

Family Conflicts in *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah* Movie: A Feminist Perspective

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Supandi, P.S., Herlyna, and Mujani, S. (2025). Family Conflicts in Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah Movie: A Feminist Perspective. *Journal of English Language and Literature*, 10(2), 279-290. Doi: 10.37110/jell.v10i2.291

Received: 25-05-2025

Accepted: 25-06-2025

Published:02-09-2025

Abstract: Although family conflict is frequently depicted in folktale-based films, there is still little feminist literary analysis of it in Indonesian literary studies. This study aims to rectify this deficiency through looking at gender roles and family conflict in the film *Garlic and Red Onion*, which draws inspiration from traditional Indonesian folklore. Finding out how patriarchal values are ingrained in family dynamics and how women are oppressed and empowered is the goal of this study. Characters, dialogue, conflict patterns, and narrative structure are all examined in this study using feminist literary theory and a qualitative descriptive methodology. The findings demonstrate how the movie depicts unfairness, favouritism, jealousy, and power disparity among female characters in a patriarchal household. The motion picture. The film highlights the complex relationship between feminist views and conventional values by showcasing the strong and defiant moments of the female characters. Even though the movie reinforces some gender stereotypes, the analysis concludes that its narrative choices also present opportunities for feminist discussion.

Keywords: *family conflict, feminist perspective, gender roles*

INTRODUCTION

Stories reflect the human condition; they tell us about values, beliefs, and ideas (e.g., teach ethics) passed from generation to generation and are a way that culture is preserved, including norms of behaviour between individuals and societies (Bennett, 2019; Bietti et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2014). Along with myths and legends, folktales and fairy tales form this phenomenon because these stories often dictate what expectations people have regarding gender roles in society; traditional Indonesian tales such as *Bawang Putih dan*

Bawang Merah teach lessons about social harmony, obedience, and moral values and also set up expectations of the expected roles for men and women (often reinforcing stereotypical gender roles).

Traditionally, fairy tales have been a means of shaping culture and reinforcing social expectations, especially in relation to gender and social roles. Indonesian folklore, like *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* are deeply ingrained in the cultural psyche as fables that instruct younger generations on what is considered "good," "obedient," and

"responsible" (particularly for women) and how those values contribute to maintaining expectations of gendered behaviour.

The problem is that behind the moral of these stories is a constant reinforcement of gender stereotypes consistent with patriarchal views. When such folktales are translated into visual media, like films, the potential exists for these biases not only to remain intact but also be reinforced by a new medium.

Despite these popular adaptations, there is a significant lack of feminist criticism of Indonesian folklore in film. While feminist theory is widely applied to narratives in the West, Indonesian cultural texts are often overlooked in academic discussions. This lack of critical engagement makes it important to investigate how film reinterprets traditional stories, particularly in the context of depictions of gender and family dynamics.

This study aims to examine how gender and family conflict are presented in the film adaptation of *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah*, using feminist theory as the main framework of analysis. Referring to the idea of adaptation theory presented by Butler, Hooks, Crenshaw, and Hutzcheon, this study aims to find out whether the film challenges or simply repeats the patriarchal messages contained in the original folk tale.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to the broader discussion in feminist literature and media studies by highlighting the development of traditional narratives into more modern forms. It also provides examples of how adaptations of folktales can be used not only to maintain cultural identity but also to raise gender awareness and question long-standing social hierarchies through popular media.

Gender and Power in Traditional Folktales

Previous research shows that Indonesian folk stories explicitly represent women within a rigid binary of "good" and "bad." Good women adhere to social expectations, being empathetic, dutiful, diligent, and submissive to hierarchical

structures, while bad women are envious, driven, and nonconforming to society (Bennett, 2019; Bietti et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2014; Santosa, 2020). Such portrayals of women, as engaging in a loss of agency reinforce the construction of femininity and traditional gender expectations and justify patriarchal values in society (Einspahr, 2010; Tabassum & Nayak, 2024). Folktales like *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah* exemplify stories that reinforce the notion of perfection in women as being submissive, selfless, and self-silencing in the interest of social harmony. In contrast, women who dare to articulate their wants, ambitions, or desires more often than not pay a heavy price and are villainised (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021a, 2021b; Alhameed Talafha & Al-Shetawi, 2021).

