

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN YONI DORES' SONG *BAGAI RANTING YANG KERING*: A GENDER DOMINATION ANALYSIS IN POPULAR SONG LYRICS

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Abstract

Song lyrics often serve as a medium for reproducing social values, including gender ideology. In popular music, representations of masculinity frequently align with hegemonic norms that position men as dominant figures. This study examines Yoni Dores' song *Bagai Ranting yang Kering* to uncover how hegemonic masculinity and gender domination are constructed within its lyrics. The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify linguistic expressions that represent hegemonic masculinity in the song, and (2) to analyze how these expressions reproduce gender domination in the context of Indonesian popular music. The research data consist of the song's lyrics, analyzed through a qualitative descriptive approach using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis framework. The findings reveal that the lyrics portray men as strong and dominant, while women are depicted as fragile and dependent. This asymmetrical representation reinforces patriarchal values and naturalizes gender hierarchy within popular culture. Thus, song lyrics function not only as entertainment but also as cultural texts that reproduce hegemonic masculinity.

Keywords: *hegemonic masculinity, gender domination, song lyrics, popular culture.*

INTRODUCTION

Popular music is one of the most influential cultural media in shaping and disseminating social values, including gender ideology. Song lyrics, as a component of popular music, do not merely convey emotional experiences or aesthetic expressions but also function as cultural texts that embody the construction of power relations and gender identities particularly how men and women are positioned within society. Previous studies have shown that song lyrics can serve as a means of reproducing masculine norms and gender domination, either implicitly or explicitly.

R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity emphasizes that in many societies, there exists an idealized model of masculinity that occupies a dominant, heterosexual, and socially, economically, and culturally powerful position while other forms of masculinity and femininity are marginalized or subordinated (Connel and Messerschmidt, 2005). This concept is essential for understanding how masculinity is socially constructed and how gender

domination is reproduced through discourse and cultural practices. Within discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) argues that cultural texts including song lyrics do not merely reflect social reality but also participate in the production and reproduction of power structures (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, analyzing song lyrics from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity and gender domination is crucial to understanding how gender norms are maintained within popular culture.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have examined gender representation and power relations in song lyrics and popular music culture. For example, Kusumaningsih et al, (2024) analyzed how dangdut lyrics depict gender inequality through a critical discourse analysis approach. Similarly, Gumelar (2023) in "*Representasi Maskulinitas Lelaki Abad 21 dalam Lirik Lagu Pop Indonesia*" found that 21st-century Indonesian pop lyrics reveal emerging forms of emotional, intellectual, and personal masculinities. Furthermore, Ulya et al (2021) explored representations of Javanese masculinity in *dangdut koplo* songs, showing the functional (as a breadwinner), emotional (emotionally stable), and intellectual (rational male) dimensions of masculinity. Meanwhile, Kiram (2024) used international lyrics such as Taylor Swift's *The Man* as a framework to analyze the performance of masculinity and gender power relations within the Indonesian context.

Research in Indonesian popular music also demonstrates that genre and sociocultural context significantly influence how gender is represented in song lyrics. Studies on *dangdut* and *dangdut koplo*, for instance, show that female figures are often portrayed as subordinate and as objects of male desire, while male figures occupy dominant subject positions. Conversely, international corpus-based studies indicate that gender bias in music lyrics is pervasive and evolving large-scale analyses reveal that solo male artists' lyrics tend to express stronger gender bias compared to those written or performed by female artists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on song lyrics from a gender perspective has been conducted several times. Gender-based research is a broad field of study, and this is also the case for research based on song lyric from a gender perspective. Examples include research on the representation of gender onequality (Dhipa et al., 2023) using Saussure's semiotic theory, research on the representation of women (Abror & Afrianti, 2025; Damayanti et al, 2023; Kamariah et al., 2025) and gender-based double standars (Siregar & Ulfia, 2022) in song lyrics. Kamariah et al., (2025) used Peirce's triadic semiotics theory in their analysis. Damayanti et al, (2023) used feminist literary criticism theory in their analysis. Meanwhile, Abror & Afrianti (2025) used Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory and semiotics analysis in their research. In addition to examining song lyric from a gender perspective, lyric-based research has also been conducted in several fields of study. These include linguistics, which discussed forgiveness meaning (Nikijuluw et al., 2021), experiential and textual function (Uswar & Harahap, 2024), figurative meanings (Warmadewi & Oka, 2019) semiotics (Hasan et al, 2022), CDA (Kristiandri et al, 2020), translation(Kim et al., 2023), and linguistic perspectives based on lexical and contextual meaning (Baene, 2023). Apart from other field of linguistics, research based on song lyrics has also been conducted in other fields such as politics (Firdaus, 2021), education (Manik & Tarigan, 2023) and identity representation (Syam et al., 2020)

