

Representation of Gender Injustice in *Wigati* Novel: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sara Mills

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the representation of gender injustice in the novel *Wigati* by Khilma Anis by using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach based on Sara Mills' theory. The study employed Sara Mills' subject position theory to reveal how the narrative in the novel represented the positions of women and men within a patriarchal social structure. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected from narrative texts that reflected gender relations, especially involving the main character and the relationship between *Wigati*'s mother and her father. The types of gender injustice identified included stereotyping, marginalization, subordination, and verbal or nonphysical violence. The results showed that female characters, particularly *Wigati* and her mother, occupied subordinate positions both socially and economically. The novel's narrative illustrated that *Wigati*'s mother was forced to accept a marginalized role due to her Siri marriage, which highlighted the neglect of women's rights in a patriarchal society. The analysis also revealed that the perspectives of the narrator and other characters influenced how readers perceived gender injustice by reinforcing certain stereotypes about gender roles. Sara Mills' theory helped in identifying how power structures and male dominance operated through narrative and reinforced gender injustice. This research aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature functions as a reflection and

critique of social injustice, particularly gender-based inequality, and how it reveals the marginalized position of women within a patriarchal culture.

Keywords: *Gender Injustice; Sara Mills; Wigati ; Patriarchy; CDA*

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are one of the media for readers to broaden their intellectual horizons and find life values (Hardiyanti & Nugraheni, 2018). Literary works present various issues from cultural, social, and psychological perspectives, often reflecting the reality of life (Woods et al., 2021). Apart from being a medium of entertainment, literary works also present moral messages that are a source of inspiration for readers.

In general, according to Lubis et al. (2023), literary works are divided into three types, namely prose, drama, and poetry. Prose in the form of novels has a high appeal to be read by the public. Novels can convey various themes of life, hope, culture, history, and social issues such as gender injustice. Gender issues are a theme that is often raised in novels as a reflection of women's struggles in facing inequality (Bataineh, 2017). For example, Khilma Anis's novel *Wigati* provides a critical perspective on the position of women in society. The novel presents the story of a woman trying to find her identity and position in the midst of social constraints that are often detrimental to her.

Gender injustice is an issue that is still at the center of important attention in various social discourses, including in studies related to literary works. This injustice often refers to unequal treatment between men and women, both in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and other basic rights (Erantika & Asnawi, 2021). In a patriarchal society, women are often placed in a subordinate position compared to men, so their rights and freedoms tend to be neglected or ignored (Nairurrohmah et al., 2024). Literature as a reflection of society's culture has great potential to reveal existing social realities, including issues of gender injustice that occur in various layers of society.

The patriarchal culture that is still very strong positions men as the dominating party and the holder of power in social life (Khaerah et al., 2022). This is one of the triggers as well as a tangible form of the cause of gender injustice. In line with Botifar & Friantary (2021) that indicators of patriarchal ideology can be seen in the following: (a) a social system centered on male power or paternal lineage rules (patriarchy), where men control family members, have rights to ownership, economic resources, and are the main decision-makers; (b) a belief system that assumes men occupy a higher status than women, leading to the view that women are part of men's property and must be regulated and supervised; (c) a justification for the control, oppression, and exploitation of women in both public and private spheres.

A novel entitled *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro* by Indonesian author Ning Khilma Anis, published in 2017 is one of the contemporary literary works that presents a portrait of gender injustice. In general, this novel tells the life journey of a woman named *Wigati* who must face various trials due to gender roles determined by social norms. One of the most striking forms of gender injustice in this novel is the experience of *Wigati* and her mother who were abandoned by men in a *Siri* marriage, without clarity of rights and adequate legal protection (Al Kayed et al., 2020). *Wigati*'s experience reflects the unequal power relations between men and women that still occur in many social contexts, including in the realm of family and marriage.

This is in line with Suryakusuma's (1996) findings that patriarchal norms in Indonesian society often position women on the subordinate side, especially in family and marriage. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an effective approach to dismantling the social constructions and ideologies that underlie gender injustice (Al Kayed et al., 2020). One of the relevant theories to be used in this analysis is Sara Mills' critical discourse theory. According to Almelinda & Nur (2024), this theory emphasizes how women are often positioned as objects in narratives, while men

assume the role of powerful subjects. (Indra et al., 2021). Technically, CDA examines how linguistic choices such as pronoun use, modality, transitivity, and narrative voice reveal unequal power relations. In the case of *Wigati*, the analysis focuses on how female characters are described, who is given a voice in the narrative, who is silenced, and how agency is distributed across genders. For instance, the mother's limited dialogue and passive role in the story indicate her marginal position, while male figures tend to dominate conversations and control decision-making. Through this method, CDA helps uncover the subtle textual mechanisms that reinforce patriarchal ideologies within the novel's discourse.

This research draws on the theory of Sara Mills, a feminist linguist who developed critical discourse theory with a focus on how language shapes the position of subjects and objects in texts. Unlike other feminist scholars, such as Judith Butler who focuses on aspects of performativity and identity, Miils is more concerned with the narrative mechanisms that confuse or exclude women in a discourse. By applying Miils' theory, this research can reveal how gender roles and ideologies can be embedded in narrative structures and characters.

A critical discourse analysis of *Wigati* novel using Sara Miils' perspective allows for a deeper reading of gender representations and brings up various structural issues that shape women's position in society. Critical discourse questions power and inequality, while reflective discourse encourages readers to internalize and examine how they may unconsciously support the system.

This study aims to reveal how gender injustice is represented in *Wigati* 's novel, both through character construction, storyline development, and the ideology implied in the narrative. In line with Sari (2024), novels are an effective medium in highlighting the often-overlooked reality of women who experience exclusion and marginalization in marriage and family life, especially in the practice of *nikah siri* (unregistered marriage).

