

NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH'S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: DISCOURSE OF MARRIED LIFE IN THE FILM PASUTRI GAJE

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ABSTRACT

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Films are produced not only as a form of entertainment but also as a medium through which implicit messages are conveyed and made open to interpretation. As cultural texts, films reflect the societies in which they are produced, and audiences may come to assume that what is depicted on screen represents social reality, thereby contributing to the formation of stereotypes. This study focuses on marriage-themed films, a genre that not only portrays harmonious and romantic marital relationships but also reflects conflict, power relations, and socio-cultural dynamics within society. Accordingly, this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the construction of marital discourse in the film *Pasutri Gaje*. This research uses a qualitative approach with a Critical Discourse Analysis method by Norman Fairclough. The findings reveal that *Pasutri Gaje* both perpetuates and disrupts existing discourses surrounding marriage in Indonesia. The discourses that are reinforced include the disadvantaged status of civil servants and the social pressure exerted by surrounding communities to have children. Conversely, the film disrupts dominant discourses related to fertility. In doing so, the film problematizes ideals of masculinity by depicting male infertility as a possible cause of reproductive challenges. Given that fertility-related issues in Indonesia tend to disproportionately disadvantage women. This study contributes to the understanding of marital life by highlighting financial insecurity as a structural root of marital conflict. Therefore, the findings are expected to provide insights for policymakers, particularly in relation to welfare reform for civil servants.

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1. Introduction

Marriage is not merely a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman, but rather an inner and outer bond between a man and a woman founded on God Almighty (Hedi et al., 2017). Furthermore, marriage also reflects the values and cultural norms of a particular society. According to Carter (2022), marriage is a contract between individuals based on the customary rules of that society. In line with this opinion, Brasher (2022) argues that marriage is an important event that not only forms a bond between a man and a woman, but also creates a bond with the culture of both families and their communities.

The social construction of marriage is also influenced by popular culture, such as films. Film is one of the most powerful media for understanding how a culture responds to various issues. Films reflect the society in which they are produced, but they also influence society as a result. From a Marxist theoretical perspective, it is argued that films are based on ideas, as they are created to represent reality (Kubrak, 2020). The impact of films on individuals is so significant that people begin to assume that whatever is depicted in films is true and real, thereby shaping stereotypical images of certain cultures (Hefner et al., 2017).

In films that depict married life, the visuals presented have the potential to prevent unhappy marriages and are expected to reduce divorce. This finding supports the notion that media plays a role in reinforcing beliefs about romantic relationships. Respondents who reported watching romantic films, whether dramas or comedies, expressed a stronger desire to marry and spent more time fantasizing about marriage and romantic relationships. Furthermore, the act of watching romantic dramas and comedies was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the belief that love conquers all, fostering high hopes for intimacy, and providing support for romantic styles. Thus, it can be interpreted that frequent exposure to romantic films is closely related to the reinforcement of ideal expectations in building romantic relationships (Galloway et al., 2015).

This study focuses on the film *Pasutri Gaje*. The film was first released in theaters on February 7, 2024, and has been available on Netflix since July 18, 2024. *Pasutri Gaje* was directed by Fajar Bustomi, who is also known for directing other popular romantic films such as *Dilan 1990* (2018), *Dilan 1991* (2019), and *Milea: Suara dari Dilan* (2020). The film tells the story of a married couple, Adimas (played by Reza Rahadian) and Adelia (played by Bunga Citra Lestari). Both work as civil servants and aspire to live independently, one of their steps being to purchase their own home. Over time, Adelia expresses a desire to have children, but Adimas feels hesitant, as he considers his civil servant salary insufficient to support raising a child. Eventually, the couple decides to begin a program to have children. However, the constant pressure from family, neighbors, and colleagues to have children soon creates discomfort for the couple. The storyline, according to the researcher, closely reflects social realities in Indonesian society, where marriage and having children are considered cultural obligations. Therefore, based on the aforementioned background, this study seeks to examine how the discourse of marriage is constructed in the film *Pasutri Gaje* through Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework?

The urgency of this study is grounded in the complex relationship between film and society. While films are primarily produced as a form of entertainment, they also convey implicit messages that are open to interpretation—messages that may resonate with the general public or only with specific segments of society. An individual's engagement with film has the potential to shape ways of thinking, behaving, and experiencing social life (Balabantaray, 2022). Accordingly, films are expected to contribute to the formation of beliefs, influence public opinion, and shape attitudes toward contemporary social issues (Kubrak, 2020). In the Indonesian context, data from BPS in 2024 indicate a consistent decline in marriage rates over the past decade. Although there is no empirical evidence directly linking this decline to film consumption, sociologist Bagong Suyanto argues that younger generations no longer perceive marriage as idealized in films or novels. Instead, they tend to postpone marriage, as they no longer view family formation as the primary source of life satisfaction. This tendency is further reinforced by the increasing divorce rate in Indonesia (Syafaruddin, 2024).