Multiple scholars highlight that folktales go beyond entertainment by shaping ideology and impacting collective consciousness, particularly regarding children's perceptions of gender roles (Black & Wight, 2020; Zipes, 2006). With regard to folktales, Haase (2010) notes that a feminist interpretation of them allows the study of the engraining of patriarchy by means of symbols and narratives. In the Indonesian setting, Setyawati (2022) illustrates how Timun Mas and other folk tales convey and nurture these values, exhibiting the culture's coherence in promoting regressive views on gender.

There is still a gap within the studies of folklore gender roles that focuses on the existentialist-feminist framework of *Bawang Putih Bawang Merah* and considers the women's empowerment and subordination discourse within women's empowerment and subordination discourse. Very few studies have attempted to connect this tale to Simone de Beauvoir's idea of women being the other, meaning that women are not regarded as entire subjects and placed in a secondary position to men. This is where I attempt to combine feminist and existentialist criticism of literature by focusing on the way Indonesian folklore conveys the notion of obedience, self-denial, and sacrifice as ideals expected from women.

This research is aimed at examining the influence of folklore on the evolution of identity in Indonesian women and will be conducted through critical and contextual readings.

Character Reconstruction in Film Adaptations

The original characters from the traditional folktale are reinterpreted in a more nuanced and sympathetic manner in the cinematic adaptations of *Bawang Putih* and *Bawang Merah*. The film challenges the folktale version's straightforward moral dilemma by introducing psychological depth and social context, even though the good vs evil moral binary is still present.

For instance, *Bawang Putih* is still shown as having a kind heart, but his personality is no longer restricted to passivity and obedience. He exhibits more emotional agency in the film; he expresses his annoyance, has doubts, and even challenges the injustices he encounters. These modifications portray her as a real girl dealing with difficult family dynamics and moral quandaries rather than as a representation of ideal womanhood. By allowing *Bawang putih* to express a range of emotions, the movie gives her a more authentic voice and subtly challenges the idea that virtue requires silence and total obedience.

Bawang Merah, generally perceived as an envious enemy, is also shown with more subtlety. Rather than being evil, her negative tendencies in the film seem to derive from external pressures, mainly from her mother's controlling conduct and societal expectations that push her to compete with *Bawang Putih*. The film contextualises her hostility within a larger sociocultural framework, implying that her animosity and manipulative tendencies are a reflection of the patriarchal milieu that sets women against one another rather than just being personal flaws. Instead of only denouncing *Bawang Merah's* actions, this change asks the audience to sympathise with her predicament.

According to Hooks (2000), feminist theory has to examine "the internal structures that

govern women's self-perceptions and relationships with other women," in addition to overt forms of oppression. The way the stepmother character is framed in the film reflects this idea. She is seen as both a product of patriarchal norms and their enforcer. Her brutality towards *Bawang Putih* and her preference for her biological daughter are not just acts of malice; rather, they are manifestations of a social structure that coerces women into empowering one another rather than opposing the system that deprives them of their own agency.

By portraying the stepmother as a woman moulded by social norms preoccupied with appearance, position, and conformity, the movie exposes how patriarchy may coerce women into imitating repressive practices. Its acts are motivated by both establishing dominance and surviving in a gender framework that assigns value to women according to how well they fit into preconceived notions. This picture supports the notion that women frequently behave within the parameters established by patriarchal expectations, even when they are granted control.

In addition to adding emotional authenticity, the film's subtle approach to character development forces viewers to reevaluate the underlying reasons behind female conflict. The movie promotes a deeper comprehension of how gender roles, familial constraints, and cultural expectations impact women's behaviour and relationships rather than reiterating straightforward good vs. evil clichés. Feminist objectives to dispel stereotypes and recognise the richness of female identity in a patriarchal culture are consistent with this rearranging of character trajectories.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Theory and Adaptation

This study is grounded in two primary theoretical perspectives: Linda Hutcheon's Adaptation Theory and feminist theory, particularly Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity. Both perspectives are crucial for examining how the cinematic rendition of the

classic tale of *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* has been remade, particularly with regard to the representation and possible challenge of gender roles.

