

## GENDER INJUSTICE AGAINST FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL LUKA PEREMPUAN ASAP BY NAFI'AH AL-MA'RAB

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### ABSTRACT

The quality of women's resources is a strategic issue that plays an important role in shaping social life and future generations. However, until now, women still face various forms of injustice due to the strong construction of patriarchal culture and unequal gender relations. Literature is an important medium to represent this reality as well as a means of social criticism. This study aims to examine the forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab through the perspective of feminist literary criticism. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods and literature. Data in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs representing gender injustice were collected through intensive reading techniques and analyzed based on the framework of gender injustice Yulianeta (2021), which includes marginalization, domination, subordination, and repression. The results of the study showed that there were 20 data on gender injustice experienced by female figures, with subordination as the most dominant form, followed by domination, repression, and marginalization. The character of Mun as the main character experiences the most intense gender injustice, both in the family, education, and social realms. These findings confirm that the four forms of gender injustice are interrelated and form a structural system of oppression against women. The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of the relationship between forms of gender injustice as an ideological unit in the narrative of the novel. This research contributes to enriching the literary study of Indonesian feminism and increasing critical awareness of the issue of gender injustice through the reading of literary works.

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### INTRODUCTION

The quality of women's resources is a strategic issue that plays an important role in determining the quality of life of future generations. Women not only have biological roles, but also social, cultural, and intellectual roles that help shape the structure of society. However, in the social reality to date, women are still often placed in unequal positions due to the strong construction of patriarchal culture and inequality in gender relations. This inequality gives birth to various forms of injustice that systematically limit women's space for movement, freedom, and rights, both in the domestic and public spheres.

Feminism exists as a critical consciousness as well as a social movement that seeks to expose and fight various

practices of gender injustice. Feminism not only questions the biological differences between men and women, but highlights how these differences are socially constructed to give birth to unequal power relations. Simon in Emriz and Rohman (2015) emphasized that feminism is an ideology and struggle movement that rejects all forms of gender-based discrimination, and demands the recognition of equal rights for women and men in social life. In line with that, feminism is understood as a global awareness of the injustice experienced by women in various parts of the world, which then encourages the birth of various studies to find a formula for equalizing rights based on human potential (Emriz & Rohman, 2015).

In daily life, gender injustice is still visible. Women are often burdened with full domestic responsibilities, neglected in family decision-making, and required to submit to male authority. In the social and economic spheres, women are often seen as weak creatures, receive lower wages, and experience limited access to resources and strategic positions. Furthermore, women are also vulnerable groups to gender-based violence and sexual violence, which is exacerbated by weak legal protections and a strong culture of victim-blaming. This condition shows that gender injustice is not only individual, but has taken root as a structural problem (Fakih, 2020; Yulianeta, 2021).

Awareness of gender injustice has actually been around for a long time, but the limitations of women's space for expression cause voices of resistance to often be marginalized. Therefore, education is an important instrument in building women's critical awareness to be able to understand, reject, and fight against the injustice practices they experience. Education not only functions as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a space for the formation of ideological awareness and the courage to speak out. It is in this context that literature has a strategic role as a medium of reflection as well as criticism of the social realities experienced by women. Literary works often represent inner experiences, social conflicts, and power relations that occur in society. Literature not only presents aesthetic beauty, but also contains values, ideologies, and social criticism that are relevant to the conditions of the times. Therefore, the study of literature needs to be carried out scientifically so that the ideological meanings contained in it can be revealed in depth. One relevant approach to examining the representation of women in literary works is feminist literary criticism. This approach focuses on efforts to understand women's positions, roles, and experiences in literary texts, as well as uncovering forms of gender injustice that are reproduced or countered through literary narratives.

Women's awareness of gender injustice has actually grown for a long time, but the limited space for expression and the dominance of patriarchal culture often cause women's voices to be marginalized. Education is one of the important means in building women's critical awareness, because through education, women can develop reflective thinking skills, dare to voice opinions, and take actions to resist various forms of injustice they experience (Yulianeta, 2021). In this context, literature has a strategic role as a medium of representation of social reality as well as a means of criticism of inequality that occurs in society.

Literary works not only function as aesthetic entertainment, but also as social documents that record the experiences, conflicts, and sufferings of certain individuals and groups, especially women. Therefore, the study of literature needs to be carried out scientifically so that the social, ideological, and cultural meanings contained in it can be revealed in depth. One of the relevant approaches in literary studies is the literary criticism of feminism. Feminist literary criticism seeks to read and interpret literary works by placing women's experiences as the center of analysis, as well as revealing how women are represented, positioned, and treated in literary texts (Andriyani & Handayani, 2019; Tong, 2020). Sugihastuti (2000) explained that feminist literary criticism is a special form of awareness that allows women to read and interpret literature from a woman's perspective. This approach aims to dismantle the dominance of patriarchal ideology in literary texts and fight for a fairer view of women. The basic idea of feminist literary criticism focuses on efforts to understand the position and role of women as reflected in literary works, including the forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters.

