

Gender Neutralization in Naomi Midori Novel's *Patient*: The Struggle of Feminism-Masculinism

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of the struggle between feminism and masculinism which is influenced by the neutralization of the main character in the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori. The objects studied are in the form of words, sentences. The data collection technique is by reading and recording techniques. The data analysis is using the Miles and Huberman's analysis mode, namely data reduction, data exposure and drawing conclusions and verification. The results of the study show that the concept of radical feminism is influenced by neutralization, namely rationalizing crime for equality. Meanwhile, masculinity influenced by neutralization is concerned with justified helplessness. The form of neutralization of the two genders is implicitly visualized in the cover of the novel *Patient*. The implication of this study is that it can conduct studies from different literary perspectives, such as psychology and anthropology. Diverse assessments can provide developments in both theoretical and practical aspects.

Keywords: Feminism, Masculinism, Neutralization, Novel, Naomi Midori

1. Introduction

According to Kate Millet, radical feminism is a revolution that happens to every individual woman and can only happen to women who take action to change their own lifestyles, experiences and relationships, which is contained in her book entitled *Sexual Politics* (Gress, 2023; Wallhead, 2023). Therefore, the oppression experienced by women always refers to discrimination in the family and cultural sphere. In the family, the one who holds the dominant power is the elder, which means that women are always positioned as submissive and helpless. Meanwhile, in the cultural aspect, the discrimination felt by women from generation to generation is inherited from previous generations. This is evidenced by various historical records that narrate women as symbols of witches and their roles behind the scenes. Related to this, radical feminism and literature is the emotional connection of female characters to take individual actions of women. This means that the emotions of a person's character are always the basis behind the actions taken by women (Alimova, 2023; Givon et al., 2023; Szadvári et al., 2023).

Masculinism is an ideology that offends men in the context of perfection both in terms of appearance and *innerbeauty*. That is, male characteristics are always based on physical strength or muscles which are implied as strong (Pratami & Hasiholan, 2020). According to Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1999), some forms of masculine domination in the domestic realm are marriage as an outbreak of wife devotion, education for boys, sexual division of labor and the actualization of women which proves the existence of subordination to men. Meanwhile, the theory of neutralization, according to David Matza and Gresham Sykes in 1957, developed a view of social control to explain why a person commits deviant behavior. Neutralization theory, also known as drift theory, argues that adolescents feel a moral obligation to the law (Hisyam et al., 2024; Walters et al., 2023).

In the study of feminism in literature, previous research has highlighted a lot about the function of literature that reflects, strengthens, or opposes patriarchal structures that have long been rooted in society (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024; Meivitasari & Widyatwati, 2023; Tarigan & Hayati, 2023). Some researchers emphasize that literature serves as an arena of gender struggle, where female characters are often constructed through a masculine perspective, which limits their autonomy and individuality. Most feminist studies from previous studies have always narrated women's struggles from the positive side, without describing the controversy of the women's equality movement. This creates an imbalance in perception in society, so that the male gender is seen as an oppressor, even though their position is both victims of patriarchy. (Afifah et al., 2023; Diko, 2024) Based on previous research, it can be said that the study of feminism is very diverse. However, there is still no investigation of feminism and masculinism influenced by neutralization factors.

For this reason, the problem of feminism in a literary work is very important to be studied, because literary works are always a medium of teaching that passes on good advice to readers (Pamungkas et al., 2023; Pramudianto et al., 2024). The orientation of feminism to the resistance of oppression is based on the existence of a patriarchal culture attached to society. Asian countries are one of those that adhere to patriarchy, even though times have changed. This culture is still firmly held by the generation that was born in that era. The tradition of patriarchy does not only have an impact on women, but also on the existence of men who are required to always be superior to women. The imbalance of roles in the two genders is a serious problem, so that the values of feminism implied in a literary work are aimed at combating all forms of oppression of women in various aspects (Febryanti et al., 2024; Hidayah, 2023).

