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## MISOGYNISTIC VALUES IN INDONESIAN HORROR FILMS (CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SARAH MILLS ON THE FILM RUMAH DARA)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the representation of women in the Indonesian horror film "Rumah Dara" and deconstruct the discourse contributing to the formation of misogynistic values. The background issue is gender relations marked by inequality and injustice in patriarchal societies, where women are often subordinated. Misogyny, manifesting in various forms of discrimination and violence, frequently appears in social and cultural contexts that position women lower than men. The method used in this study is Sarah Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis, which examines the interaction of language, power, and ideology in shaping social practices and the structure of female character representation. The findings reveal that characters in this film not only play narrative roles but are also influenced by the subject's perspective. This is evident in various scenes depicting the objectification and violence against women, reflecting patterns of gender domination and oppression. The implications of this research highlight the significant role of film media in shaping and reinforcing anti-women attitudes in society and the importance of critical analysis in examining gender representation in media.*

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**KEYWORDS** *Women Representation, Misogyny, Horror Film, Critical Discourse Analysis, Sarah Mills*



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### INTRODUCTION

In societies worldwide, gender relations often display disparities and injustices. Social structures are frequently dominated by patriarchal norms, where men hold primary authority while women are relegated to subordinate roles (Sakina & A., 2017). Misogyny, characterized as prejudice or hostility directed against women, manifests through discriminatory practices, acts of violence, and demeaning portrayals (dr. Kevin Adrian, 2021). The Journal of Philosophy underscores that misogyny commonly emerges within social and cultural frameworks that systematically position women beneath men.

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Gender-based violence, often motivated by hatred towards women, is one of the manifestations of gender inequality (Israpil, 2017). The journal *Gender & Society* notes that domestic violence is often rooted in misogynistic attitudes, with perpetrators feeling entitled to control and dominate their female partners. Patriarchy is a social system that places men in a dominant position (Nurchahyo, 2016), while misogyny refers to attitudes that demean women (Andriani, 2022). Understanding this distinction is crucial for effective strategies to address both issues (*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*).

Misogyny has widespread impacts on society, affecting individuals, communities, and social structures (Sakina & A., 2017). Women who experience gender-based discrimination and harassment often suffer higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Suwijik & A'yun, 2022). Misogyny limits women's economic opportunities and creates unsafe social environments (*Psychological Bulletin*). In films, misogyny often manifests through stereotypical representation, objectification, and derogatory portrayals of women (Annissa & Adiprasetio, 2022).

Indonesian horror films, such as "Rumah Dara" (2009), often feature female antagonists that reinforce negative stereotypes (Muktaf, 2008). For instance, the character Dara is depicted as a sadistic and powerful woman who uses extreme violence, reinforcing negative stereotypes about powerful women as threats. Films like "Kuntilanak" (2006), "Sundel Bolong" (1981), and "Pengabdian Setan" (1980, 2017) perpetuate negative stereotypes about women in maternal roles and as evil and frightening figures (Esfandari, 2016).

These films emphasize the pattern of misogynistic representation in Indonesian cinema, objectifying women as sources of fear and reinforcing patriarchal views that women are threats when deviating from traditional norms (Hafizh, 2023). Misogyny in films can shape negative stereotypes and reinforce narrow views on women's roles and dignity in society (Wahyuni & Adnan, 2022). Critical discourse analysis allows for understanding how the structure of texts and the meanings they contain influence gender perceptions (Ayustin & Christin, 2022).

The author chooses "Rumah Dara" as the object of analysis due to its exaggerated depiction of women and reinforcement of harmful gender stereotypes. This film provides a concrete example of how media can shape and reinforce anti-women attitudes in society, a relevant theme for contemporary discussion. "Rumah Dara" is also chosen because of its popularity and influence in the Indonesian horror genre, with a significant fanbase and considerable attention from horror audiences and international film festivals.