To achieve this goal, we will be guided by the following questions: (1) What are the forms of gender injustice in *Wigati* novel? (2) How does Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis model reveal the position of subjects and objects as well as the role of readers and writers in representing gender injustice in the *Wigati* Novel? (3) What is the position and role of female characters in *Wigati* novel? Examining their roles helps reveal the broader ideological messages embedded in the text about gender dynamics in Indonesian society. Previous studies on gender inequality have focused more on its religious and cultural aspects, while few have critically analyzed the role of women in depth. This gap is the reason for raising this research question.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with the aim of examining the representation of gender inequality in a novel entitled *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro* by Khilma Anis. The analysis in this study adopts the critical discourse analysis (CDA) model from Sara Mills' theory by emphasizing three main aspects, namely the position of the subject, the position of the object, and the position of the reader. The study of subject position aims to identify who is the author or controller of the point of view in the story. Meanwhile, the object position examines who is being talked about. As for the reader's position, it discusses how the reader is directed or positioned in understanding the narrative in the novel.

The data sources in this study are narrative quotations, dialogues between characters, and descriptive depictions in novels that specifically highlight gender-based issues. The main characters such as *Wigati Dewayasa*, her mother, father, *Kiai Ali*, *Manik*, and *Kang Jati* are analyzed in a context that presents gender injustice, such as marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, especially in the issue of *Siri* marriage and patriarchal society.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with a focus on narratives and dialogues that implicitly and explicitly show gender inequality. In particular, this technique ensured that the selected text segments best reflected the

complex interplay between gender, power, and cultural values. In this study, the researcher acted as the main instrument who conducted repeated and critical readings of the entire novel. Analytical interpretations were enhanced by secondary literature to provide theoretical context and strengthen the findings. The unit of analysis includes narration, dialog or character utterances, and interaction patterns to be interpreted using Sara Mills' model to classify the three positions above.

The data collection procedure was taken in several stages, namely reading observing, recording, and analyzing data based on the content of the novel *Wigati*. Researchers read, observed, and analyzed the data in the novel repeatedly to understand the meaning contained in it. Furthermore, researchers analyzed the data through two stages, namely data reduction and data presentation. In the data reduction stage, the researcher focused on narratives that illustrate gender discrimination. Furthermore, researchers classified the data into forms of gender discrimination, including marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, and double workload.

In the data presentation stage, the researcher describes the narratives that show forms of gender discrimination based on the events that occur in the text by determining the position of the actor who is the subject of the story and the object being told. In this stage, the researcher also verified the findings by using supporting data sources through sentences in dialog that support the audience's position, and strengthened the presentation of data with support from previous research related to forms of gender discrimination and the position of the perpetrator. The researcher also added critical reflections to support the development of further research.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Findings of gender representation and the *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro*

The analysis focused on how women are portrayed in the novel *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro*. The characters' utterances and actions in the novel illustrate

gender discrimination, particularly toward *Wigati* and other female figures. For example, the narrative presents *Wigati*'s grandmother as “just a Javanese woman who dared not oppose her husband’s decision,” reflecting how traditional norms position women as submissive and voiceless (see Findings: Gender Injustice in the Aspect of Subordination, Data 2). This supports the claim that women in the story are subjected to structural subordination under patriarchal authority (Naz, 2014).

Gender injustice emerges in several aspects of *Wigati*'s life, such as when she is deemed unfit to inherit and manage the family heirloom because she is a woman, despite being the sole heir to Ki Surronggono. This social pressure is exacerbated by the neglect and rejection of her biological father, *Kiai Ali Muqaddas*, who marries another woman at the request of his family, leaving *Wigati* and her mother without formal protection or recognition. In her search, *Wigati* finds that recognition of her identity and presence only comes after she successfully unites Nyai Cundrik Arum *Keris Rajamala*, the symbol that links her to her father. *Kiai Ali* apology to *Wigati* and her mother comes only at the very end of the story, just before his death. Although he had made efforts to find them in the past, his fear of disappointing his current wife and damaging the reputation of the *pesantren* prevented him from taking real action.

This delayed acknowledgment of his wrongdoing highlights the gender injustice faced by women, as *Wigati* and her mother had to endure years of abandonment without support or recognition. His late apology underscores how women are often forced to carry the burden of men’s decisions and hesitations, even when those decisions deeply impact their lives.

Her friendship with *Manik* and *Kang Jati* also contains elements of gender injustice. *Manik*, *Wigati*'s best friend, is heartbroken when she is asked to abandon her feelings for *Kang Jati*, who is instead entrusted to *Wigati* by *Kiai Ali* (at the end of the story, *Kiai Ali* sets *Wigati* up with *Kang Jati* in front of her family and *Manik* before she breathes her last). *Manik*'s personal desires are sacrificed to fulfill what

the family deems a “greater responsibility” fitting for a male guardian, showing how women's wishes are routinely subordinated to patriarchal duties. The novel illustrates gender injustice through multiple episodes: *Wigati*’s grandmother, for instance, silently disagrees with a decision but submits to her husband because “*dia hanyalah wanita Jawa yang tidak berani menentang keputusan suaminya*” (Data 2, findings of gender injustice in aspect subordination).

This moment shows how women are systemically expected to submit in both family and institutional settings. Here is the percentage of narrative and dialogue findings that represent gender injustice in the novel *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro*.