According to Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, gender is a set of behaviours and roles that are continuously played depending on the social and cultural context rather than an innate and stable identity.

The film reconstructs the characters with more social context and psychological depth, using the original folktale's binary framework—good vs evil, submissive versus rebellious. The film's emphasis on tone, atmosphere, scenery, and facial expressions is made possible by visual storytelling, which adds levels of meaning that may not be possible with text or oral narration alone. Character power dynamics or emotional states can be delicately highlighted by the use of camera angles, lighting, and costume design, for instance, which can either strengthen or complicate the story being delivered.

Moreover, adaptations give filmmakers the opportunity to challenge ideologies. Films become a forum for challenging long-standing conventions on gender, motherhood, obedience, and family by reimagining conventional characters and relationships. This supports Hutcheon's contention that adaptations are both derivative and "palimpsestic" that is, they rework the original while referencing it, thereby establishing a dialogue between ideals from the past and present.

Linda Hutcheon's (2006) Adaptation Theory, especially in her work *Adaptation Theory*, complements this feminist viewpoint. According to Hutcheon, adaptation is a creative and interpretive process that reimagines the story for various mediums and circumstances rather than merely replicating the original text. Repetition and change are both involved in adaptation, according to Hutcheon, which keeps identifiable aspects of the original while modifying them to suit new creative, cultural, and temporal settings.

Bawang Putih's role is obviously intended to embody the ideal of the "good woman," which is admired in patriarchal societies as being subservient, diligent, and unrepentant. In the meantime, a system of partiality and unfair competition among the women is maintained by seeding and exempting her own biological daughter, *Bawang Merah*, from these responsibilities. This arrangement reveals a deep systemic structure that reflects the patriarchal norms ingrained in family life, rather than just individual cruelty.

This portrayal is consistent with Iris Marion Young's (2005) observation that "patriarchal logic often positions women as victims and agents of oppression in the domestic sphere." In other words, women, such as stepmothers, may enforce patriarchal rules not because they are inherently cruel, but rather because they have internalised them as a means of social control or survival. By rewarding her biological daughter and punishing her stepdaughter, the stepmother is not only creating a hierarchy that she may have experienced herself but also teaching her daughter to compete for male approval and authority rather than fostering female solidarity.

Hutcheon's adaptation framework and Butler's theory are combined in this study to show how the movie both reflects and reshapes cultural conceptions of gender. The study questions ideas of fixed identity and shows how media adaption can be a potent tool for rethinking conventional narratives from a modern feminist perspective. Patriarchy in Family Relationships. The depiction of patriarchal influences functioning within a blended family structure is one of the film *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*'s most notable and emotionally stirring themes. Traditional gender norms and hierarchical relationships, especially between women, have a significant impact on home dynamics. The stepmother character is at the heart of this dynamic, serving as a potent emblem of how patriarchy is not only upheld by males but also

perpetuated and sustained by women under social pressure.

The stepmother in the film firmly assigns gender-based domestic responsibilities, portraying *Bawang Putih* as the perfect obedient daughter who is overworked and emotionally invested in the family, particularly through the mother-daughter bond. The movie shows how cultural norms shape family roles, transforming what ought to be a place of love and support into a battlefield for approval and control. According to this perspective, stepmothers are not just evil people; rather, they are the result of a broader system that instils in women the need to respect patriarchal standards in order to safeguard their restricted access to authority.

The film challenges the fundamental ways that family, gender, and power are connected in Indonesian society by revealing these relationships, going beyond merely recounting folklore. It challenges viewers to reevaluate the role that women ought to perform and the viability of ending this inherited oppressive cycle.

The film's visual portrayal of these conflicts is what gives it such impact. The scenes that depict *Bawang Putih* cleaning the home, sobbing quietly, or receiving reprimands while others find comfort highlight the psychological and emotional toll that being confined to gender norms takes. The emotional violence of patriarchy, which is frequently regarded as normal or unnoticed in regular family life, is made evident to the viewer by these cinematic aspects.

