meet the narrative needs of male characters (Balraj et al., 2021). This approach inherently denies women's autonomy and agency, turning them into instruments to advance the plot or satisfy the audience's gaze, rather than as individuals with internal narrative complexity.

The phenomenon of objectification is specifically rooted in the concept of *the male gaze*, where the camera and film narrative are positioned to represent the world from a heteronormative masculine perspective, so that women are seen and judged based on their visual appeal to male audiences (Gransden, 2024). Heteronormative masculine perspectives have implications for the creation of passive female characters, always being objects of gaze, and even losing agency over their own bodies and narratives (Romacho, 2023). Furthermore, depictions from such perspectives can extend to marginalize women from roles that have power or influence, while limiting their participation in the cinematic narrative substantially (Bertling, 2016) (Hernández-Santaolalla & Bravo, 2021).

The presentation of women as monsters or creepy figures in horror films almost always begins with their depiction as visually attractive and seductive figures, before finally transforming into monstrous creatures (Chusna & Mahmudah, 2018). The process of dehumanization affirms the way horror films exploit and then punish femininity because it is considered threatening or deviating from patriarchal norms (Romacho, 2023). In addition, it also reflects social concerns against women who reject traditional roles, so that they are then represented as dangerous entities that must be destroyed (Hernández-Santaolalla & Bravo, 2021).

Thus, objectification in horror cinema not only degrades the dignity of women, but also embodies a mechanism of social supervision to suppress unconventional gender expression. This reality indicates a correlation between the representation of women in horror films and the preservation of an unequal gender power structure, where patriarchal power is constantly reproduced through visual mediums (Haryanto, 2016). This is in accordance with the view of Objectification Theory which states that women are often sexually objectified and treated as objects shown by men and the media (Balraj et al., 2021).

According to Objectification Theory, women are shown in the mass media, but their representation is inseparable from their status as sexual objects for men, which are then exploited for the sake of the visual satisfaction of the audience (Salsabila et al., 2022). In horror films, such depictions are often used to increase the element of tension, where women's physical vulnerability is the main focus of the narrative, reinforcing the idea that a woman's value lies in her attractiveness or ability to be visually exploited (Anggraini & Sarah, 2025). On the other hand, there is also a tendency to show female characters who are physically stronger or smarter, but end up still being victimized, often in a brutal and degrading way (Hernández-Santaolalla & Bravo, 2021).

Female characters in horror films are often confronted with extreme violence, torture, and self-mutilation, which is almost exclusively perpetrated against or by them, although these narratives sometimes also present internal criticism of misogynistic depictions of victimization (McGillvray, 2019). This condition underscores that the representation of violence against women in horror cinema does not only function as a narrative element, but also a reflection of the gender power imbalance that has taken root in society (Anggraini & Sarah, 2025). It is not surprising, then, that women are usually the main targets in horror scenarios, with the intensity of violence being much more graphic and personal than that of male characters.

Social and Cultural Implications of Representation

The representation of women in horror films that tend to be stereotypical and objective will shape and strengthen public perceptions of women's roles, values, and social boundaries. This representation contributes to the internalization of gender norms that limit and perpetuate inequality in daily life, as highlighted by various studies of Gender Sociology (Haryanto, 2016). The impact is not limited to the individual level, but also to the broader structure

of society, where objectification and stereotypes can affect public policy, social interaction, and opportunities for women.

In relation to public policy, biased representation has the potential to construct a frame of thought that justifies gender injustice, so that it can then manifest in legislation or policies implicitly discriminating against women (Haryanto, 2016). Concretely, public understanding of issues, such as domestic violence or sexual harassment, can be significantly affected by the portrayal of women as passive or provocative victims in the media (Hua & Zhao, 2024) (Martono et al., 2012). This creates a cycle in which media representation influences social perceptions, which in turn impacts institutional responses to crucial gender issues.

In social interaction, the stereotypes maintained by horror films can influence the way individuals interact with women, reinforce gender biases, and limit women's active participation in various social spheres. In fact, this kind of representation can contribute to the normalization of symbolic violence, when patriarchal domination is accepted as natural and legitimate, even without the dominated class realizing it (Martono et al., 2012). The implication of normalization is then seen in the inability to recognize or reject covert forms of discrimination, thus preserving the cycle of gender marginalization.

The opportunity for women to express and participate in the public sector is often hampered by the negative image built by the media, thus affecting the public's perception of women's capabilities and roles outside the domestic sphere (Martono et al., 2012). The gender gap is not only limited to accessibility, but also how women are positioned in society, often as more passive parties (Martono et al., 2012) (Haryanto, 2016). These restrictions harm not only individual women, but hinder the collective progress of society, as the potential for innovation and significant contributions of half the population is overlooked.

The influence of mass media, including films, to shape individual perspectives and attitudes is indeed significant, especially related to gender equality issues (Damsar, 2012). This is because the media has the power to represent gender roles that ultimately shape social perceptions (Wijaya et al., 2025). Through narrative mechanisms, horror cinema is able to construct and reinforce gender stereotypes, which has implications for society's view of women's position in social structures (Ardelia, 2022) (Li, 2023). The phenomenon is in line with the view that mass media is not only a reflection of reality, but a shaping of social reality itself, which is able to influence the way individuals define themselves and others, especially in relation to gender contexts (Gregorio et al., 2022) (Hua & Zhao, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings that have been presented, the representation of women in Indonesian horror films consistently reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes and objectifications that are deeply rooted in patriarchal society. This research reveals that Indonesian horror film narratives often exploit women's vulnerability, presenting them as passive victims or sexual objects that serve to increase tension and visual appeal. This indirectly reflects the socio-cultural values that place women in subordinate positions, as reflected in the patriarchal structure of Indonesian society.

While creepy figures, women are often portrayed as having destructive supernatural powers, but they usually appear as a response to injustice or a manifestation of the suffering they experience, rather than as a form of autonomous and positive agency. In fact, this power often leads to the destruction of self or others, without providing a positive empowering representation. This shows that, despite the shift from passive victims to supernatural figures, the portrayal of women in horror films is still framed in narratives that reinforce symbolic violence and patriarchal domination.

Suggestions that can be given, among others, are that Indonesian horror film filmmakers need to be more critical in creating female characters with more complex narrative depth, agency, and dimensions, beyond existing stereotypes. Such a more depiction will be able to challenge conventional views and open up space for more empowering and progressive representation. Furthermore, audiences should be willing to adopt a critical lens when consuming media presentations, in order to be able to identify and deconstruct biased gender messages. Broader media

literacy education is also needed to increase public awareness of how the media affects gender perception, so as to be able to foster a more inclusive and equal social environment.

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