Table 1. Findings of gender representation and the Novel *Wigati: Lintang Manik Woro* (Sara Mills' Discourse Analysis)

No.	Findings	Subcategories	short description	Amount
1	Position of the object to the subject		Relationship of female characters to male characters	10
2	Position of the reader towards the writer		The reader's position on the author's perspective in the text	10
3	Representation of gender inequality	Subordination	Women are positioned as powerless	7
		Gender stereotypes	Women are portrayed according to certain stereotypes	7
		Marginalization	Exclusion or undermining of women's roles	5

Violence	Physical or mental violence experienced by women in the text	1
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Table 1 presents the categories of gender injustice found in *Wigati* 's novel, including subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, and non-physical violence. Each category is identified through narrative and dialogue quotes that reflect unequal power relations between men and women. A more detailed explanation of these forms of gender injustice will be presented in the following subsections.

Gender Injustice in the Aspect of Subordination

Gender injustice in the aspect of subordination is seen through the placement of women in a lower position than men. Women are depicted as having no power over important decisions in their lives. This reflects the unequal power relations in the patriarchal social structure. The following are the narrative findings in the novel:

Datum 1: Romo Kiai did not agree at first. Romo Kian had only positioned Bu Nyai as a wife who had to serve him, serve the family. Never before had Romo Kian presented Bu Nyai in terms of her knowledge.

Datum 2: "Our Romo Kiai is an old-fashioned religious leader who insists on maintaining traditional values."

Romo Kiai, portrayed as a conservative and firm leader, exemplifies male authority by holding control over the rules and values within the *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). As the dominant subject, he wields substantial influence in the social structure, while women and other family members lack the same authority, showing their subordination to the decisions of the powerful male figure within this religious community.

Datum 2: "Your grandmother also disagreed with this sudden plan, but she was just a Javanese woman who dared not oppose her husband's decision."

Datum 2: *Eyang putrimu juga tidak setuju dengan rencana mendadak ini, tapi dia hanyalah wanita jawa yang tidak berani menentang keputusan suaminya.*

In this discourse, the grandmother is depicted as a Javanese woman who "dares not oppose" her husband. She is positioned as a submissive object, following her husband's decisions without the courage to voice her opinion. This narrative perspective reflects how cultural and traditional norms require women to be obedient, placing them in a consistently subordinate role under men, even if they disagree with the decisions.

Datum 3: "Your father agreed with your grandfather's plan to arrange your marriage, but he didn't dare to tell his father or the rest of his family yet. He said this marriage was only to make it official, so his extended family didn't need to know just yet."

Datum 3: *Serta merta, ayahmu sangat setuju dengan rencana kakekmu, tapi dia belum berani mengutarakan niat ini pada abahnya dan semua keluarganya. Ayahmu bilang kalau pernikahan ini hanya untuk menghalalkan saja. Jadi, keluarga besarnya tidak perlu tahu dulu.*

Wigati's father supports her grandfather's decision to arrange her marriage but feels the need to keep it secret from his family. This narrative highlights that the decision about *Wigati*'s marriage rests solely with her father and grandfather, who hold authority as the dominant subjects. Meanwhile, *Wigati* and her mother are in a subordinate position as objects without a voice or control over significant decisions affecting their lives.

Datum 4: "Your mother was powerless when your father said that his family didn't approve. She could only sob, remembering the hard work her grandfather put into creating the *Rajamala Keris* for her family. She kept crying when she found out that her husband's family had arranged a match for him with the daughter of a prominent kiai in Wonosobo."

Datum 4: *Mama tidak berdaya ketika ayahmu bilang bahwa keluarganya tidak setuju. Mama hanya bisa tersedu mengingat usaha keras kakek membar Keris Rajamala untuk keluarganya. Mama terus menangis saat tahu kalau ternyata ibunya telah menyiapkan jodoh untuk ayahmu, seorang gadis putra kiai besar di daerah Wonosobo.*

In this narrative, *Wigati*'s mother is powerless when her husband expresses that his family disapproves of their marriage. She is depicted as a passive object, forced

to accept the decision without the strength to assert her rights, illustrating the subordination of women within the marital relationship.

Datum 5: "It was indeed a difficult choice at that time. Men everywhere, when asked to choose between their mother and wife, would be torn, especially as they bear the honor and reputation of a major *pesantren*."

Datum 5: *Waktu itu memang dalam pilihan yang sulit. Laki-laki dimanamana kalau disuruh milih antara ibu dan istrinya tentu bimbang. Apalagi, ia menanggung kehormatan dan nama baik pesantren besar.*

In this view, men are regarded as bearers of honor and the reputation of the *pesantren*, placing them in a higher and more influential position than women. Men are positioned as subjects responsible for maintaining family dignity, while women become objects who can only rely on men's decisions, showcasing the subordination of women in social and family contexts.

Datum 6: "Upon hearing your grandfather's reluctance, your father became very disappointed. He began approaching your mother, who was only seventeen at the time, and asked her to persuade your grandfather."

Datum 6: *Mendengar ketidaksanggupan kakekmu, ayahmu sangat kecewa. Dia mulai mendekati mama yang waktu itu masih tujuhbelas tahun dan meminta Mama merayu kakek.*

Wigati's father exploits his position by asking *Wigati*'s young mother to persuade her grandfather. Here, *Wigati*'s mother is positioned as an object utilized to fulfill the goals of the male family members without the freedom to refuse. This narrative demonstrates how the subordination of women makes them vulnerable to manipulation within the family environment.

Datum 7: "Selfish Abah. Where have you been all this time? You abandoned me even before I was born. Don't keep defending Abah!"

Datum 7: *Abah yang egois. Abah kemana saja selama ini? Abah sudah membuangku sejak aku belum lahir. Jangan terus-menerus membela Abah!"*
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In the conversation between *Wigati* and Abah, *Wigati* expresses anger towards Abah for neglecting her. In this context, Abah is positioned as a subject with the power to make decisions, even ones that harm *Wigati* and her mother. According to

Aoumeur (2022), this illustrates how the subordination of women within family relationships leaves them without protection or support from men who should be responsible for them.