Furthermore, it is possible to see the rivalry between *Bawang Putih* and *Bawang Merah* as a direct result of patriarchal ideals that prevent women from standing together. The film urges spectators to see how the stepmother's favouritism and society's assumption that women should compete for resources, love, and recognition create the tension between the two girls rather than portraying them as natural enemies. This is a reflection of the larger cultural narrative that frequently pits women against one another, preventing them from

developing relationships of empowerment that would challenge the established quo.

In the end, the film serves as a critique of the way patriarchal beliefs are perpetuated in opposition to gender norms that have their roots in folklore. Additionally, feminist research methodology, which emphasises subjective interpretation and contextual understanding, is consistent with the descriptive qualitative approach. Instead of aiming for objectivity in the conventional sense, feminist research aims to critique dominant discourses and elevate marginalised voices in this example, patriarchal narratives woven within popular stories. Thus, in line with the objectives of feminist studies, this research design functions as a tool for social critique and empowerment in addition to being an approach to inquiry.

METHOD

The qualitative descriptive design used in this study is ideal for examining social constructs, narratives, and symbols in texts and media. Using theoretical and interpretive frameworks, qualitative research enables scholars to investigate the meanings, themes, and patterns present in cultural goods, including films and folktales. Since the focus of this research is gender and power, a deeper engagement with the symbolic qualities and social ramifications of character portrayals is made possible by a qualitative approach.

A thorough explanation of how gender roles are portrayed and how patriarchal values function in the narrative is given by the descriptive aspect of the design. This study focuses on textual interpretation, visual analysis, and theoretical reflection rather than statistical analysis or numerical data to reveal how gender ideologies are reflected and reinforced in both traditional and contemporary portrayals of women.

By contrasting two distinct media film adaptations and oral/traditional folktales, this study also employs a comparative methodology. Finding changes in character development, narrative structure, and thematic emphasis, particularly in the representation of women's agency throughout time and formats, requires this comparison. In addition to being in line

with feminist research methodology, which emphasises contextual understanding and subjective interpretation, this comparison shows how much contemporary media reinterprets or visual/modern media offers a rich field for examining the effects of media adaptations on qualitative descriptive design.

Instruments

The primary tool utilised in this qualitative study is the writer. In addition to observing and analysing, the researcher also creates auxiliary tools, such as an open-ended questionnaire, to investigate respondents' opinions on how women are portrayed, family strife, and patriarchal ideals in the 2004 movie *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*.

There are a number of open-ended questions in this survey that let respondents freely express their opinions without being constrained by predetermined answers. The purpose of the questions was to gather descriptive narrative data, which was subsequently subjected to thematic analysis in order to uncover patterns of perception that surfaced from different respondents. In other words, the method remained qualitative despite the use of surveys because the primary emphasis was on interpretation and meaning rather than numbers.

The writer also carefully examined the film's content by watching it again, taking notes, and annotating important plot points, character arcs, and visual symbolism. Feminist theory and adaptation theory are consulted in order to complete this process.

Scholars employ theoretical frameworks like Linda Hutcheon's concept of adaptation and Judith Butler's performativity as a means of comprehending topics like female identity formation, stepmother authority, and gender inequality. Writer can create a more thorough and contextualised examination of the cultural narrative and patriarchal ideology in the movie by integrating data from respondents with an in-depth viewing of the movie.

Overall, this research has an instrument that is rich in interpretation. The researcher,

as an active participant in this process, plays a central role in constructing meaning and revealing the social dynamics hidden behind the visual text and public opinion towards it.

Procedure

In order to accommodate a qualitative approach, which prioritizes a thorough comprehension of meaning, social context, and cultural representation, the methods employed in this study were methodically organised. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data for this study, and the text of the 2004 movie *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* was analysed.

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was created by the writer and given to a number of respondents who were specifically chosen for the first stage. The purpose of this survey was to investigate how the general public felt about the movie's portrayal of women, family strife, and patriarchal ideals. To ensure that the data collected was narrative and contextual, respondents were allowed to respond in accordance with their individual experiences and comprehension of the themes presented. Researchers aggressively distributed the questionnaire using a Google Form, which made it possible to reach responders of all ages and genders.

In the second step, a thorough analysis of the movie was conducted, encompassing observations of the conversation, character relationships, visual expressions, and symbolic components in the story. To find themes, power relationships, and gender representational forms, the researcher reenacted the movie several times. In order to determine the changes in meaning or ideology that take place during the adaptation process, this study also contrasts the storyline of the movie with the traditional folklore version of *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah*.