Despite these contributions, several research gaps remain evident. First, most Indonesian studies focus predominantly on women's representation or narratives of subordination how women are constructed as passive, dependent, or oppressed within lyrics while few studies specifically examine hegemonic masculinity construction in Indonesian song lyrics, that is, how men are portrayed as dominant figures and how such portrayals systemically reproduce gender domination. Second, many studies center on mainstream genres (such as *dangdut* or general pop) and romantic themes but seldom investigate songs with distinct sociocultural contexts or specific artists whose works carry cultural significance, particularly regarding hegemonic masculinity. Third, although some studies employ CDA, few have comprehensively applied Fairclough's three-dimensional framework textual analysis, discourse practice, and social practice explicitly to Indonesian song lyrics or directly linked it to the theory of hegemonic masculinity. Fourth, the existing literature often stops at descriptive representation what is portrayed without connecting it to the broader implications of popular culture, namely how song lyrics as "cultural texts" actively naturalize gender hierarchies in popular consumption and shape public understandings of masculinity and gender domination in everyday life. To address these gaps, the present study aims to: (1) identify the linguistic expressions that represent hegemonic masculinity in Yoni Dores' song *Bagai Ranting yang Kering*; and (2) analyze how these expressions reproduce gender domination within the context of Indonesian popular music.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because its focus lies on understanding the meanings and discourses contained in the song lyrics in a deep and contextual manner. This approach was chosen because qualitative research allows the researcher to interpret social and cultural phenomena based on textual data rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2013). The analysis is directed at uncovering representations of hegemonic masculinity in the song lyrics by interpreting linguistic structures, social contexts, and implicit ideologies.

The primary data source of the study is the lyric text of the song "*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*" by Yoni Dores, an Indonesian popular singer and songwriter active in the 1980s. The song was selected because it contains an emotional narrative that demonstrates power relations between men and women and strongly symbolizes the construction of gender roles. The secondary data sources consist of scholarly literature such as theoretical books, journal articles, and previous studies relevant to the concepts of hegemonic masculinity (Connell Messerschmidt, 2005) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995). These secondary sources are used to fortify the theoretical analysis and provide a social context for interpreting the song lyrics.

Data collection techniques used in this study are documentation and literature review. The data analysis in this study employs the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model developed by Norman Fairclough (1995). Analysis is conducted through three interrelated dimensions. The adoption of Fairclough's CDA framework is deemed most suitable because it reveals the relationship between language and power in cultural texts. Through this approach, the song lyrics are treated as social practices that play a role in shaping the collective awareness

of gender in society. To ensure the validity of the data, the study applies theoretical triangulation by comparing the findings of the analysis with concepts from various scholars such as Connell and Fairclough. This approach also enables critical reflection on how song lyrics are used as instruments for the naturalisation of gender ideology in popular culture.