Gender injustice in the aspect of stereotypes

Gender injustice in the aspect of stereotypes is evident through the negative labeling of women based on traditional roles. Women are portrayed as emotional, weak, and irrational compared to men. This reinforces social constructions that limit women's roles and potential. The following are the narrative findings in the novel:

Datum 1: *Wigati*, who was originally completely unknown, began to be talked about when the female students were *petan* or looking for lice, lined up on the stairs. Especially after *kang-kang ndalem*, through *mbak-mbak ndalem*, laughed that *Kang Sarip*, who was known to be fierce without a match, suddenly fell ill and called *Wigati*'s name.

Datum 1: Wigati yang semula sama sekali tidak dikenal, mulai dibicarakan saat para santri putri petan atau mencari kutu, berjajar di tangga. Lebih-lebih setelah kang-kang ndalem, lewat mbak-mbak ndalem, menertawakan kalau Kang Sarip yang dikenal garang tanpa tanding tiba-tiba jatuh sakit dan memanggil-manggil nama Wigati.

Wigati became a topic of conversation only when it was related to the behavior that was considered “strange” by the *Pesantren* environment, namely *Kang Sarip* who suddenly fell ill and called her name. Here, *Wigati* is positioned as an object observed by the female *santri* and becomes the subject of ridicule. This narrative reflects gender stereotypes that a woman's fame or reputation can emerge only when she is associated with a male figure, in this case, *Kang Sarip*.

Datum 2: This must be about *Kang Sarip* complaining to *Romo Kiai* that *Wigati* had attacked him and made him unsteady. *Kang Sarip* must have been embarrassed that he, who was known to be powerful, could be defeated by a woman.

Datum 2: *Ini pasti tentang Kang Sarip yang mengadu pada Romo Kiai kalau Wigati sudah menyerangnya dan membuatnya limbung. Kang Sarip tentu*

malu dirinya yang dikenal sakti mandraguna bisa kalah oleh seorang perempuan.

Kang Sarip felt ashamed of losing to *Wigati*, a woman, who in the view of society has a weak or inferior position compared to men. In this case, gender stereotypes place women as figures who should not be able to defeat men, so the defeat is considered shameful. *Wigati* is positioned as a threat to a man's virility or prowess, and this narrative reinforces the stereotype that women are weak.

Datum 3: She has a masculine side perhaps. When men who look at it certainly imagine dozens of times. Though not beautiful, her face is begging to be loved.

Datum 3: *Dia punya sisi maskulin barangkali. ketika laki-laki yang melihat tentu terbayang-bayang puluhan kali. Mesti tak cantik, air mukanya tergolong memohon dicintai.*

The description of *Wigati* as having a “masculine side” reflects the stereotypical view that masculine characteristics are something unusual or special if possessed by women. This perspective objectifies *Wigati* as someone who might “beg to be loved,” suggesting an expectation that a woman must be feminine and “pretty” to be attractive. In Sara Mills' model, *Wigati*'s position here becomes an object of biased gender judgment.

Datum 4: When I was young, I didn't like the stories of Javanese kings and puppets. I didn't think they were interesting. Not heroic. Not imaginative. Moreover, I was a girl. So, I wasn't interested in being given magic and weapons.

Datum 4: *Waktu itu aku masih kecil, jadi tidak suka dengan cerita raja-raja jawa da wayang. Menurutku cerita itu tidak menarik. Tidak heroik. Tidak imajinatif. Apalagi aku perempuan. Jadi tidak gumun dipameri kesaktian dan senjata-senjata.*

The female narrator expresses her disinterest in traditional stories that are seen as “unheroic” or uninteresting because of the female perspective. This view shows the stereotype that women are considered to have less appreciation or understanding

of masculine aspects, such as stories about magic and weapons. *Wigati* here is a subject who is indirectly suppressed by the stereotype that women should be interested in feminine things.

Datum 5: He laughed, perhaps because I was too excited “Kang *santri* is like that, Manik. Men who go to boarding school are also forged by circumstances.

Datum 5: *Dia tergelak, mungkin karena aku terlalu menggebu “Kang santri juga begitu, Manik. Laki-laki yang mondok juga ditempa keadaan.”*

The statement that “men who go to boarding school are also forged by circumstances” shows the difference in viewing the education process between men and women. *Wigati* as a woman is perceived as not understanding the challenges experienced by men, and this view reinforces the stereotype that women do not go through the “tough tests” or forging that men do.

Datum 6: You're too young to understand this, Wi. You don't know how sacred your grandfather's *Keris* is. They want to buy your grandfather's *Keris* for hundreds of millions. I mean well, *Wi*. I'll give the proceeds to your mother.

Datum 6: *“Kamu masih terlalu muda untuk paham hal ini, Wi. Kamu tidak tahu bagaimana keramatnya Keris kakekmu. Mereka mau membeli Keris kakekmu dengan harga ratusan juta. Aku bermaksud baik, Wi. Nanti hasil penjualan itu kuberikan pada ibumu”*

Wigati is perceived as did not have comprehension of the value of her ancestral heirloom, the *Keris*, because of her age and gender (female). This indicates the stereotype that women are not considered to have the capacity or authority to understand or appreciate things that are considered “sacred” or important in traditional culture. In Sara Mills' model, *Wigati* is positioned as a passive object who has no rights to knowledge.

Datum 7: “You are the sole heir of Ki Suronggono, *Wi*. Even though you are a woman, you should understand the legacy of these *Keris* is. It is your destiny as the granddaughter of a *Keris* maker. Do not deny your destiny.”