In addition, the urgency of this study is reinforced by the popularity of romantic films among audiences, particularly those addressing issues of marriage (for example, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan*). Unlike these films, which predominantly employ a religious perspective, the film examined in this study adopts a more universal approach and does not foreground religious discourse. Instead, it primarily draws upon the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. Therefore, this study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the construction of marital discourse in the film *Pasutri Gaje*.

2. Method

This study is a qualitative research employing Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method. Fairclough (2015) argues that media discourse should be regarded as possessing complex and contradictory ideological constructions that are not fixed, but rather vary in their formations. It is essential to conduct deeper investigations into the ideologically embedded meanings within media. Therefore, a comprehensive framework is required to enable an in-depth exploration of ideology, power, and hegemony. For this reason, this method is applied to analyze the dialogues and scenes in a film so that the interactions and power relations can be systematically explained and thoroughly identified.

In this study, the primary data consists of the film *Pasutri Gaje*, which was obtained from Netflix. The researcher presents selected scenes under each sub-section of the discussion. However, in compliance with Netflix's screenshot policy, which does not permit direct capturing of its films, the researcher displays the analyzed scenes by photographing them using another device. The selection of scenes in this film is based on their relevance to social realities surrounding marriage in Indonesian society. Reality examined concerns income and economic factors, which are considered vital to family life, when these expectations are unmet or misaligned, they may generate marital conflict. Another set of selected scenes addresses a man's perceived ability to impregnate his wife, as issues of masculinity are highly sensitive and closely tied to male dignity. Notably, discourses surrounding fertility tend to disproportionately disadvantage women.

Additionally, scenes related to having children are included, as parenthood is widely regarded as a crucial aspect of married life. News of pregnancy or childbirth is not only anticipated by the couple but also by their immediate social environment, such as family members and neighbors. Based on the selection of scenes that reflect Indonesia's socio-cultural realities, this study finds it compelling to further explore how such realities are constructed within the film *Pasutri Gaje*. Moreover, the application of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis provides a robust analytical framework, as it offers a comprehensive set of tools for examining the interplay between discourse and socio-cultural conditions.

In terms of data analysis techniques, after collecting the data, the researcher applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. The first dimension is description, in which the text itself is analyzed linguistically, covering grammar, syntax, lexis, phonological features, literary devices (e.g., rhetorical questions), and textual structures (Fairclough, 2015). The second dimension is interpretation, which involves practices related to the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. The third dimension is explanation, which concerns forms of analysis based on the broader social context beyond the production process, including sociocultural, political, ideological, institutional, and historical contexts (Fairclough, 2015).

3. Results and Discussion

Civil Servants' Welfare in Household Life

In the film *Pasutri Gaje*, Adimas and Adelia work as civil servants in a district office. The issue of civil servants' salaries becomes a central theme in the film. Adimas states that a civil servant's income is relatively small, which makes him reluctant to have children too soon, as raising a child would be financially burdensome for someone in his position. The modest lifestyle of civil servants is depicted from the very beginning of the film. After five months of marriage, Adimas and Adelia manage to purchase a modest house through a 15-year mortgage. Upon moving into the house, Adelia begins to imagine various possibilities for their new life; however, Adimas interrupts her daydreams. Since they are still paying off the mortgage, Adimas urges Adelia to limit household expenses, including postponing the

decision to have children. Nevertheless, Adelia cannot suppress her desire to become a mother. One day, while in the kitchen, she notices through the window that their neighbor is often seen caring for a young child. At that moment, Adelia imagines, “If only we already had a little angel like that in this house, perhaps Mas Adimas and I would be even happier”.



Figure 1. Adimas and Adelia Modest House

Adelia continually urges Adimas to have children, yet Adimas consistently refuses, citing the financial constraints of being a civil servant. In one scene, when Adimas former college friend visits the district office to handle land documents, the friend asks whether Adelia is already pregnant. Adimas responds, “We are postponing it for now because there are other priorities—well, you know, being a civil servant.” Furthermore, during a night patrol with the neighborhood head and security guards, Adimas is advised that having children will bring blessings. However, at that moment, Adimas remains silent.