Thus, this research method does not only focus on the content of the text, but also seeks to understand how the text operates within a broader social and cultural system. By applying CDA, this study endeavours to uncover the ideological processes behind the representation of hegemonic masculinity in the lyrics of “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” and to explain how linguistic structures can reproduce and normalize gender domination relations in Indonesian popular music.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the analysis of Yoni Dores’ song “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” (*Like a Dry Branch*) using Norman Fairclough’s (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which consists of three dimensions: (1) textual analysis, (2) discourse practice, and (3) social practice. Each dimension is employed to reveal how the ideology of hegemonic masculinity and gender relations are manifested through linguistic structures, lexical choices, and the cultural contexts of the song’s production and reception.

The main focus of the discussion lies in how the song represents women within emotional relationships shaped by hegemonic masculinity stereotypes a social construction that positions men as rational, strong, and emotionally distant figures, while depicting women as gentle, loyal, and self-sacrificing (Kimmel, 2019; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Accordingly, the analysis aims not only to identify forms of male dominance embedded in the text but also to explore how the female subject constructs self-awareness and symbolic resistance through emotional expressions embedded in the lyrics.

The analysis was conducted qualitatively by interpreting linguistic elements (diction, metaphor, and sentence structure), the social context of Indonesian popular music production, and the underlying gender ideology. The discussion is organized according to Fairclough’s three-layered analytical model, beginning with the representation of women in the text and proceeding to the broader social implications of masculinity discourse within popular culture.

3.1 Representation of Women in Masculine Relations

The song “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” (*Like a Dry Branch*) portrays the emotional experience of a woman who loses her sense of self-worth due to her partner’s neglect. The opening lyric “*Kau anggap diriku bagai ranting yang kering, kau diam, kau acuh, dan tak pernah kau sentuh*” (“You treat me like a dry branch, you stay silent, indifferent, and never touch me”) illustrates a form of emotional domination exercised by a man over a woman. The phrase “*dry branch*” symbolizes symbolic helplessness something that once possessed life and vitality but has now lost its essence due to the absence of affection and emotional recognition.

Within the framework of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), this representation demonstrates that masculine dominance does not always manifest through physical or verbal control but often operates through emotional restraint and detachment. The woman in the song is depicted as someone who waits, adapts, and defines her emotional

existence in response to the man's actions. As noted by Ulya (2021), Indonesian popular culture frequently positions women as individuals whose existence and self-value are measured through male affection and validation.

Thus, the song transcends a mere narrative of personal sorrow it exposes the social structure that normalizes women's subordination and emotional dependence within patriarchal cultural discourse. The female subject's silence and longing reflect how popular music can reproduce gender hierarchies, subtly legitimizing male emotional dominance as natural or desirable in romantic relationships.

3.2 Linguistic Analysis: Diction, Metaphor, and Discourse Structure

From a linguistic perspective, the song employs diction that consistently frames the female figure in a passive position. The lyric "*Kau diam, kau acuh, dan tak pernah kau sentuh*" ("You stay silent, indifferent, and never touch me") illustrates how active actions are attributed to the male subject, while the female subject merely receives their emotional impact. This linguistic pattern demonstrates a hierarchical power relation in which the man appears as the agent, and the woman becomes the object of action (Fairclough, 1995; Lazar, 2007)

The metaphor "*ranting yang kering*" (dry branch) operates ideologically it represents a part of the tree that has lost its function, easily broken, and stripped of value. By describing herself as such, the female narrator implicitly acknowledges the inferior position imposed upon her by patriarchal culture. However, this reflective awareness simultaneously opens a space for symbolic resistance, as the woman uses language to articulate her suffering. In this sense, the song becomes a medium through which women "speak from the location of pain" (Hooks, 1994), revealing injustice while reclaiming emotional existence.

The repetition of the structural pattern "*kau... kau... dan aku...*" reinforces the emotional imbalance in the relationship. The woman remains trapped in a discourse of passivity, compelled to understand rather than to be understood. This aligns with (Lazar, 2007) concept of feminist critical discourse, which argues that language in popular culture often functions as a medium through which women are socialized to adapt to male emotional norms.