This research aims to analyze the representation of women in the Indonesian horror film "Rumah Dara" and deconstruct the discourse contributing to the formation of misogynistic values (Annissa & Adiprasetio, 2022). Using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis method, this research examines how language, power, and ideology interact in shaping social practices and structures, particularly in the representation of female characters (Hafizh, 2023). This research is expected to make significant contributions to film studies, gender studies, and Critical Discourse Analysis, and be of interest to scholars, students, and practitioners in the cinema industry (Wahyuni & Adnan, 2022).

## **Literature Review**

### ***Media in Communication Studies***

The role of media in communication, especially in the context of film, is significant and multifaceted (Djamaly et al., 2023). Media influences audience perceptions and consumption behavior in the film industry. Sarah Mills' theory of "everyday life media" highlights how media is present in daily life and shapes our perceptions of the world. In film, media acts as a tool to create narratives, influence perceptions, and shape understanding of reality.

### ***Film as a Mass Communication Medium***

Film as mass communication is a process that uses mass media as an intermediary to convey messages to a large number of people dispersed across diverse and anonymous locations (Romli, 2016). Film, as a form of mass communication media, not only shapes society's views on various issues but also records and develops societal realities to be projected on screen. Through film, filmmakers have the opportunity to convey messages or meanings to their audience (Sobur, 2006).

### ***Indonesian Horror Film Genre***

Horror films have become a significant cultural phenomenon in Indonesia, especially since the 1980s with the presence of actress Suzanna, attracting the attention of various age groups due to their mimicry and mystical elements (Muktaf, 2008). However, this genre often falls into a monotonous pattern with recurring themes such as moving houses and female ghosts (Annissa & Adiprasetyo, 2022). Since the 1960s, Indonesian horror films have undergone significant changes. The post-Soeharto reform period spurred the development of new genres such as mystical soap operas and post-New Order horror (Theodoridis & Kraemer, 2016). Post-1998 horror films reflect societal trauma with a temporal gap between real violence and the reappearance of ghosts (Theodoridis & Kraemer, 2016).

### ***Representation of Women in Films***

The representation of women in films often depicts them in subordinate and overly emotional roles, contrasting with men who are portrayed as ambitious (Murphy, 2015). Male dominance in patriarchal culture positions women in subordinate roles due to male power structures (Rokhmansyah, 2016), creating an image of women trapped in stereotypes (Beauvoir, 1961). Gender bias is reflected in the patriarchal culture of the film industry, which exhibits misogynistic traits and gender bias, especially in the slasher genre.

### ***Misogyny***

Misogyny is the hatred or prejudice against women, which manifests in various forms, from explicit discrimination to attitudes and behaviors that demean women (dr. Kevin Adrian, 2021). It can be expressed through acts of violence, harassment, or through language and representations that belittle women. According to a journal published in *The Journal of Philosophy*, misogyny often arises in social and cultural contexts where women are systematically placed in subordinate positions compared to men, both explicitly and implicitly.

**Cinematography**

Cinematography derives from two words: "cinema," meaning movement, and "graphy," meaning writing. Thus, cinematography can be interpreted as the art of writing with moving images. In the context of film production, cinematography is a crucial aspect because it involves carefully chosen techniques for capturing images to create cinematic nuances and convey messages intended in a film. Joseph V. Mascelli A.S.C explains that several fundamental principles must be considered in cinematography, including Camera Angle, Type Shot, and Composition, which are used to understand how misogynistic values are reflected and constructed through the use of cinematographic techniques in the film.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, the author employs a qualitative approach (Kriyantono, 2012) , which is a research process aimed at understanding social phenomena in humans. This approach is used to comprehend the processes of life, meanings, and interpretations of human experiences (Sugiyono, 2017). The research involves critical/descriptive analysis through data collection and in-depth examination of the Indonesian horror film industry.