Eventually, Adimas gives in and agrees to have a child after seeing the balance in their mobile banking account, which amounted to Rp 45,712,100. At that moment, Adelia reveals that ever since their marriage, her entire salary had been transferred to Adimas account. Even so, Adimas remains concerned about their financial situation should they have a child. In the end, he instructs Adelia that if they are to proceed with having a child, they must continue to live frugally, for example by bringing lunch from home to the office.



Figure 2. Adimas and Adelia Scooter

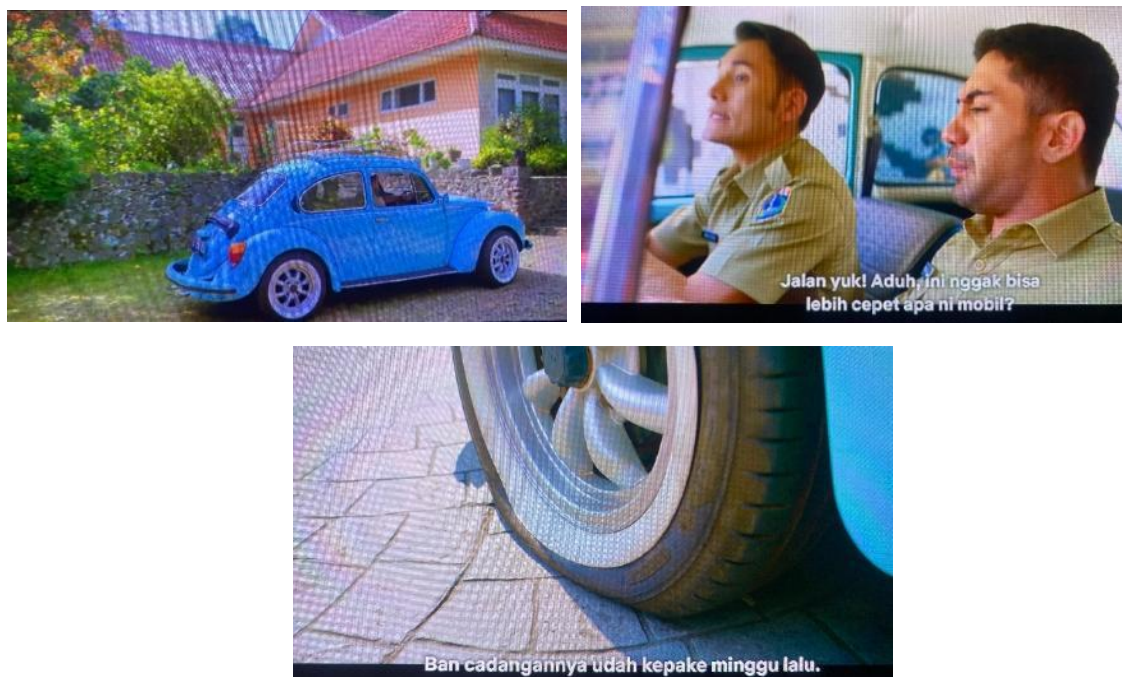


Figure 3. Meka's Volkswagen Beetle

The modest life of a civil servant can also be seen from the vehicle used daily by Adelia and Adimas, namely a green scooter-type motorcycle. They only own one motorbike, which they usually ride together, both when going to the office and when visiting Adelia parents. The simplicity of a civil servant's life is also reflected through a supporting character, Meka. In the film, Meka is a colleague of Adimas and Adelia who also works as a civil servant at the district office. His daily transportation is an old blue Volkswagen Beetle. One scene in the film depicts how this car frequently encounters problems while giving Adimas a ride to fetch Adelia after she ran away from home, such as lacking power to run properly and experiencing a flat tire.

Looking at the context of civil servants' lives in Indonesia, the issue of salaries has actually been regulated in Government Regulation No. 15 of 2019 concerning the Eighteenth Amendment to Government Regulation No. 7 of 1977 on the Salary Regulations for Civil Servants, in which the basic salary of civil servants is determined by their rank and years of service. However, civil servant remuneration in Indonesia continues to draw attention because it is considered relatively low. According to Kadarisman (2019), the salary of civil servants in Indonesia has not yet met the standard of a decent living. The remuneration system, which is based on rank and grade without taking into account competence and performance, fails to fulfill the principle of fairness. Consequently, this affects contributions to performance and productivity, both individually and organizationally. Furthermore, some argue that the low salary of civil servants is the root of many managerial problems, leading to high social and economic costs. This, in turn, often motivates civil servants to engage in deviant practices, resulting in bureaucratic inefficiency and ineffectiveness, as well as undermining the overall realization of bureaucratic reform (Simanungkalit, 2013).