2. Research Methods

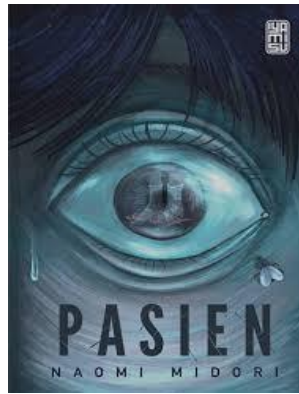
This research was conducted using a hermeneutic method, which aims to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of the struggle between feminism and masculinism influenced by the neutralization of the main character in the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori. The characteristics of research data are descriptive, tend to be analyzed or interpreted in the text (Safarudin et al., 2023). Hermeneutics was chosen because it is relevant, focusing on philosophical studies that emphasize interpretation in texts. That is, hermeneutics is related to the attempt to interpret the meaning behind the text, to find patterns from a particular culture (Britannica, 2024; Ricoeur, 2016).

The source of data from this study is in the form of the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori. The objects studied are in the form of words, sentences, and novels. The data collection technique is by reading and recording techniques. That is, the author reads the entire novel, then notes the parts that are considered to meet the indicators of feminism influenced by the act of neutralization. The data analysis is using the Miles and Huberman analysis mode, namely data reduction, data exposure and drawing conclusions and verification (Miles et al., 2014).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Visualization of Crime in the Context of Gender Neutrality in the Cover of the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori





According to Fadliansyah & Bustam (2023) states that the whole in a literary work always has a relationship with the cover used. This means that each element present in a literary work represents a certain meaning and message. The cover of a literary work, especially a novel, serves to communicate the things that the author wants to convey to the reader. Therefore, the cover is needed to be able to build a perception that is translated by the sense of sight by engaging the mind. This is also emphasized by Edmund Burke in his book entitled *Art as Image and Idea*, explaining that one of the beauties of a work is that it creates an impression and is in accordance with taste (Antal, 2024; Kafeja, 2024; Richardson, 2023). Thus, the aesthetics of the cover of a literary work does not only attract the attention of readers, but also communicates the message in the novel, so that it can be felt by the reader.



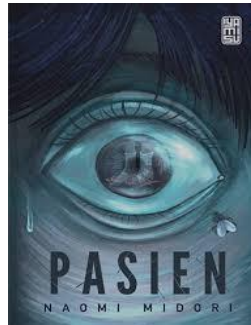
Gambar 1. Sampul Novel Pasien Karya Naomi Midori

Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* hints at a form of neutralization of two different genders, namely male and female. The act of gender neutrality that leads to crime can be identified from the cover of the book. This means that each element used in the cover of the book includes coloring, layout, and typeface selection, representing a specific meaning. The cover of Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* in Figure 1, features bulging eyes that reflect the shadow of a girl's feet. Then, there is a black fly that lands on the left eye, and tears on the right. This means that the aspects mentioned have meanings related to each other. Related to this, Table 2 is the meaning of each element in the cover of the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori.

**Table 1. Visualization of Crime in the Context of Gender Neutrality in the Cover of the Novel
Patient by Naomi Midori**

No	Element	Indicator
a.		Featuring eyes that reflect the shadow of a girl's feet
b.		A fly that landed on the left eye
c.		Tears or sweat on the right eye
d.		Writing fonts full of thorns

e.



The coloring tends to be blue with a hint of black, creating a suspenseful impression

In Table 1, each of the identified elements has a meaning related to the form of crime in the context of gender neutralization. This is evidenced in the first element displaying the gaze of a person's eyes that reflect the shadow of a woman's feet, having an intention about how society views women. The eye has always been identified with vision. The interpretation of bulging eyes can be caused by strong emotional factors such as anger and shock towards something (Mujani et al., 2024; Rahail, 2024). In the symbol of flies and tears, it is narrated as an animal that loves feces and the characteristic of its characteristics is the part of its eyes that provides reflection on the object it sees. That is, the element of flies provides an interpretation of the character of Imelda which interprets her discrimination from the side of crime based on disappointment.

The meaning of the thorn element stuck in the letter, indicates suffering and evil. It is based on the meaning of thorns which means the parts of plants or animals that cause injuries to the body (Mulyadi et al., 2023; A. A. C. Putri, 2019; Safitri et al., 2024; Sugara et al., 2023). That is, the meaning related to suffering refers to the form of discrimination experienced by Imelda's character. Then, the color chosen for the cover of Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* is blackish blue. The blue color of grief and disappointment and black means evil. These two colors, broadly depict the motif of Imelda's character who feels disappointed with life. Then the disappointment leads to a justified crime. Thus, the interpretation of the thorn element in the font and the choice of color in the cover of Naomi Midori's novel *Patient*, deals with suffering and evil.