This qualitative approach uses the critical discourse analysis method based on Sara Mills' model. Sara Mills focuses on discourse theory from a feminist perspective, examining how women are represented in texts such as novels, images, photos, and news (Darma, 2014) . Mills' approach highlights how texts tend to depict women in disadvantaged and marginalized positions compared to men. Mills pays attention to the position of actors in the text, such as who is positioned as the subject and who as the object of the narrative, which influences the structure and meaning of the text. She also emphasizes how readers and writers are treated in the text, affecting how the text is understood and the position of social actors. The storytelling style and the positions highlighted in the text form legitimacy for one party and oppression for another (Darma, 2009).

Eriyanto (2005: 211) describes Mills' analytical framework as follows:

Tabel 1. Mills' Analytical Framework

Level	Focus of Analysis
Storytelling Subject-Object Position	How events are viewed, from whose perspective the events are seen, who is positioned as the storyteller (subject), and who is the object being told.
Writer-Reader Positio	How the reader's position is depicted in the text. How readers position themselves in the displayed text. To which group the readers identify themselves.

This framework helps in analyzing the representation of women and the interplay of power and ideology in texts, providing insights into how gender dynamics are constructed and perceived in media narratives.

This research uses a qualitative method and Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis to examine misogynistic representations in Indonesian horror films, particularly "*Rumah Dara*" (2009). Over a period of two months, this study focuses on the main

character, "*Dara*," who is depicted as a symbol of evil and gender inequality, demonstrating manipulative power, violence, and negative views towards women. The analysis shows that patriarchal culture influences negative perceptions of women in films, highlighting gender inequality and stereotypes in the media (Hafizh, 2023).

Primary data from the film "*Rumah Dara*" highlight derogatory dialogues and physical suffering of women, while secondary data from literature support this analysis. The unit of analysis includes scene segmentation, dialogue analysis, visual exploration, and mapping of characterizations and situations of violence against women. This study underscores how misogynistic representations in "*Rumah Dara*" influence perceptions of women in Indonesian horror films.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

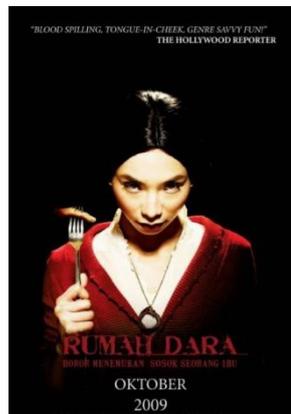


Figure 1. *Rumah Dara* Movie Poster

"*Rumah Dara*," also known as "*Macabre*," is a 2009 Indonesian horror film directed by Kimo Stamboel and Timo Tjahjanto. The film follows a group of friends who become trapped in the house of a mysterious woman named Dara and her sadistic family. As the friends begin to disappear one by one, Maya, who is pregnant, must fight to save herself and her child from the ensuing horrors. Known for its intense horror scenes and gruesome visuals, the film reinforces negative views of women by portraying them as weak and easily victimized, thus perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes (Ayustin & Christin, 2022). "*Rumah Dara*" was chosen for analysis due to its exaggerated portrayal of women, providing a concrete example of how media can shape and reinforce anti-women attitudes in society—a highly relevant theme in the current context.

This study presents the findings and data analysis of the film "*Rumah Dara*" using Sara Mills' discourse analysis, focusing on the subject-object position and the writer-reader position. "*Rumah Dara*," a horror thriller by the Mo Brothers (Timo Tjahjanto and Kimo Stamboel), depicts the struggle of a group of people against a psychopathic family led by Dara. The film not only showcases terror and tension but also highlights the representation of women in society. Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis includes two main concepts: the subject-object position and the writer-reader position.