The issue of low salaries among civil servants has increasingly become a subject of public debate, especially during the recruitment period for prospective civil servants (CPNS). Most recently, in the 2024 fiscal year recruitment, the National Civil Service Agency (BKN) reported that 1,967 individuals who had passed the selection process chose to withdraw. This figure reflects the outcome of the optimization process. The announcement was made by

Zudan Arif Fakrulloh, Head of BKN, during a meeting with Commission II of the House of Representatives. There are various reasons why those who passed decided to withdraw, ranging from placement results that were far from their domicile to the perception that civil servant salaries are too low (Febiola, 2025). Withdrawals from CPNS candidates who had already passed the selection process occur in almost every recruitment cycle. For instance, in 2022, hundreds of individuals also resigned for various reasons, one of which was that the salaries and allowances offered were considered too low and did not meet their expectations (Rakhmayanti, 2022).

The perception of the civil servant profession, once strongly associated with stability, has now shifted among younger generations. According to Shofie az Zahra, an economist at Indonesia Development and Islamic Studies (IDEAS), for today's youth the traditional perception of civil service as synonymous with stability, pension security, and social status is no longer appealing. Instead, they prioritize a more flexible work environment, opportunities for growth, and compensation that matches their workload and quality of life. Furthermore, this shift has created a challenge of regeneration within the civil service profession, as highly qualified and competent young individuals are increasingly uninterested in pursuing civil servant careers. To address this issue, the government needs to implement structural reforms in the management system, one of which is by increasing salaries (Nadeak, 2025).

Civil servants have dedicated their energy and efforts in expectation of receiving both financial and non-financial rewards from the government. However, in reality, they are not fully provided with fair compensation, either in terms of internal or external equity (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In fact, compensation rights are regulated under Law No. 20 of 2023 on State Civil Apparatus. Article 21 stipulates that: "(1) State Civil Apparatus employees are entitled to receive recognition and rewards in material and/or non-material forms. (2) The components of recognition and rewards for State Civil Apparatus employees as referred to in paragraph (1) consist of: a. income; b. motivational rewards; c. allowances and facilities; d. social security; e. work environment; f. self-development; and g. legal assistance." The compensation framework regulated in the law has significant implications for both public organizations and civil servants. Proper compensation benefits civil servants by encouraging their development and, at the same time, benefits public organizations by motivating employees to work harder (Kadarisman, 2019).

Based on the above analysis, the film *Pasutri Gaje* constructs the idea that the life of a civil servant in Indonesia has not yet achieved a decent and fair level of welfare. The construction of welfare in the film reflects socio-cultural realities that circulate within public discourse in Indonesia. One of the central issues highlighted is the salary of civil servants, which is portrayed as a significant concern within the narrative. Economic conditions and income-related matters are not trivial issues for married couples, rather they constitute structural problems that can generate prolonged marital conflict. In Indonesia, economic hardship is frequently cited as a contributing factor to divorce. Through its narrative, the film constructs the notion that employment stability as a civil servant does not automatically translate into social legitimacy for marriage. As depicted in *Pasutri Gaje*, conflicts surrounding income persist throughout the storyline and continue until the later stages of the film, when Adimas eventually decides to participate in a pregnancy program.

This representation aligns with the broader Indonesian reality regarding the civil servant salary system. Although civil service positions are commonly perceived as stable, they do not necessarily attract strong social or economic appeal. Notably, this perception is

also discursively constructed within the film, reinforcing existing public narratives about welfare, employment stability, and marital readiness. Although being a civil servant is often regarded as a dream job both for individuals and their parents, the film portrays quite the opposite. The profession of civil servant, commonly associated with stability, in *Pasutri Gaje* in fact becomes a source of difficulty for Adimas in gaining approval from Adelia father. In order to receive his blessing, Adimas is required to compete in a fishing contest beforehand. Furthermore, throughout the film, Adelia father repeatedly demonstrates his disapproval toward Adimas even after the marriage. This illustrates that, despite the perception of civil service as a stable profession, it is not necessarily regarded as an ideal or prestigious occupation by in-laws.

Masculinity and a Husband's Fertility

Masculinity is the result of cultural construction that establishes standards regarding what a man should be or do within a particular culture. According to Hall (2003), culture is not merely "a set of things," but rather "a set of practices" that are "concerned with the production and exchange of meaning" within a society or specific group.