Based on this context, the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab was chosen as the object of research because this novel represents women's life experiences that are fraught with social pressure and gender injustice. The female characters in the novel are portrayed as experiencing various forms of injustice, both in the family and society.

This phenomenon is relevant to the social reality that is still going on today, so it is important to study critically through the literary perspective of feminism. This research is expected to contribute to increasing readers' and society's awareness of various forms of violence and injustice experienced by women, as well as enriching the treasures of feminist literary studies in Indonesia.

The novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab is one of the literary works that explicitly raises women's life experiences in facing social pressure and gender-based injustice. This novel represents the complexity of women's lives who are trapped in patriarchal power relations, both in the family and society. The female characters in the novel experience various forms of injustice that reflect social realities that are still relevant today. The novelty of this research lies in its analytical approach that places the four forms of gender injustice—marginalization, subordination, domination, and repression—as a single ideological structure in the novel narrative, rather than simply as a separate category. This research not only identifies forms of gender injustice, but also shows the relationship and relational patterns between these forms of injustice in shaping the life experiences of female characters. In addition, this research makes a new contribution by raising the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* which is still relatively minimally studied from the perspective of feminist literary criticism, thus enriching the treasure of contemporary Indonesian literature studies based on gender issues. This research is focused on the study of feminist literary criticism by examining four forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap*, namely marginalization, subordination, domination, and repression. These four aspects are analyzed in depth based on the representation of narratives and conflicts experienced by female characters. Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: What are the forms of marginalization, subordination, domination, and repression experienced by female characters in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods and literature. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on the interpretation and interpretation of data in the form of literary texts in depth, not on the measurement of numbers. The descriptive method is used to systematically explain and describe the forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in novels. The literature method is used because all research data is sourced from written materials, both in the form of main texts and relevant supporting references. The data sources in this study consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary data sources. The primary data source is the 296-page novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab published by Gramedia in 2025. Secondary data sources are books, scientific articles, and other writings related to literary studies and gender injustice against women. Tertiary data sources are in the form of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and online sources that are used to help understand terms and search for additional references.

The research data is in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs in the novel that show gender injustice against female characters. The data includes forms of marginalization, subordination, domination, and repression that are depicted through dialogue, actions, and narratives in stories. The data collection technique is carried out through intensive reading and in-depth interpretation of the text. The stages of data collection include reading the entire novel, identifying parts of the text that contain gender injustice, recording relevant data, and grouping data based on predetermined categories. Data analysis was carried out by studying the content of the text qualitatively. The data that has been collected is classified based on forms of gender injustice, then described and interpreted according to the context of the story. The analysis was carried out repeatedly to gain a deep understanding until a conclusion was reached that fully described the representation of gender injustice in the novel. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation by comparing data, analysis results, and relevant supporting sources. In addition, data checks are also carried out through discussions with other competent parties to minimize misinterpretations and increase confidence in research results. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation by comparing data, analysis results, and relevant supporting sources. In addition, data checks are also carried out through discussions with other competent parties to minimize misinterpretations and increase

confidence in research results.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section, data from research on the forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab are presented. Data were obtained through intensive reading techniques and recording of dialogues and narratives that represent gender power relations in stories. Gender injustice in this study is classified based on the concept put forward by Yulianeta (2021), which divides gender injustice into four main forms, namely marginalization, domination, subordination, and repression. These four categories are used as the basis of analysis because they are relevant to the socio-cultural context depicted in the novel and are able to comprehensively explain the power relations experienced by female characters.

Based on the results of the data classification, 20 quotes were found that contained elements of gender injustice against female figures. The initial data presentation is carried out in the form of a table to provide an overview of the distribution of data in a systematic and measurable manner. Based on the results of the data classification, 20 quotes were found that contained elements of gender injustice against female figures. The initial data presentation is done in the form of a table to provide an overview of data distribution in a systematic and measurable manner.

### Data Description

Table 1. Presentation of Data on Gender Injustice against Female Characters in the Novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab

	Yes Characters	Data Citation	Marginalization	Dominance	Subordination	Repression
1	Marjo	Date 1 (p. 128)	✓	—	—	—
2	Mun	Date 2 (p. 258)	✓	—	—	—
3	Mun's father	Date 3 (p. 251)	✓	—	—	—
4	Mun's father	Date 4 (p. 10)	—	✓	—	—
5	Mun's father	Date 5 (p. 7)	—	✓	—	—
6	Mun's father	Date 6 (pp. 10–11)	—	✓	—	—
7	Mrs. Wilda	Date 7 (p. 135)	—	✓	—	—
8	Mrs. Wilda	Date 8 (p. 176)	—	✓	—	—
9	Mun's father	Date 9 (p. 184)	—	✓	—	—
10	Mun's father	Date 10 (p. 35)	—	—	✓	—
11	Marjo	Date 11 (p. 66)	—	—	✓	—
12	Kang Marno	Date 12 (p. 217)	—	—	✓	—
13	Marisa	Date 13 (p. 249)	—	—	✓	—
14	Marisa	Date 14 (p. 258)	—	—	✓	—
15	Marisa	Date 15 (p. 250)	—	—	✓	—
16	Mun's father	Date 16 (p. 114)	—	—	✓	—
17	Mrs. Wilda	Date 17 (p. 62)	—	—	—	✓
18	Kang Marno	Date 18 (p. 218)	—	—	—	✓
19	Bachtiar	Date 19 (p. 248)	—	—	—	✓
20	Marisa	Date 20 (p. 257)	—	—	—	✓

### Data Analysis

Based on the classification results in Table 1, it was found that the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* contains 20 data on gender injustice with the following distribution: Table 2. Distribution of Forms of Gender Injustice

Forms of Gender Injustice	Amount of Data
Marginalization	3
Dominance	6
Subordination	7
Repression	4
Total	20

The data show that subordination is the most dominant form of gender injustice, followed by domination, repression, and marginalization. Domination and subordination appear most strongly in family relationships, academic relationships, and social relations involving Mun's character as the main woman in the novel. The female character who most often experiences gender injustice is Mun, as the main character, followed by other female characters such as Marisa and Bu Wilda. This confirms that the novel's narrative consistently places women in vulnerable positions to social pressure, power control, and symbolic and physical violence.

#### Marginalization (marginalization)

Marginalization is a form of gender injustice that puts women in marginalized positions, both socially, psychologically, and symbolically. In the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap*, marginalization is mainly experienced by the character Mun. There are 3 data that show the marginalization of Mun figures, namely in data (1), (2), and (3)

##### Date: 1

The quote on page 128 shows that Mun was used as an object of arranged marriage for the economic interests of the male family. Mun is not positioned as a subject who has a will, but as a tool to save the family's business. In addition, Mun also experienced verbal harassment through an assessment of his appearance which was considered "kampungan". This condition shows the marginalization of women in marital relationships, where women's values are reduced to economic benefits and physical appearance alone.

##### Dates 2

In this data, Mun gets the label "old" from Marisa because she maintains her life principles. The labeling reflects a symbolic marginalization that limits women's thinking space and places Mun's views as irrelevant to dominant social norms. Marginalization in this data takes place through psychological pressure and intellectual stigma against women.

##### Dates 3

The pressure from his father who compared Mun to a married woman his age showed a form of marginalization based on social norms. Mun is not given space to explain his emotional state and life, so he experiences emotional alienation. Thus, the marginalization in this novel operates through social norms that blame women for their own life choices.

#### Dominance

Domination is a form of gender injustice that arises due to unequal power relations, where one party has full control over the other. In this novel, dominance is experienced by the character Mun through family and academic relationships. 6 dominance data were found, namely data (4) to data (9).

##### Data 4 and Data 5

These two data show the dominance of the father over Mun in the family realm. Mun had no space to express his views or beliefs because the father held full authority as the head of the family. This dominance was ideological and psychological, which led Mun to choose silence and obedience.

##### Dates 6

The imposition of his father's will on car ownership shows the loss of Mun's autonomy in making his life choices. This domination takes place verbally and symbolically, by demeaning Mun's identity as a woman who is considered "not mentally rich".

##### Data 7 and Data 8

Mrs. Wilda as a lecturer used her position to control Mun through academic threats. This unequal power relationship puts Mun in a powerless position and is forced to obey for the sake of academic graduation.

##### Dates 9

Mun's father asserted his superiority by demeaning Mun's education and views. This dominance reinforces a patriarchal construct that places men as holders of absolute truth.

#### **Subordination (Subordination)**

Subordination is a form of gender injustice that puts women in a secondary position, lacks value, and has to conform to male standards. In this novel, 7 subordination data are found, Data (10) to (16).

Subordination is seen through: the intellectual degradation of women, double standards in appearance, the measurement of women's values based on economics and sexual attractiveness, and the restriction of women's autonomy in determining life partners. Mun is consistently positioned as a party who must yield, adjust, and follow the norms determined by the patriarchal environment, both by his family and close friends.

#### **Repression (Bullying/Violence)**

Repression is the most obvious form of gender injustice because it involves verbal, psychological, and physical violence. In the novel Luka Perempuan Asap, 4 repression data were found, namely data (17) to data (20).

Date: 17

Mrs. Wilda carried out psychological oppression through academic threats and verbal harassment. This repression restricted freedom of thought and forced Mun to submit to the interests of the authorities.