3.3 Discourse Practice Dimension: Production and Consumption of Meaning

From the perspective of discourse practice, the song was produced within the context of Indonesian popular music from the late 1980s to the 1990s a period when melancholic narratives often depicted women as "faithful victims" (Gumelar, 2023). The lyric "*Perasaanku berbakti untukmu, makan pagi kusiapkan semua*" ("My feelings are devoted to you, I prepare your breakfast") conveys a form of gendered servitude, where affection is expressed through domestic service. In the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, this text reflects how popular music reproduces traditional gender ideologies that define women by their ability to serve (Wodak, 2015).

However, the woman's critical consciousness emerges through reflective questions such as "*Mati ataukah hilang perasaanmu? Apa memang pindah ke lain hati?*" ("Has your feeling died, or have you moved to another heart?"). These rhetorical questions mark a discursive negotiation in which the female subject begins to question inequality, even if she has not yet resisted it explicitly. In feminist CDA, such questioning represents discursive

resistance an effort by women to disrupt the stability of masculine ideology through reflection and doubt (Lazar, 2007).

Furthermore, the consumption of meaning by listeners reinforces the song's function as a cultural text that shapes social perception. Many Indonesian songs from this era normalized the image of women who "remain devoted despite being hurt," embedding hegemonic messages within emotional morality. Thus, both the production and reception of this song illustrate how popular culture operates as an ideological apparatus, sustaining patriarchal norms through emotion and nostalgia.

3.4 Social Practice Dimension: Gender Ideology in Popular Culture

At the level of social practice, "*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*" functions as an ideological text negotiating the meaning of womanhood within a patriarchal system. The lyric "*Jadi aku harus apa? Masa sih aku diam saja?*" ("So what should I do? Should I just stay silent?") expresses the emergence of female self-awareness toward emotional injustice. This moment represents a form of discursive agency a linguistic act where a previously passive subject begins to construct awareness of her own position.

Interestingly, this resistance does not emerge through verbal or political confrontation, but through emotional consciousness and introspection. The song's ambivalence lies here: on one hand, it reproduces patriarchal ideology through the image of the loyal woman; on the other, it allows for a reinterpretation in which women become aware of imbalance and begin to demand emotional recognition.

Thus, the song can be read as an ideological arena that holds two voices simultaneously the voice of domination and the voice of resistance. It illustrates how the language of love can serve both as a tool of power and a medium of awareness. Within Indonesian popular culture, "*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*" becomes a crucial text for understanding how masculine stereotypes not only shape men's identity but also compel women to construct their sense of self in relation to the masculine subject.

3.5 Synthesis of Findings

Based on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA model text, discourse practice, and social practice this study concludes that "*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*" profoundly represents women as subjects who experience emotional marginalization due to hegemonic masculine behavior.

At the textual level, the metaphor "*ranting yang kering*" conveys the existential condition of women who lose meaning and warmth within unequal relationships. Passive and repetitive diction such as "*kau diam, kau acuh, dan tak pernah kau sentuh*" reinforces the male's role as the active agent, while positioning the woman as a passive, dependent object. This linguistic structure reveals the internalization of patriarchal values that regulate emotional relationships a clear example of how discourse naturalizes power. At the discourse-practice level, the findings indicate that the song operates within a male-dominated music industry of 1980s–1990s Indonesia. Love songs of the period largely centered on male perspectives, casting women as objects of affection, devotion, or loyalty. However, "*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*" introduces a subtle deviation from this dominant pattern: the woman becomes both

narrator and subject of experience, not merely a recipient of male narration. Yet, her voice remains constrained within the linguistic structure of submission and emotional servitude suggesting that even female expression is shaped by patriarchal discourse (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

At the social-practice level, the song reflects the gender ideology embedded in Indonesian society. The lyric “*Perasaanku berbakti untukmu, makan pagi kusiapkan semua*” signifies the internalization of “*good womanhood*” an idealized femininity that values self-sacrifice and service in love. Nevertheless, the narrator’s reflective line “*Jadi aku harus apa? Masa sih aku diam saja?*” marks the emergence of female awareness toward symbolic oppression, representing a form of discursive resistance to masculine dominance (Lazar, 2007; Wodak, 2015).