Figure 4. Adimas persuading Adelia to be Intimate

The ideal masculine image has often been represented through whiteness, athletic or muscular physique, and tall stature (Lewington et al., 2018). Traditional masculinity emphasizes characteristics such as strength, authority, dominance, independence, hard work, and heterosexuality. In this film, Adimas, played by Reza Rahadian, is depicted as having a masculine build. In this film, Adimas is tall and muscular, and has a beard. In one scene where Adelia is cooking, Adimas tries to seduce her by doing push-ups while wearing a tank top. Adimas wants to continue the intimate scene in the morning, which was delayed due to the visit of the neighborhood head and Limnas. However, Adelia refuses because she is cooking. Seeing this, Adelia feels tempted and says "his muscles are giving me a headache." However, the attempt fails because Adelia instead tells Adimas to buy fish oil.

Thanks to the masculinity displayed, it also attracts others, namely Rani. Rani in this film plays a grocery store keeper. Before Adimas came, Rani was imagining the figure of a bearded man on an advertising poster in her shop. Suddenly Adimas came to the shop to buy fish oil, Rani immediately tried to seduce and give more attention to Adimas because according to Rani Adimas was similar to the figure of the man she had imagined before and thought that Adimas was her soul mate. When Adimas wanted to take the fish oil, Rani jumped in front of Adimas as if wanting to be hugged by Adimas. When taking it, Adimas hand touched Rani's cheek as if he was being stroked and then said "addiction".

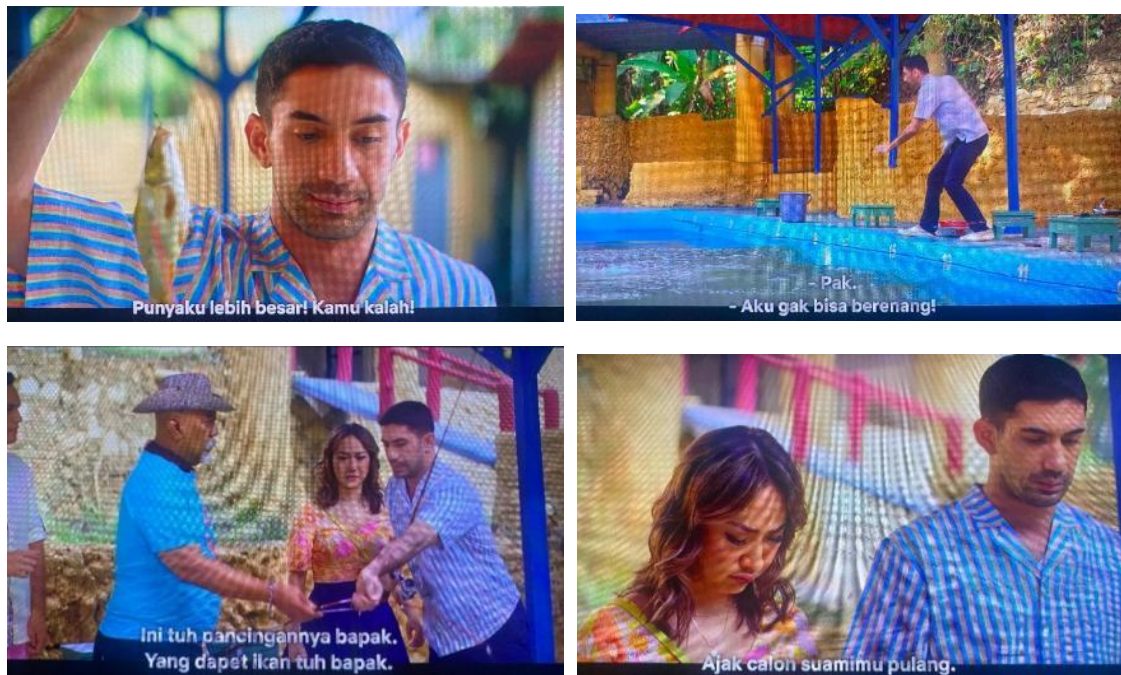


Figure 5. Adimas Gentlemanly Attitude While Fishing

The film also portrays forms of modern masculinity. Modern masculinity is described through traits such as emotional vulnerability, care, sensitivity, expressiveness, rejection of violence, and attention to appearance (Mitchell, 2023). This modern form of masculinity is often referred to as metrosexuality, which emerges as a breakthrough against the rigid boundaries of traditional masculinity that are often considered harmful or restrictive (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Masculinity in this film is not only represented through physical appearance but also through the character traits displayed by Adimas. When seeking approval to marry Adelia, her father sets a condition: if Adimas manages to catch a bigger fish, then he will give his blessing. During the fishing contest, Adimas is the first to catch a fish, but when Adelia father catches one, his fish turns out to be much larger. However, as he tries to reel it in, Adelia father falls into the pond, and Adimas immediately helps him. As a result of falling, the fish escapes. Shortly afterward, Adelia and Meka arrive. Adelia asks Adimas whether he managed to catch a bigger fish, and Adimas replies that he lost because he didn't catch the fish—his father did (while discreetly switching his own fish with his father's). This makes Adelia feel disappointed, but upon witnessing Adimas gentlemanly act of conceding defeat, her father finally gives his blessing for Adimas to marry Adelia.