A feminist theoretical framework and adaptation theory served as the interpretative basis for the entire analysis process. Because of its reflective nature and adaptability, this process enables researchers to modify the analysis's focus in response to insights gleaned from the questionnaire data and the movie's

content.

By following this process, the research not only considers the film's visual content but also the audience's reactions and interpretations, leading to a more thorough and contextual knowledge of the social and cultural themes the film raises.

1. Data Collection

The first step in this research involves the collection of primary data sources. The two main texts used are: 1) adaptation of the film *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah* (2004), directed by Arie Azis; 2) A version of the traditional folktale, commonly found in Indonesian children's books, folklore collections, and school literature used throughout the country.

These sources were chosen because they represent two different narrative media: oral/traditional storytelling and cinematic adaptation. Using both versions allows for a more in-depth comparison and allows researchers to trace how meanings, character roles, and ideological messages shift from one format to the other.

2. Transcription and Data Organisation

After film and questionnaire data have been collected, the next step is the transcribing and data organisation process. Regarding film data, the researcher analysed the 2004 films *Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah* in a methodical manner, paying close attention to important details and highlighting dialogue characters, visual symbols, and emotional expressions that highlight gender and group dynamics.

3. Coding and Thematic Analysis

Following the collection and transcription of all the data, the writer coded the narrative data from the movie and the responses of the participants. Themes that surfaced during the close reading process and the examination of the questionnaire data served as the basis for the natural development of this coding scheme.

Thematic categories or codes were determined using the feminist theoretical framework and adaptation theory as a foundation. From a feminist standpoint,

some examples of codes are as follows: women's initiative, workload at home and gender role, embedded patriarchy, and emotional responses to unfairness.

Meanwhile, some codes derived from adaptation theory are as follows: changes in narrative, reinterpreting characters, localisation of culture, and degree of authenticity and divergence from the initial version. Every code falls under a more general issue, such as how the movie either expands or restricts the representation of women or how conventional values are questioned in a contemporary setting.

4. Interpretation and Synthesis

Following the coding process, the writer started interpreting the data using the theories that had been applied, including Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Bell Hooks' analysis of patriarchal violence and women's relations.

By considering how the movie either upholds or challenges patriarchal ideas in the folkloric form, the interpretation was done in a thoughtful manner. As a reflection of the process of cultural negotiation in film adaptation, the writer also emphasised the conflict between conventional expectations and the representation of women in a contemporary setting.

In order to better understand how the public perceives the characters, family issues, and gender inequality in the movie, data from respondents was also employed. Reflections on the film's ideological message and its effect on viewers of the current generation were based on the opinions of the respondents.

5. Triangulation with Previous Studies

The analysis's findings are contrasted with earlier scholarly investigations on gender representation in Southeast Asian cinema, Indonesian folklore, and theories of literary translation to film in order to bolster the validity and reliability of the writer's findings.

This research is not only descriptive but also analytical and reflective of societal shifts portrayed in cinematic works because it integrates audience opinions, film data, and scholarly literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher divided the responses into several key thematic areas related to the research questions. explained and categorised the data collected from the Google Form, which was designed to explore public perception of gender representation, family conflict, and patriarchal values as reflected in the film, *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*.

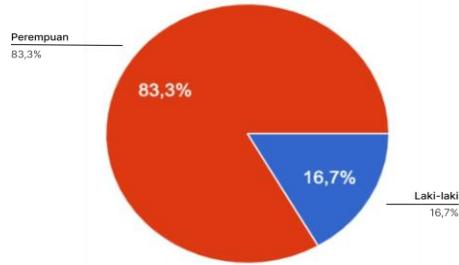


Figure 1. Respondents of Female and Male

Based on figure 1 shows that the gender distribution shows that 83,3% of respondents identify as female, while 16,7% identify as male. This distribution may influence perceptual bias toward female representation, as most of the insights are provided by women who may relate more closely to the issues presented in the film.