Date: 18

Mun was subjected to physical violence and direct intimidation from male figures. Mun's body is treated as an object that can be controlled and hurt, reflecting women's vulnerability in brutal power relations.

Date 19 and 20

Both of these data show repression through verbal sexual harassment and moral pressure that degrades women's dignity. A woman's body and identity are made objects of judgment and control by men.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of gender injustice in the novel Luka Perempuan Asap by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab show that women's representation does not stand as a mere individual experience, but is strongly tied to the social, cultural, and ideological structures of patriarchy that work in a systematic manner. The gender injustice experienced by female figures—especially Mun—shows how gender-based power relations are still reproduced through the domestic, social, economic, educational, and symbolic relationships in society. In the study of contemporary Indonesian feminist literature, novels are not only understood as aesthetic products, but also as an ideological medium that represents social reality (Wiyatmi, 2021). The gender injustices that appear in literary texts often reflect the practices of inequality that live in patriarchal societies, where women are placed as subjects who are controlled, judged, and determined by masculine norms (Sari & Nugroho, 2022). This is in line with the view of cutting-edge literary feminism that places literary texts as an arena for gender discourse battles.

The form of marginalization experienced by female characters in this novel does not only occur in the economic context, but also in the symbolic and psychological realms. Marginalization through labeling, the stigma of "outdated", and the pressure to conform to certain social norms indicate the marginalization of women's rights in determining their life choices. According to Rahmayani and Fitriani (2021), the marginalization of women in modern literary texts often operates subtly through language, dialogue, and interpersonal relationships that normalize inequality. In this context, women are positioned as parties who "have to adapt" in order to be socially accepted.

The dominance found in the novel shows how power relations work through the legitimacy of male and institutional authority. Domination is not always present in the form of physical violence, but more often appears through decision control, psychological pressure, and the elimination of women's voices. A study by Prasetyo and Lestari (2023) confirms that patriarchal dominance in contemporary Indonesian literature is often legitimized through fathers, lecturers, or authority figures who are considered "the most knowing", so that women's opinions are positioned as inferior. In this novel, this dominance limits the autonomy of female characters in determining life values, academic choices, and future directions. Subordination to female figures is seen through the prioritization of women's roles, intellect, and bodies. Women are judged based on economic standards, physical appearance, and conformity to male social expectations. This phenomenon is in line with the findings of Lestari and Hidayat (2022) who stated that gender subordination in post-reform Indonesian literature is still strongly reproduced through gender-biased moral and aesthetic standards. The female body in literary texts is often reduced to an object of social evaluation, rather than as a subject who has authority over herself.

Meanwhile, the forms of repression or oppression that appear in the novel show the escalation of gender injustice into the realm of structural and symbolic violence. Repression is manifested not only in physical violence, but also through

academic intimidation, threats, and will-to-be. According to Putri and Ramadhan (2021), symbolic violence against women is often legitimized by the perpetrator's social position, making it difficult for victims to resist. In the context of this novel, repression emphasizes that women are in a vulnerable position when faced with an unequal power structure. Overall, this discussion shows that gender injustice in *Hurt Perempuan Asap* does not stand separately, but is intertwined between marginalization, domination, subordination, and repression. These four forms of injustice form a complex system of oppression against women. These findings strengthen the view that contemporary Indonesian literature is still a space for critical reflection on gender issues, as well as showing the urgency of feminist reading as an effort to dismantle patriarchal ideologies implied in literary texts (Wahyuni, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in the use of the gender injustice framework of Julianeta (2021) in the analysis of feminist literature, which is still relatively rarely applied in the study of Indonesian novels. In addition, this study confirms that female figures are not only victims of male patriarchy, but also experience injustice from fellow women who have internalized patriarchal values. The theoretical implications of this study enrich the study of Indonesian feminist literature with a structural-contextual approach, while the practical implications can be used as a material for reflection in literary education and strengthening gender awareness.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rabs represents various forms of gender injustice experienced by female characters. The character of Mun as the main character experiences the most dominant gender injustice. The forms of gender injustice found included marginalization, subordination, domination, and repression or violence with variations in the number of citations in each form. Apart from Mun, other female characters who also represent gender injustice in this novel are Marisa and Buk Wilda. These findings confirm that gender injustice is a central issue that is consistently constructed in the novel's narrative. Practically, the results of this research can be used as academic reading materials to expand understanding of the issue of gender injustice and the social impact of oil palm plantations, especially for students. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of feminist literary studies, especially in enriching the analysis of gender injustice in contemporary Indonesian literary works. This study recommends that the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* be used as a means of increasing awareness of women's rights and positions. In addition, this research can be used as a reference to understand the negative impact of oil palm plantations in a literary perspective. Researchers are then advised to examine gender injustice in this novel using other approaches or perspectives to enrich the findings and perspectives of the research.

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