Figure 6. Fertility Issues Lie on Adimas Side

The masculinity depicted in the film, as portrayed by Adimas, has to face a problem, namely fertility. Based on previous research, men will feel less like men and they feel like failures because they are unable to fulfill one of their life goals, namely not being able to impregnate a woman. This is considered a threat to masculine identity for men and is hampered by existing stigma (Sylvest et al., 2018). Although the film does not explicitly mention Adimas facing fertility issues, it emphasizes that Adimas is the one who is trying hard. When Adimas agrees to a program to have children, Adelia always gives him a menu of bean sprouts. However, when Adimas is asked to eat bean sprouts, he always refuses because he doesn't like them. So, before the incident where Adelia leaves the house because Adimas eats instant noodles and eggs instead, Adimas always has to eat bean sprouts. According to Adelia, bean sprouts are one of the foods that can increase a man's fertility. Another incident related to Adimas fertility was when Adelia parents called to visit the house and asked if Adelia was pregnant, but Adelia said no. This then made Adelia father angry because Adelia was not pregnant. Furthermore, Adelia father even told Adimas to call his father if Adelia was not pregnant because later Adelia father would teach him how to have children quickly.

According to anthropological studies, it is explained that male infertility disorders have a 'profound impact on masculinity and men who fail as virile patriarchs are considered weak and ineffective' (Fisher et al., 2010). A series of studies have shown that men with infertility disorders show lower levels of self-esteem, higher anxiety, and more somatic symptoms than fertile men (Joja et al., 2015). Although men may experience low self-esteem, state that women seem to face even greater pressure when dealing with infertility. This is the result of constructions influenced by outdated gender stereotypes that are not supported by research data. Such social constructions can, in turn, harm human rights as they are often rooted in and/or caused by gender discrimination, racism, and stereotypes. Gender stereotypes—including the stereotype that a woman's most important role is to be a mother—worsen the impact of infertility on human rights (Shah & Gher, 2023). The obligation of becoming a mother is deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms. Women must bear children in order to be considered "worthy" adult women (Gerrits et al., 2023).

In many developing countries, women are more often blamed for a couple's inability to have children than men, even when infertility issues are caused by the man. Gender inequality and notions of masculinity help explain the greater burden of stigma placed on women. Men may leave their wives to remarry (sometimes under pressure from their families), and women may face intimate partner violence or mistreatment from in-laws (Nahar, 2021).

In the socio-cultural context of Indonesia, women are indeed more often disadvantaged in this matter. From a medical perspective, however, according to Tiara, an Andrology Specialist at Bocah Indonesia Fertility Center, this is influenced by the stigma in society that women are the ones responsible when a couple has difficulty conceiving. Another influencing factor relates to men's pride in their masculinity, as undergoing fertility checks is often perceived as a sign of weakness (in Siyahailatua, 2020). Furthermore, according to Professor Dr. Tono Djuwantonono, an Obstetrics and Gynecology Specialist, couples who struggle to have children are not always affected by female-related factors. This is merely a stigma that has developed in society. Both men and women have equal chances of being the cause of fertility problems (in Sari, 2024).

Based on the analysis above, the film portrays Adimas as a masculine figure who embodies both traditional and modern concepts of masculinity. Adimas possesses a physical appearance that aligns with traditional masculinity, while also displaying emotional qualities consistent with modern masculinity. However, this stands in contrast to his motivation to have children. The film constructs the idea that fertility issues can also stem from men. The discourse surrounding Adimas inability to impregnate Adelia is articulated explicitly through supporting characters, most notably Adelia father. In the socio-cultural context of Indonesia, infertility and difficulties in conceiving are more often perceived as women's responsibility, which has led to entrenched stigma within society. The depiction of Adimas as a masculine man is particularly compelling because masculinity is typically associated with dominance. Thus, when masculinity is juxtaposed with the issue of fertility, it reinforces the construction that infertility is not solely a women's issue.

Having Children Is An Environmental Encouragement

From the very beginning of the film, after Adimas and Adelia purchased a house, even before they moved in, Adimas had already asked Adelia to postpone having children. For Adimas, raising a child would require high expenses, such as the cost of milk and diapers. However, as a result of delaying pregnancy, they began to experience pressure from their surrounding environment. This social pressure made Adimas and Adelia uncomfortable whenever they were asked about having children.