Besides, the writer evaluated the age of respondents. The result of survey is as below:

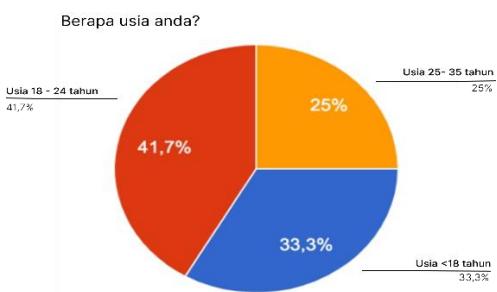


Figure 2. Ages of Respondents

In terms of age, 41,7% of respondents fall within the 18–24 age range, followed by 33,3% in the under-18 group, and 25% in the 25–35 age group. The predominance of younger respondents may shape the interpretation of gender issues from a more modern or progressive perspective compared to older generations.

Then, the questions were given about respondents' experience in watching the film, *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah*.

Apakah Anda pernah menonton film Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah (versi film atau sinetron)?
13 jawaban

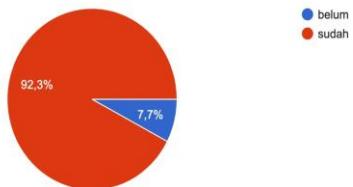


Figure 3. Respondents' Experience

Based on Figure 3, respondents had watched *Bawang Putih dan Bawang Merah* in any version (film or soap opera), 12 out of 13 respondents (92.3%) stated that they had seen the film. This high level of familiarity indicates that the respondents' opinions are likely based on direct experience with the storyline and character portrayals, ensuring the validity of the qualitative responses gathered.

From the data above, the respondents' perspective shows that the majority of respondents describe *Bawang Putih* as kind, patient, and obedient. This aligns with traditional depictions of "ideal" femininity in patriarchal narratives. Out of the 12 respondents who had watched the film, 10 explicitly characterised her as "*baik hati*", "*sabar*", or "*penurut*". This reinforces the cultural norm that praises submissive and virtuous women, particularly those who endure hardship without resistance.

"Bawang putih sabar, baik hati, dan rajin. Meskipun dia sering terluka, dia tetap kuat dan tidak pernah membala-bala. [Garlic is patient, kind, and diligent. Even though she is often hurt, she remains strong and never returns harm.]"

This response reflects how virtue is often linked to a woman's capacity for patience and endurance rather than her autonomy or assertiveness.

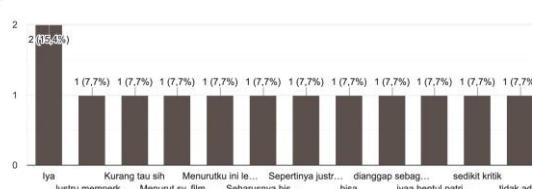
In contrast, *Bawang Merah* is predominantly perceived as arrogant,

selfish, and malicious. The responses include adjectives such as “jahat”, “serakah”, “manja”, and “tidak berempati.” At least 11 of 13 respondents (84.6%) described her negatively. This binary portrayal reinforces the common trope of the “evil woman” versus the “good woman,” simplifying complex female identities into moral opposites.

“Bawang Merah yang iri, manja, dan suka jahat. Efeknya dia suka memfitnah tapi ceritanya jadi lebih hidup. [Bawang Merah is envious, spoiled, and likes to be mean. The effect is that he slanders but makes the story livelier.]”

Although antagonistic, her role is seen as adding dramatic interest to the story, showing that conflict is essential in driving the narrative.

Apakah menurut Anda film ini bisa dianggap sebagai bentuk kritik terhadap budaya patriarki, atau justru memperkuat nilai tersebut?
 13 jawaban



Apakah Anda melihat adanya perlakuan tidak adil terhadap karakter perempuan dalam cerita ini? (jika iya, bagian mana yang paling terasa?)
 13 jawaban



When asked whether there was unfair treatment towards the female characters, particularly Bawang Putih, 11 out of 13 respondents (84.6%) answered affirmatively. Most of them pointed out the stark difference in how the stepmother treats *Bawang Putih* compared to *Bawang Merah*. Some respondents noted:

“Perbedaan perlakuan ibu tiri terhadap

bawang putih dan bawang merah. [The difference in treatment from the stepmother towards garlic and shallots.]”