Datum 7: *Kamu itu satu-satunya pewaris ki Suronggono, Wi. Walaupun kamu perempuan, kamu mustinya paham dengan Keris -Keris peninggalannya. Kodratmu adalah kau cucu seorang empu. Jangan mengingkari kodrat.*

The expression "even though you are a woman, you should understand" reflects the gender stereotype that women are typically considered unfit to inherit or comprehend ancestral heirlooms. *Wigati* is compelled to accept her "destiny" as an heir, despite being a woman. This narrative perspective reinforces specific gender expectations, suggesting that *Wigati*'s role or position as a woman does not align with the norms of inheriting historical artifacts.

Gender Injustice in the Aspect of Marginalization

Gender injustice in the aspect of marginalization is reflected in the exclusion of women's roles and voices in social and family spheres. Women are often excluded from important decision-making processes and denied access to rights and opportunities. This indicates a systematic pattern of exclusion against women. The following are the narrative findings in the novel:

Datum 1: *"Pesantrens are all the same; only those who are 'pretty' are chosen as in-laws. Wigati isn't beautiful, nor does she know Alfiah; she's an average student like me."*

Datum 1: *Pesantren di mana-mana sama saja, yang diunduh jadi mantu hanyalah yang molek. Wigati tidak cantik, tak hapal Alfiah juga; santri rata-rata sepertiku.*

This narrative illustrates the standard that marginalizes women based on physical appearance. The *pesantren* is depicted as having beauty standards for selecting in-laws, where only those deemed "pretty" are considered worthy. *Wigati* does not meet this standard as she is "not beautiful" and does not know *Alfiah*, thus marginalizing her. Here, *Wigati* is positioned as an object judged by beauty stereotypes, and her role as a student is undermined by her inability to meet these physical expectations.

Datum 2: "Papa is not your biological father. Before him, Mama was married to your biological father, a man from a pesantren family. Mama's marriage was never recognized, so she never took you to meet your father."

Datum 2: *Papa bukanlah ayah biologismu. Sebelum dengannya, Mama sudah pernah menikah dengan ayah kandungmu, seorang lelaki dari keluarga pesantren. Pernikahan mama tidak pernah diakui. Jadi, mama tidak pernah membawamu kepada ayahmu.*

Wigati's mother's unrecognized marriage places her and *Wigati* in a marginalized position. As a child from an unrecognized marriage, *Wigati* and her mother are denied access to legal rights and social acknowledgment. This narrative perspective reveals the marginalization of women through a family structure that does not recognize *Wigati*'s mother's status, ultimately affecting *Wigati*'s social standing as a subject within the story.

Datum 3: "*Wigati* must feel pressured by her grandmother's order to find her biological father, while at the same time, her mother wants her to bury this story deep."

Datum 3: *Wigati pasti tertekan dengan perintah eyang putrinya untuk mencari siapa ayah kandungnya. Sedangkan pada saat yang sama, mamanya meminta mengubur kisah ini dalam-dalam.*

Wigati faces pressure from both sides: her grandmother urging her to find her biological father and her mother wants to hide this story. In this situation, *Wigati* is positioned as an object trapped between conflicting family demands. As a subject without the freedom to make her own choices, *Wigati* experiences emotional marginalization, where her needs and feelings as a woman are not respected.

Datum 4: "Although valid under religious law, especially since her biological father officiated, the woman has no recourse if her husband decides to leave. Children from *Siri* marriages also lack a clear birth certificate because the marriage is not recorded in the civil registry. Your grandmother also explained to Mama that a *Siri* marriage ultimately disadvantages the woman. Men can leave anytime since there are no legal obligations."

Datum 4: *Memang sah secara agama, palagi yang menikahkan adalah ayah kandung sendiri. Tapi, pihak perempuan tidak bisa menuntut pertanggungjawaban apa-apa kalau suatu saat suaminya pergi. Anak hasil*

pernikahan siri juga tidak akan jelas akta lahirnya karena pernikahan orang tuanya tidak ada dalam catatan sipil. Eyang putrimu juga menjelaskan pada Mama kalau pernikahan siri sesungguhnya merugikan pihak perempuan. Laki-laki bisa meninggalkannya kapan saja sebab tak ada jeratan hukum.

Wigati's mother's *Siri* marriage highlights structural injustice that marginalizes women. This narrative explains that *Siri* marriages provide no legal protection for women, leaving them vulnerable to abandonment by their husbands. *Wigati* is positioned as a witness to the impacts of a marriage that disadvantages women, where her mother and herself become victims of this injustice. Marginalization occurs when women lack the legal rights or protection to secure their rights.

Datum 5: Manik: "*Kang?*"

Kang Jati: "Hmmm."

Manik: "Siri marriage really has harsh effects, doesn't it?" He nods.

Manik: "Especially for the woman, right, Kang?"

Datum 5: Manik: "*Kang?*"

Kang Jati: "Hmmm,"

Manik: "*Efek nikah siri ternyata kejam ya?*". Dia mengangguk

Manik: "*Apalagi untuk perempuannya ya, Kang?*"

This conversation about the impact of *Siri* marriages demonstrates an understanding that women are the ones most disadvantaged. In this exchange, *Wigati* reflects on the vulnerability of women in marriages unrecognized by the state. This perspective highlights the marginalized position of women, whose legal status offers them no protection, making them more susceptible to exploitation or abandonment.

Gender injustice in the aspect of non-physical violence

Gender injustice in the aspect of non-physical violence is seen through the use of demeaning words and manipulative actions toward women. This form of violence is not physically visible, but it leaves deep psychological impacts. Such

representation shows how power is maintained through verbal and emotional domination. The following are the narrative findings in the novel:

Datum 1: When mama broke the news to your father, he told her that he was not the father of her fetus. This is the saddest of all the wounds inflicted on Mama, Son.