Figure 7. Adelia Family Encouraging Her to Have a Child Soon

The findings regarding familial and neighborhood pressure on couples to have children can be understood not merely as expressions of social concern, but as mechanisms for normalizing discourses of marriage and reproduction. Recurrent questions such as “When will you have children?” function as discursive practices that reproduce dominant norms positioning the ideal marriage as one that is quickly followed by parenthood. The environment that strongly pressured the couple to have children came from Adelia family. When the two visited Adelia parents’ home, the first question posed by Adelia father was about when they would have children. One day, in an effort to gain respect from his father-in-law, Adimas felt overjoyed upon learning that Adelia had been two weeks late with her period, assuming she was pregnant. During a family dinner, Adimas announced to the entire family that Adelia was expecting. However, Adelia grew anxious upon hearing this announcement, as she had not yet confirmed her pregnancy. Later, after checking at home, the result turned out to be negative. Adelia became angry with Adimas for making the announcement prematurely. When the truth was revealed—that Adelia was not pregnant—her father reacted with deep anger and disappointment. This disappointment stemmed from the father’s pride, as he had already shared the news with neighbors and even gone as far as buying a book of inspirational baby names.



Figure 8. Office Friends Encouraging Her to Have a Child Soon

The pressure to have children also came from Adimas and Adelia colleagues at the district office. One of the colleagues who assumed that Adelia was pregnant was Meka. Meka first heard the information from Ningsih, a pharmacist. After Adimas purchased a pregnancy test kit, Ningsih took a photo of him and sent it to Meka, implying that Adimas had bought it because Adelia might be pregnant. Consequently, Meka assumed that Adelia was indeed expecting. Later, when Adimas and Adelia were leaving the office, Meka loudly congratulated Adelia by saying, “Congratulations on your pregnancy,” while she was riding on the back of Adimas motorcycle. Another employee then asked who was pregnant, and Meka replied that it was Adelia. This led the entire office staff to believe that Adelia truly was pregnant. The culmination of this misunderstanding occurred during a morning exercise session, when the instructor advised Adelia not to move too much because she was supposedly in early

pregnancy. Shocked, Adelia immediately left the field. At that moment, Adimas stepped onto the stage and clarified to everyone that Adelia was not pregnant.



Figure 9. Neighbors Encouraging Her to Have a Child Soon

Another environment that pressured Adimas and Adelia to have children was their neighborhood. When Adimas first joined a night patrol with the neighborhood head (Pak RT) and the local security guard (Hansip), the conversation throughout the patrol revolved around children. Pak RT advised Adimas not to delay having children, claiming that children would bring fortune. This statement was supported by Limnas, who said that based on his own experience, unexpected blessings often came after having children. Furthermore, Pak RT suggested that if Adimas wanted to succeed in having children, he should avoid staying up late, regularly drink traditional herbal medicine (jamu), and consume plenty of bean sprouts. However, instead of feeling encouraged, Adimas felt uncomfortable with such remarks and asked for the topic to be changed. A similar situation was experienced by Adelia when she attended the circumcision celebration of Pak RT's son. As she introduced herself as a new resident to the other neighbors, the first question she received was whether she already had children. When Adelia replied that she did not, the neighbors turned her answer into a joke, which made her feel uncomfortable and ultimately led her to leave the gathering.

Within a framework of power relations, these social interactions reflect forms of power that operate subtly and in a decentralized manner. Families and communities do not impose coercion directly, rather they exert influence through the repetition of discourse and symbolic pressures that appear “natural” and “taken for granted.” This process aligns with the concept of productive power, whereby social norms are produced and reproduced through everyday practices rather than through formal authority. In the context of Indonesian society, matters of marriage, pregnancy, and having children are often regarded as obligatory life stages that must be fulfilled. Therefore, it is not uncommon for Indonesians to frequently encounter questions such as, “When will you get married?”, “When will you have children?”, “Where do your children go to school?”, or “Where do your children work?”—whether these come from close relatives, friends, or even strangers. Such questions are often posed either as casual small talk or out of genuine curiosity about someone’s private life. However, these questions are typically asked without considering an individual’s personal circumstances. For instance, postponing parenthood is not always a matter of unwillingness; there may be underlying reasons such as facing fertility challenges. Consequently, these socially common questions often become intrusive and distressing.

From a medical perspective, such questions may have significant implications for the health of those who are targeted. According to clinical psychologist Monica Sulistiawati, couples who have been unable to conceive for several years often experience social pressure as a result of being repeatedly asked about children. These persistent questions function as stressors that may lower their psychological well-being. Stress arising from such pressure

can trigger Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a condition that disrupts menstrual cycles and increases the likelihood of failed conception in women. Moreover, stress may also manifest as psychosomatic symptoms such as increased gastric acid, gastritis, headaches, or irregular heart rhythms, all of which pose additional health risks for couples seeking to have children (in CNN Indonesia, 2022).