“Bawang Putih diperlakukan tidak adil, dia disuruh bekerja sepanjang waktu, dia dibentak tanpa alasan, dan dia tidak pernah dibela. [Bawang Putih was treated unfairly, she was told to work all the time, she was yelled at for no reason, and she was never defended.]”

This suggests a recurring motif of female victimisation under a domestic patriarchal system where power is unequally distributed within the family, reinforcing the notion that a woman's value lies in her ability to endure injustice silently.

The role of the stepmother is also central to understanding how female authority is portrayed. 10 out of 13 respondents (76.9%) associated the stepmother with negative stereotypes such as being “jahat,” “pilih kasih,” or “kasar.” This character reinforces societal myths about stepmothers being cruel and biased, which are common in traditional folklore

“Ibu tiri dalam cerita ini menciptakan stigma yang memengaruhi persepsi masyarakat terhadap ibu tiri, yang digambarkan sebagai sosok jahat dan tidak adil terhadap anak tirinya. [The stepmother in this story creates a stigma that influences society's perception of the stepmother, who is depicted as an evil and unfair figure towards her stepchildren.]”

This insight supports the idea that the narrative not only reflects existing stereotypes but may also perpetuate them through repeated cultural storytelling.

Lastly, respondents were asked whether the film offers a critique of patriarchy or reinforces it. Responses were divided: 6 respondents (46.2%) believed the film criticises patriarchal values, 4 respondents (30.7%) said it reinforces patriarchal norms, and 3 respondents (23.1%) were unsure or ambiguous in their answers.

Those who saw the film as critical of

patriarchy pointed to *Bawang Putih*'s suffering as a mirror of women's struggles in society. However, others argued that the film still promotes the idea that a woman must be passive and obedient to be rewarded, which aligns with traditional patriarchal ideals.

"Menurut saya ini lebih ke penguatan patriarki, karena perempuan baik memang diberi ganjaran, tetapi mereka harus tunduk dan bersabar terlebih dahulu. Jadi seperti menunjukkan bahwa perempuan 'ideal' itu harus penurut dan tidak banyak mengeluh. [I think this is more about strengthening patriarchy, because good women are rewarded, but they have to submit and be patient first. So it's like showing that the 'ideal' woman must be obedient and not complain too much.]"

CONCLUSION

Based on the collected qualitative data, some conclusions and interpretations emerged, mostly related to public perceptions of gender representation, group conflict, and patriarchal values in the films *Bawang Putih* and *Bawang Merah*.

First, 83.3% of respondents who were female and most likely to be between the ages of 18 and 24 were able to contribute to the interpretation of progressive and gender-neutral films. This democratic group may offer a more critical perspective on traditional gender roles in comparison to more conservative.

Bawang Putih is portrayed as kind, patient, and obedient, illustrating how femininity is idealised in patriarchal culture through submissive and sacrificial traits. Meanwhile, *Bawang Merah* is widely viewed in a negative light as selfish, arrogant, and envious. This reinforces the binary stereotype of the "good woman" versus the "bad woman," which reduces female complexity into oversimplified moral roles.

Unquestionably, the stepmother figure reinforces negative female power; 76.9% of respondents agree that she is nasty and unjust. This exemplifies how folklore shapes contemporary beliefs by perpetuating negative assumptions about maternal figures, especially

stepmothers.

The most startling finding was that 84.6% of respondents agreed that *Bawang Putih* had been treated unfairly, particularly by her stepmother. It is evident that patriarchal power structures that normalise female pain and silence are reflected in traditional stories' household settings.

The answers were unambiguous when asked about the movie's position on patriarchy: almost half (46.2%) thought it criticised patriarchal structures, while others thought it supported them or were unsure. This dichotomy reflects a wide range of audience interpretations: some regard the story as a subtle affirmation of old gender standards that reward passive femininity, while others see it as a reflection of female struggle and resistance.

The answers make it very evident that audiences, especially younger women, are well aware of the gendered dynamics in the movie. Traditional values may be presented in the story, but it is evident from the audience's diverse interpretations that these portrayals are challenged by a developing consciousness. This is an obvious sign of a cultural change in the way that contemporary feminist perspectives are being used to re-examine Indonesian folklore.

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