Datum 1: *Saat mama mengabarkan berita gembira ini pada ayahmu, ia mengatakan bahwa bukan dirinya ayah dari janin Mama. Inilah yang paling menyedihkan dari seluruh luka yang menimpa Mama, Anak.*

In this data, when *Wigati*'s mother informed *Wigati*'s father about her pregnancy, he refused to take responsibility for the unborn child. This action constitutes a form of non-physical violence that emotionally wounded *Wigati*'s mother. According to Sara Mills' model, *Wigati*'s father assumes the role of the dominant subject because he controls the narrative by making critical decisions—such as abandoning his wife and unborn child—without being challenged or held accountable.

This demonstrates how the subject's position enables him to act freely while maintaining authority. Conversely, *Wigati*'s mother occupies the subordinate object position because she is portrayed as the one who suffers the consequences of his actions, such as social shame and emotional burden, without having a voice or agency in the narrative. This reflects why her character is positioned as passive and marginalized within a patriarchal structure.

This denial constitutes emotional abuse that makes *Wigati*'s mother feel neglected and degraded, as her pregnancy is treated as something outside of the father's responsibility. The father's action demonstrates his freedom to disavow responsibility, while the mother is left to bear the burden alone. Overall, analysis using the Sara Mills model reveals how gender-based injustice in the form of non-physical violence emerges through discourse that positions women as vulnerable objects subject to unilateral decisions made by men, exposing a power dynamic in

which women lack authority over emotionally painful situations (Santaemilia & Maruenda, 2014).

A similar representation is found in the study by Maesaroh et al. (2022), which analyzed children's English textbooks in Indonesia. As another example, Sumarni and Shomary (2023) conducted a qualitative content analysis of the novel *Guru Aini* by Andrea Hirata, identifying various social and cultural values such as affection, empathy, cooperation, and traditional beliefs, thereby illustrating how children's literature can reflect the sociocultural realities of Indonesian society. They showed that female representations continue to be dominated by domestic role stereotypes and subordinate positions, reinforcing patriarchal ideologies within education. These findings affirm that unequal representations of women—such as the figure of *Wigati*'s mother are not only found in literary works but also in early childhood educational materials. In analyzing gender injustice in the context of non-physical violence using Sara Mills' model, we can observe how such violence is manifested through the roles of subject and object, as well as through narrative perspectives that emphasize power imbalances between male and female characters (Nurhasanah et al., 2022; Annur et al., 2024; Izzati, 2023)

Subject-Object Position Analysis

This study conducts a subject-object position analysis to identify the narrative position of the first-person subject in the *Wigati* novel. This analysis is used to map the position of SFS as an interpreter of events or as an entity interpreted in the context of gender injustice representations. Referring to this reality, the position of the subject is always positioned superior to the position of the object. In Sara Mills' perspective, the subject has the power to shape meaning, while the object is more often the party that is interpreted or positioned passively. The position of the subjects in the SFS representation in *Wigati*'s novel is shown in each piece of data analyzed as follows:

Datum 1: "... *Kang Sarip*, who is known to be fierce, suddenly fell ill and called *Wigati* 's name."

Datum 1: "...*Kang Sarip* yang dikenal garang tanpa tanding tiba-tiba jatuh sakit dan memanggil-manggil nama *Wigati* ." Page 3.

Datum 2: "... *Kang Sarip* who complained to Father *Kiai* that *Wigati* had attacked him..."

Datum 2: "...*Kang Sarip* yang mengadu pada Romo *Kiai* kalau *Wigati* sudah menyerangnya..." Page 4.

Datum 3: "... Her face is begging to be loved..."

Datum 3: "...air mukanya tergelong memohon dicintai..." Page 10

Datum 4: "... Your grandfather's *Keris* will be sold and I will give the proceeds to your mother."

Datum 4: "...*Keris* kakekmu akan dijual dan hasilnya kuberikan pada ibumu." Page 20.

Based on the sample data presented in the four quotes above (pp. 3, 4, 10, and 20), the first perspective shows that the position of female characters in *Wigati* 's narrative is more placed as objects in male-centered discourse. Data 1 and Data 2 both feature the character of *Kang Sarip* as the subject who interprets and talks about *Wigati*. In Data 1, *Kang Sarip*'s emotional vulnerability is directed at *Wigati* when she falls ill and keeps mentioning her name. This places *Wigati* as an object of emotional admiration and longing without having direct agency in the scene. Similarly, in Data 2, *Kang Sarip* complains about *Wigati* to *Romo Kiai* because he is considered to have attacked her, strengthening the position of men as the controller of the narrative, while *Wigati* remains the party who is interpreted.

The second perspective emerges in Data 3 and Data 4, where the narrative begins to shift slightly to make room for the possible agency of female characters. In Data 3, although *Wigati* does not speak directly, her facial expressions are interpreted as a plea to be loved. Here, he begins to occupy the space of emotional agency but remains through the lens of the narrator, which shows that his position as a subject is still limited. Meanwhile, Data 4 reflects the family and economic context, when a male figure decides to sell the *Keris* and gives the proceeds to *Wigati* 's mother. In this case, women, both *Wigati* and her mother, are placed as passive

parties and only accept decisions made by male figures, showing a patriarchal structure that is still strong in social relations.

Overall, the subject-object relationship in *Wigati*'s narrative shows the complexity of gender representation. Although there is little gap for female characters to show agency, male voices remain dominant in forming, interpreting, and making decisions over female characters. This is in line with Sara Mills' view that subjects have the power to form meaning, while objects tend to be in a position that is interpreted by others.