### Subject Position

The subject position refers to how actors are presented in the text. In the subject position, Dara as a subject takes an active role in the story. She is not only the narrator

but also the main driver of the conflict. However, as an object, Dara is represented through the perspectives of other characters, particularly her victims, who see her as a major threat. This representation reinforces the misogynistic view that women with power and dominance are considered abnormal and frightening. The following scene excerpts illustrate how the subject position is portrayed in "Rumah Dara":

Table 2. Data Findings Framework for Subject Position in the Film "Rumah Dara"

Time	Scene	Point of Analysis	Scene Description
48.34	 <p><i>Image 2 Data Findings</i></p>	<p><b>Background music:</b> suspenseful music</p> <p><b>Setting:</b> house</p> <p><b>Time:</b> midnight</p> <p><b>Camera shot:</b> witness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Camera angle:</b> eye level</li> <li>• <b>Type of shot:</b> full shot</li> <li>• <b>Composition:</b> walking room</li> </ul>	<p>This shot makes the audience feel like a third party witnessing the torture scene directly.</p>
54.13	 <p><i>Image 3 Data Findings</i></p>	<p><b>Background music:</b> suspenseful music</p> <p><b>Setting:</b> house</p> <p><b>Time:</b> midnight</p> <p><b>Camera shot:</b> witness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Camera angle:</b> eye level</li> <li>• <b>Type of shot:</b> full shot</li> <li>• <b>Composition:</b> walking room.</li> </ul>	<p>This shot makes the audience feel like a third party witnessing the torture scene directly.</p>
01.06.40	 <p><i>Image 4 Data Findings</i></p>	<p><b>Background music:</b> suspenseful music</p> <p><b>Setting:</b> house</p> <p><b>Time:</b> midnight</p> <p><b>Camera shot:</b> witness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Camera angle:</b> high level</li> <li>• <b>Type of shot:</b> close-up</li> <li>• <b>Composition:</b> noseroom</li> </ul>	<p>This shot makes the audience feel like a character who is being tortured, looking up at the mother character from below or from a lying down position.</p>
01.26.40	 <p><i>Image 5 Data Findings</i></p>	<p><b>Background music:</b> suspenseful music</p> <p><b>Setting:</b> house</p> <p><b>Time:</b> midnight</p> <p><b>Camera shot:</b> witness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Camera angle:</b> high level</li> <li>• <b>Type of shot:</b> close-up</li> <li>• <b>Composition:</b> noseroom</li> </ul>	<p>This shot makes the audience feel like a character being killed by the mother character.</p>

Source: scene excerpts from the film "Rumah Dara"

These detailed scene analyses demonstrate how specific cinematographic techniques are used to create a visceral experience for the audience, emphasizing the intense and horrific nature of the scenes. The use of eye-level and high-level camera angles, along with full shots and close-ups, contributes to the immersive and emotional impact of the film, reinforcing the themes of power, control, and victimization.

### ***Image Explanation***

In the film "Rumah Dara," the character Dara is the main subject who narrates and leads the story, while her victims are the objects being narrated. The scenes of physical violence against women in this film highlight misogynistic values, reflecting social issues related to gender inequality and violence against women. The character "Mother Dara" is depicted as a frightening and cruel woman, reinforcing misogynistic values by presenting women in dominant and dangerous antagonist roles.

In Image 10, Mother Dara tortures two married couples, demonstrating physical and psychological violence that reflects her dominant position and control over their lives, reinforcing the negative stereotype that strong women are threats to be wary of. In Image 11, Mother Dara's violent actions, including near-murder and the taking of a baby, show her dominance and exploitation of other female characters, underscoring gender inequality and the exploitation of women as vulnerable objects. In Image 12, the scene where the victims call the authorities reveals that Mother Dara collaborates with the police, reinforcing the stereotype that women are manipulative and evil, depicting women as cunning and untrustworthy. In Image 13, Mother Dara coldly and remorselessly kills a male character, portraying women as frightening and cruel, and reinforcing misogynistic views of dominant women as threats. In conclusion, these scenes depict the dominance and power of the character Mother Dara, while highlighting the misogynistic values embedded in the film's narrative, reinforcing negative views of women in the media.