The inability to conceive immediately is a complex life crisis that negatively impacts a couple's social life, emotional well-being, marital relationships, sexual life, future plans, and mental well-being (Sahin & Gursoy, 2021). The fact that society relies on childbearing and having children is considered a significant factor that confers privilege and social prestige on individuals, while also placing infertile couples under social and psychological pressure. Therefore, along with the desire to have children, couples want to avoid peer pressure and gain social prestige and acceptance (Vizheh et al., 2015).

Based on the analysis above, the film constructs the idea that social pressure and encouragement regarding pregnancy are considered normal and have become a cultural practice in Indonesia. Popular culture, such as this film, perpetuates such norms, as films are produced in response to the phenomena and cultural values present in society. Questions such as “when will you get married?” or “when will you have children?” have been normalized, even though not everyone feels comfortable receiving them. These questions do not necessarily reflect genuine concern; rather, they constitute sensitive inquiries that can negatively impact an individual's mental state.

The film represents power relations through dialogic scenes that position the couple as subjects who are socially evaluated and monitored. Consequently, the discourse of having children is not neutral, rather it functions as a mechanism of social regulation over the couple's bodies and private decision-making. This is particularly true for women, whose emotional responses may be heightened when confronted with such questions. This is evident in several scenes in which Adelia is repeatedly asked about when she will have children. Thus, the social pressure to have children promptly, as depicted in the film, not only represents cultural realities but also reveals mechanisms of discursive normalization that sustain power relations within the institution of marriage. The film functions as a site of meaning production, reinforcing how couples' reproductive decisions are constructed as collective concerns rather than purely personal choices.

4. Conclusion

Pasutri Gaje is a romantic comedy film whose storyline reflects the social realities of marriage in Indonesian society. Marriage in Indonesia is inseparable from stigmas that are socially constructed. These social realities, when represented through popular culture such as film, reinforce and perpetuate the stigmas surrounding marriage. Through a critical discourse analysis, the researcher concludes that *Pasutri Gaje* both sustains certain existing social constructions while simultaneously challenging others related to marriage.

Adimas and Adelia, who both work as civil servants, face challenges in their well-being, particularly financial difficulties. This reflects the reality that civil servants in Indonesia still struggle with a relatively low standard of living. The film attempts to challenge the stigma that associates the civil service profession with job stability and guaranteed pensions. The depiction of their modest lifestyle and fear of having children highlights that civil servants continue to face significant welfare issues.

Due to his fear of having children for financial reasons, Adimas becomes the central focus in the film, as he is perceived as unwilling to make an effort to have a child. Although portrayed as a masculine figure, his lack of motivation to become a father stands in stark contrast to this image. His reluctance to have children constructs the issue of fertility around a masculine figure. Throughout the film, people around Adimas repeatedly question whether he truly possesses the virility to impregnate a woman. In this way, the film challenges the existing social reality in which women are often made the primary victims of the expectation to bear children.

The presence of a child within a marriage is considered essential in Indonesian society. The social pressure and encouragement received by Adimas and Adelia further emphasize that having children is regarded as a crucial aspect by those around them. It becomes a source of pride and a form of validation that couples are expected to possess in order to build a “complete” marital life. Consequently, questions such as “When will you get married?” and “Do you already have children?” remain commonly encountered. Through this film, it is constructed that social pressure, expressed in the form of such questions directed at couples, has been normalized and has become a cultural practice embedded in Indonesian society.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a single film, therefore, the findings regarding the construction of discourses on marriage and reproduction cannot be generalized to broader cinematic representations. Second, as the study is grounded in textual and discursive analysis, it does not address how these discourses are received, negotiated, or even resisted by audiences within diverse social contexts.

Future research is encouraged to examine audience reception in how meanings of marriage, profession, and reproduction are interpreted by different social groups. In addition, comparative studies across films with similar themes may be conducted to identify patterns of representation, shifts in discourse, and ideological dynamics in the cinematic construction of marriage in Indonesia.

Based on this conclusion, the researcher provides a recommendation for the government to pay greater attention to the issue of welfare among civil servants (PNS). As depicted in the film *Pasutri Gaje*, the welfare of civil servants becomes the root of the problem in fulfilling the necessities of life, particularly for those who are already married. Therefore, it can be argued that there is an urgent need for reform in the civil servant welfare system in order to strengthen governance, which in turn will contribute to improving the quality of public services.

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