Readers and Writer's Position Analysis

In the framework of Sara Mills, the positions of the author and the reader in the novel *Wigati* are interrelated in shaping the meaning of discourse. The author positions himself as a proponent of the ideology of gender equality by representing the figure of *Wigati* as a symbol of oppression as well as resistance to patriarchal structures. Through narratives that emphasize the suffering and power of female characters, readers are directed to be empathetic and critical of gender injustice.

Datum 1: "The only thing that is missing is the fact that the only thing that is missing is the fact that it is the only thing that can be done..."

Datum 1: "*Pesantren di mana-mana sama saja, yang diunduh jadi mantu hanyalah yang molek...*"

Datum 2: "Your daughter doesn't agree either... "She is just a woman who doesn't dare to oppose her husband's decision."

Datum 2: "*Eyang putrimu juga tidak setuju... tapi dia hanyalah wanita jawa yang tidak berani menentang keputusan suaminya.*"

Datum 3: "You must understand the *Keris* of his heritage. Your nature is that you are the grandson of a master."

Datum 3: "*Kamu mustinya paham dengan Keris -Keris peninggalannya. Kodratmu adalah kau cucu seorang empu.*"

Datum 4: "Mama just agreed because she was blinded by love. This is the beginning of Mama's stupidity, son."

Datum 4: "*Mama setuju saja karena dibutakan oleh cinta. Inilah awal kebodohan Mama, Nak.*"

Based on the sample data presented in the four quotes above, the author's position in the novel *Wigati* shows her alignment with the issue of gender equality, as seen in Data 1, Data 2, and Data 4, which illustrate her awareness of patriarchal injustice and her implicit resistance to gender-based limitations. Through narratives that highlight injustices against women, the author inserts a critique of patriarchal culture, such as in Data 1 and 2 which shows how women are treated solely based on appearance and subject to men's decisions.

Through the portrayal of the female characters' subjugation (see Data 1 and 2), the analysis encourages readers to empathize with their struggles and critically reflect on the gender norms imposed upon them. In Data 3, the author directs the reader to re-question what has been considered "nature" in social construction. The data of the 4 authors highlight that women's life choices are often influenced by cultural and emotional pressures.

Overall, The author builds a critical perspective on gender roles, as shown through the repetition of traditional expectations in Data 3 and the critique of women's limited agency in Data 2. A narrative with a position that is on the side of gender awareness, while at the same time inviting the reader not to be passive. Readers are invited to be emotionally and intellectually involved in dismantling unjust social structures. This position shows that the meaning of discourse is not singular, but is formed through the relationship between the author as the ideological director and the reader as an active interpreter.

This study employed Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis by identifying subject-object positioning in the text, examining how female characters are marginalized (Data 2 and 4), and analyzing narrative voice and authority in gendered contexts.

Forms of Gender Injustice in *Wigati* Novel

The *Wigati* novel portrays multiple forms of gender injustice, predominantly through the lives of *Wigati* and her mother, who experience subordination, marginalization, and stereotyping within a patriarchal society. A particularly complex form of injustice emerges through *Siri* (unregistered) marriage, a culturally specific practice that, while valid under religious norms, is not legally recognized by the state. *Wigati*'s mother endures a marginalized position due to her status as a *Siri* wife, which deprives her and her daughter of formal legal protections and social acknowledgment (Yesdia Talakua & Hartono, 2023).

This cultural practice complicates traditional interpretations of gender justice, which often presume a legal system that uniformly protects marital and familial rights. In contrast, the novel highlights how religious legitimacy in Indonesian society can coexist with legal invisibility, thereby exacerbating women's vulnerability within patriarchal structures. The study addresses this cultural specificity by examining how *Siri* marriage, as illustrated in Data 4 and Data 5 under the theme of Gender Injustice in the Aspect of Marginalization, reflects the structural vulnerability of women who lack legal recognition and protection within such unions. The narrative illustrates how women in such marriages face compounded subordination not only socially and economically, but also ideologically through a system that grants men the authority to abandon women without accountability.

This marginalization is evident as both women are socially and economically disadvantaged due to the lack of legal recognition, highlighting a structural injustice that affects women disproportionately in patriarchal cultures (Hamdan & Jalabneh, 2009). Moreover, stereotypes position *Wigati* as less worthy due to her gender, confining her within socially constructed expectations (Botifar & Friantary, 2021). This reinforces patriarchal ideologies, as seen in Data 2 (subordination of *Wigati*'s grandmother in domestic roles) and Data 5 (marginalization of her mother due to

siri marriage). These examples show how cultural and legal structures constrain women's agency. Yet, *Wigati*'s persistence offers a localized critique of gender justice rooted in Indonesian socio-religious norms.

Representation of Gender Injustice through Subject-Object Relations and the Position of Readers and Writers in Important Novels

Within the framework of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis, the position of subjects and objects in *Wigati*'s narrative reveals how gender power relations are formed and maintained. Male figures such as *Wigati*'s father and Father Kiai are often positioned as dominant subjects, while female figures are represented as passive or marginalized objects (Amerian & Esmaili, 2014). The narrative's emphasis on male control over women's lives emphasizes patriarchal hegemony. However, through ambiguous characters such as Father Kiai, the narrative also opens up space for resistance to absolute male domination (Muhammad, 2018).

Sara Mills' model enables a deeper reading of gender relations in the novel, as seen in characters like Kiai Ali who represent both patriarchal authority and implicit critique of that authority (Data 6). Female characters such as *Wigati* (Data 7) and her mother (Data 5) experience structural injustices rooted in cultural customs and legal norms. Judith Butler's notion of gender as performative is reflected in *Wigati*'s navigation of conflicting gender expectations, as she repeatedly resists prescribed roles, thus illustrating that gender identity in the novel is not fixed but enacted and negotiated. *Wigati*'s struggle to find her identity amidst social demands reflects broader gender inequality (Alexopoulos et al., 2022; Shaikh, 2012).