### ***Explanation of Subject Position***

In the film "Rumah Dara," the object position is filled by characters such as Adjie, Astrid, Jimmy, Eko, and Alam, who become victims of Mother Dara's cruelty. Dara, as the narrative subject, depicts them through various sadistic and manipulative actions, showing violence and dominance by a woman portrayed as cruel and frightening. For example, Adjie and Astrid, who are traveling, become victims of Dara's brutal cruelty, with the pregnant Astrid symbolizing exploited weakness. Jimmy, Eko, and Alam are also tortured and killed by Dara and her family, reinforcing the misogynistic view that strong women are significant threats. Dara's collaboration with local authorities shows her power and manipulateness, reinforcing her image as a cunning and dangerous figure. Dara's daughter, Nani, is also involved in the cruelty, furthering the negative representation of women. In conclusion, the film portrays Mother Dara's dominance and power while depicting misogynistic values that reinforce negative stereotypes of women as deadly and cunning threats.

### **Object Position**

The object position in the film "Rumah Dara" can be analyzed through several scenes and dialogues involving its characters. Actors whose presence is narrated by

others become subjects who cannot present or describe themselves directly. The object position is held by those who are described and depicted by others. Actors in the object position only serve as supporting roles, placing them in a disadvantaged position when depicted in the film. The following scene excerpts illustrate the object position in "Rumah Dara":

Table 3. Data Findings Framework for Object Position in the Film "Rumah Dara"

Scene	Visual	Point Analysis	Scene Description
04.40	 <i>Image 6 Data Findings</i>	<b>Backsound</b> : restaurant music <b>Setting</b> : restaurant <b>Time</b> : night <b>Camera shot</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carmera angle</b> : eye level</li> <li>• <b>Type shoot</b> : full shot</li> <li>• <b>Composition</b> : Headroom</li> </ul>	This shot makes the audience feel like a third party witnessing the scene directly.
28.40	 <i>Image 7 Data Findings</i>	<b>Backsound</b> : romantic music <b>Setting</b> : house <b>Time</b> : midnight <b>Camera shot</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carmera angle</b> : eye level</li> <li>• <b>Type shoot</b> : close-up</li> <li>• <b>Composition</b> : noseroom</li> </ul>	This shot makes the audience feel like a third party witnessing the scene directly.
41.50	 <i>Image 8 Data Findings</i>	<b>Backsound</b> : suspenseful music <b>Setting</b> : house <b>Time</b> : midnight <b>Camera shot</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carmera angle</b> : High level</li> <li>• <b>Type shoot</b> : full shot</li> <li>• <b>Composition</b> : Noseroom</li> </ul>	This shot makes the audience feel like a character being tortured, looking up at the mother character from below or from a lying down position..
01.21.59	 <i>Image 9 Data Findings</i>	<b>Backsound</b> : suspenseful music <b>Setting</b> : house <b>Time</b> : midnight <b>Camera shot</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carmera angle</b> : eye level</li> <li>• <b>Type shoot</b> : Close-up</li> <li>• <b>Composition</b> : Noseroom</li> </ul>	This shot makes the audience feel like a character being killed by the mother character.

Source: scene excerpts from the film "Rumah Dara"

### ***Image Explanation***

In the film "Rumah Dara," each character not only acts within the narrative but also reflects perspectives and interpretations toward them. In Image 14, at a restaurant, Nadia, a young waitress, is sexually harassed by a man who suggests she become "dessert." This interaction reflects the objectification and harmful gender stereotypes against women, showing a lack of respect for Nadia as an individual and professional.

In Image 15, in a quiet house at night, a woman pleads to be accompanied by a man who firmly refuses. This scene highlights male dominance and the dismissal of women's requests, reflecting misogynistic values. In Image 16, Adam, Mother Dara's son, commits extreme violence against a woman, nearly killing and mutilating her. This scene reinforces the misogynistic theme by showing how male characters use their power to oppress and harm women.