Therefore, “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” can be understood as an ambivalent cultural text one that simultaneously reproduces patriarchal ideology while opening discursive space for critique. The song mirrors the social dynamics of women in a patriarchal society, where their voices are often expressed through sadness yet contain the seeds of awareness and resistance. More broadly, these findings reaffirm that popular culture, including love songs, functions not merely as entertainment but as a discursive field where gender ideologies are produced, circulated, and negotiated. This study highlights the importance of reading popular music through a critical-feminist lens, recognizing women not only as narrative objects but as conscious subjects with agency and transformative potential (Gumelar, 2023; Ulya, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Yoni Dores’s song “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” (“Like a Dry Branch”) not only portrays a woman’s sadness but also reflects a broader social reality concerning how women are constructed through a masculine lens. Within the lyrics, the woman does not speak as an autonomous individual; rather, her existence is defined through the male’s response she feels valuable when loved, and becomes “dry” when ignored. This illustrates how, within a patriarchal cultural structure, female identity is often formed in relation to men rather than through self-definition.

The stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity embedded in popular culture such as the image of men as rational, powerful, and emotionally restrained create relational standards that position women in a subordinate role. In this song, the man’s silence and indifference are portrayed as natural, even as signs of strength, while the woman’s emotional expressions sadness, anxiety, devotion are framed as weakness to be tolerated. This constellation of meanings demonstrates how masculine ideology normalizes emotional asymmetry, compelling women to adapt to men’s emotional distance. She is not allowed to become the subject who determines the direction of the relationship, but remains the object who strives to understand and adjust to a value system defined by masculinity.

The diction and metaphors within the song reinforce this reproduction of gendered stereotypes. The phrase “*Perasaanku berbakti untukmu*” (“My feelings are devoted to you”) implies sacrificial emotional labor a one-sided and subordinating form of affection. Meanwhile, the rhetorical question “*Masa sih aku diam saja?*” (“Should I just stay silent?”) opens a small discursive space for female reflection on this injustice, yet remains confined within the moral

consciousness shaped by patriarchal norms. The woman recognizes her unequal position but lacks the discursive power to fully escape it. Thus, the song illustrates what Connell (2005) describes as complicit femininity a form of womanhood constructed through accommodation to dominant masculine norms.

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the song demonstrates that gender ideology operates through subtle emotional representations rather than overt power. Hegemonic masculinity does not always manifest through aggression or verbal domination but can emerge through silence, indifference, or the refusal to empathize forms of control that compel women to continuously adjust themselves. Hence, the discourse of the song reflects a structure of symbolic power, where male dominance is exercised through the *absence of care* rather than physical or verbal violence.

Reflectively, this study emphasizes that popular culture, particularly music, does not merely mirror social values but actively shapes how societies understand love, loyalty, and gender roles. “*Bagai Ranting yang Kering*” underscores that when masculinity is idealized as strength devoid of empathy, women are positioned as reactive beings objects who must align themselves with male emotional rhythms rather than active agents of feeling. Female identity thus becomes reactive rather than active; she exists only insofar as she can endure and understand.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of developing critical awareness among listeners, readers, and scholars regarding how language and art construct perceptions of gender relations. There must be an effort to deconstruct stereotypes that render women merely as mirrors of masculinity rather than subjects with voice and agency. Future research could extend this analysis to other popular songs to explore how ideologies of masculinity and femininity are negotiated, contested, or reconstructed within contemporary Indonesian cultural practices.

Ultimately, this song should not be read merely as a sentimental love ballad but as an ideological text that exposes the paradox of patriarchal culture: women are expected to love unconditionally, while men are taught to dominate without empathy. Within that space of silence and resignation lies an implicit critique a subtle yet profound resistance against the gendered system that sustains patriarchy.

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