Furthermore, Judith Butler's theory of gender as performative provides a complementary and transformative lens to this analysis. Butler challenges the notion of gender as a stable, essential identity and instead argues that gender is constituted through repeated social performances over time. In this view, *Wigati*'s

identity is not a fixed outcome of her biological sex or social role but is constantly negotiated through her actions, choices, and resistances. For instance, her persistent search for identity and refusal to conform fully to traditional expectations can be read as performative acts that destabilize the norms imposed upon her. Similarly, her mother, although portrayed as passive in some instances, engages in subtle acts of survival that also perform and shape gender in complex ways.

By introducing Butler's performativity, it becomes clear that gender identity in the novel does not precede gendered acts. It emerges through them. This means that characters like *Wigati* are not simply portrayed as victims of a patriarchal narrative, but as subjects whose identities are shaped within and through gendered discourse. As Butler explains, a person does not have a fixed identity before he or she takes on his or her gender role. Instead, that identity is formed through the process of becoming a man or woman in society. This means that even if someone lives in an oppressive system, they can still show agency or power to act through the way they play the gender role. (Ton, 2018).

This added dimension further complicates the analysis of gender injustice, suggesting that while the novel portrays female characters as often subordinated, it also subtly highlights the potential for their resistance, negotiation, and transformation. The dynamic interplay between Sara Mills' subject-object-reader positions and Butler's performativity enriches the understanding of gender identity in *Wigati* novel, framing literature not only as a mirror of patriarchal culture but also as a space for disrupting and reimagining gendered realities.

Position and Role of Female Characters

The female characters in *Wigati* novel are largely positioned in subordinate roles, reflecting the restrictions imposed on women in a traditional patriarchal society. This can be seen from some of the findings above, Gender Injustice in the Aspect of Subordination, such as Data1, where *Romo Kiai* positions *Bu Nyai* solely

as a wife who must serve him, without acknowledging her intellectual capacity, indicating how women are not recognized outside of domestic roles.

Data 2 further emphasizes this when the grandmother is described as a “Javanese woman who dare not oppose her husband's decisions,” reinforcing cultural conformity. In Data 3, the decision regarding *Wigati* 's arranged marriage is solely made by her father and grandfather, while *Wigati* herself and her mother have no voice.

Data 4 highlights the helplessness of *Wigati* 's mother when her husband's family sets her up with another woman-she can only cry, without being able to fight back. These examples illustrate how female characters are treated as passive objects in decisions that affect their lives, thus reinforcing their subordination in family and community structures. (Nur & Riyadi, 2023).

Sara Mills' theoretical framework highlights how female characters in Importance are often positioned as objects in narrative structures, with limited opportunities to influence their own lives (TriAna et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the novel also provides subtle forms of resistance through *Wigati* 's personal development and emotional resilience, which shows a critique of these limiting roles. This resistance is illustrated clearly in one scene where *Wigati* directly confronts her father for abandoning her and her mother: “*Abah yang egois. Abah kemana saja selama ini? Abah sudah membuangku sejak aku belum lahir. Jangan terus-menerus membela Abah!*” (p. 87).

This emotional outburst marks a moment of subtle yet significant resistance, as *Wigati* challenges the authority of the male figure in her life and rejects the silence traditionally expected of women. This resistance reflects an ongoing struggle for gender equality, making *Wigati* not only a narrative of oppression but also an implicit call for social change and a challenge to conventional gender norms (Baidilah & Hamdani, 2023) This is also in line with findings in children's fiction

that show how patriarchal ideologies are embedded in narratives from an early age (Aoumeur, 2022)

Further, given that literature not only reflects but also shapes social discourse, the representation of gender injustice in *Importance* has the potential to influence readers' understanding of gender dynamics in the real world. *Wigati*'s confrontation breaks the cycle of passive compliance and represents a growing awareness of the injustices she experiences. Other narrative details that support this form of resistance, such as *Wigati*'s emotional resilience and her refusal to submit silently are outlined in the Findings section under the subheading "Gender Injustice in Aspects of Subordination". These moments show that even within the framework of a patriarchal society, female characters can express resistance and demonstrate agency, thereby challenging dominant gender norms. As such, literary works function as spaces of ideological resistance, where readers are invited to engage in broader questions about gender inequality through narrative experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the representation of gender inequality in *Wigati*'s novel using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Initial findings indicate that women, especially *Wigati* and her mother, are positioned as objects that experience subordination in a patriarchal social structure. In the narrative, male dominance is seen through symbolic power, such as religious authority and social legitimacy that are only held by male characters. The absence of legal protection for women in unregistered marriages is clear evidence of how patriarchal norms are institutionalized and reinforce gender inequality. However, to capture the depth of gender experience more comprehensively, this approach is expanded with Judith Butler's thoughts on gender as a performative social construction.

According to Butler, gender identity is not something essential or fixed, but rather is formed through repeated social actions and is shaped by the discourse

prevailing in society. In the context of *Wigati*, the actions, and choices of female characters can be seen as a form of gender performativity, where they not only reproduce existing gender norms but also have the potential to negotiate or even challenge them. For example, *Wigati*'s mother's resilience in facing the social stigma due to unregistered marriage and *Wigati*'s struggle to find her identity show subtle forms of resistance to patriarchal norms. These actions show that women in this novel can exercise their agency, even though they are limited by established social structures. On the other hand, the narrative also implies that gender construction is dynamic and can shift when women begin to redefine their roles. Thus, although patriarchy dominates the narrative, gender identity in *Wigati* novel also shows that women are not passive entities, but agents who play a role in the process of social construction.

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