In Image 17, a female character repeatedly experiences violence from David, Mother Dara's sadistic son. This violence highlights patterns of dominance and oppression against women, reinforcing misogynistic values by depicting women as continual objects of violence. Overall, these scenes demonstrate how the film's narrative portrays gender injustice and domination that consistently degrades women.

### ***Explanation of Object Position***

In the analysis based on Sarah Mills' object position theory, the film "Rumah Dara" depicts how each character acts as both an agent and an object influenced by the subject's perspective. Female characters are often positioned as objects experiencing objectification and demeaning gender stereotypes, highlighting inequality in gender relations. The extreme violence by male characters against women shows domination and oppression, depicting women as objects of physical violence. The recurring pattern of violence illustrates gender injustice and highlights how female characters are treated within the subject's perspective framework. Sarah Mills' object position theory helps analyze power, domination, and gender representation in "Rumah Dara," revealing the injustice and degradation of women's dignity within the film's narrative.

### **Writer-Reader Position**

In this discourse analysis, Sara Mills focuses on the writer-reader position in the text, considering the text as a result of negotiation between the two. Readers are not just recipients of the text but also interact with the writer, influencing the understanding of the text and the placement of actors. In the film "Rumah Dara," the character Dara is depicted as a frightening and cruel woman, wielding power within the family through extreme violence. Characters like Adjie, Astrid, Jimmy, Eko, and Alam become objects of Dara's cruelty, reflecting female domination in a negative narrative. For instance, Astrid, who is pregnant, becomes a target of Dara's brutal cruelty, showing Dara's lack of compassion. Jimmy, Eko, and Alam also become merciless victims, reinforcing the misogynistic view that strong women are threats. Dara's collaboration with local authorities further strengthens her image as cunning and manipulative. Dara's representation as a cruel figure reinforces negative views of women, showing that women with power are seen as threats, reinforcing negative stereotypes in society.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals how Indonesian horror films, particularly "Rumah Dara" (2009), reinforce misogynistic values through distorted and harmful representations of female characters. Critical discourse analysis by Sara Mills highlights that the film not only depicts extreme physical violence against women but also constructs a narrative that diminishes women as vulnerable objects under dominant power.

The research found that dramatic cinematographic techniques such as intense camera angles and visual compositions emphasizing violence effectively strengthen the narrative portraying powerful women as a threat needing control. The misogyny depicted in the film not only influences societal perceptions of women but also creates an image that female empowerment is abnormal and menacing.

Using Sara Mills' method, the analysis uncovers two primary concepts: the subject-object position and the writer-reader position. In the subject-object context, the character Dara is portrayed as the dominant subject driving the narrative, while her victims are positioned as objects subjected to violence, reinforcing the stereotype that empowered women are threats requiring control. The dramatic cinematography used in the film further reinforces this narrative. In the writer-reader position, the study describes how audiences interact with the presented narrative. Dara is depicted as someone who uses violence to maintain her power, reflecting societal acceptance and reinforcement of misogynistic views and patriarchal cultural constructions in Indonesia.

The study concludes that "Rumah Dara" serves not only as entertainment but also as a media representation that reinforces negative stereotypes about empowered women. Its implications are significant within the context of Indonesian popular culture and the horror film industry, promoting awareness of the importance of more inclusive and non-discriminatory gender representations in media. Within the patriarchal context dominating social structures, Indonesian horror films often exploit negative stereotypes and objectification of women to create tension and fear. Characters like Dara in "Rumah Dara" are portrayed as powerful yet evil symbols of crime, reinforcing the notion that women wielding power outside societal norms are perceived as threats to be fought against.

This research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of how films as mass media can shape and reinforce specific social values, particularly misogynistic ones. The proposed next steps include advocating for more inclusive and positive representations of women in the film industry, as well as educating the public about the importance of gender equality and eliminating gender-based discrimination in all forms of media.

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