3.2. The Effect of Neutralization on the Spirit of Feminism

David Matza and Gresham Sykes in 1957 developed the view that Neutralization is a social control to explain why a person commits deviant behavior. Neutralization theory, also known as drift theory, argues that adolescents feel a moral obligation to the law (Hisyam et al., 2024; Walters et al., 2023). The feminist neutralization approach emphasizes women's character openly by opposing the existing social structure, the feminist neutralization approach emphasizes individual choice, personal freedom, and the search for self-meaning as a form of emancipation. This approach is often seen in literary or popular culture works where female characters are portrayed as independent individuals who face their life's challenges in a way that doesn't always fit into the generally accepted feminist ideas (Indriyani, 2024; Intan, 2019).

In the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori, the neutralizing influence of feminism is seen through the characteristics of women who experience oppression in various forms, but are shown with a passive or accepting attitude. An approach that does not explicitly support traditional feminism, but instead features a more complex female character, which uses a neutral approach to gender roles and their own meaning (Solihin, 2023). The reconciliation of the spirit of feminism shown in Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* is not tied to a narrative of gender resistance that prioritizes humanity. Rather, it is an effort to oppose people who tend to go out of the norms of society. Therefore, feminism in the novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori provides a depiction from a different perspective, namely women's struggles based on excessive violence. Changes that are oriented towards violence, have a high probability of putting humanity and norms aside. Related to that, on the Table. 1 is an illustration of the influence of spirit neutralization on feminism.

Table 2. The Influence of Neutralization on the Spirit of Feminism in the Novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori

No	Citation	Neutralization measures	Data code
1	"Instead of busily waiting for someone to be rewarded for their bad deeds, I usually prefer to remove them from my life"	Skepticism of the Law	P/D01/23
2	"Karin's existence and our poverty are also the reason why I don't have close friends like other friends."	Playing Victim	P/D02/54
3	"Everyone commits murder because of a certain motive, for me the killers have been being honest with themselves rather than the norms out there."	Ideological deviation	P/D03/64

4	"I have to find out the weaknesses of Uncle Adil's family to blackmail and manipulate them".	Cunning	P/D04/74
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Data code description in the table:

P: Patient

D01-D04: Finding Data 01 – 04

In Table 2, it is found that there is an effect of spirit neutralization on feminism. It is marked by several actions from Imelda figures who tend to be radical. According to A, radical feminism is a women's paradigm that focuses on the oppression of women because of the power of men in monopolizing women's bodies as a whole (Saputra & Zaini, 2023; Tong & Botts, 2024). This means that all forms of discrimination experienced by women are caused by patriarchal understandings that view women as sexual objects. This is evidenced by one scene of Imelda's character being raped by a blood relative, receiving a cold response from the surroundings. Nami Midori as the author elaborated a different perspective, about how the nanife of the spirit of feminism has a high probability of leading to crime. In relation to this, gender equality upheld by Imelda tends to be dominated by violence. The form of crime implied in the spirit of feminism of Imelda's character is emphasized in how the figure interprets the law of society as the most superficial hierarchy in life as in P/D01/23. Thus, the distrust of Imelda's character is the mechanism of her feminist spirit, in opposing discrimination in society.

Skepticism can be interpreted as a person's distrust of something (Pratiwi & Handayani, 2023). Imelda's suspicion of the law was the trigger for the formation of neutralization actions in the form of erroneous ideologies. This is evidenced by the assumption of Imelda's character in P/D01/64 which implies that every evil is not just black and white. This means that crime is a mechanism for a person to be honest with himself in defending his right to life. This thinking is a wrong way of thinking, because it is contrary to the concept of humanity which always prioritizes morals and manners (Apollo, 2022; Wulandari, 2022). The ideological error of Imelda's figure is a representation of her disappointment with patriarchal pressure. As a result, a distorted ideology develops into a perception that makes Imelda's character feel disadvantaged as in P/D01/54. Imelda's suspicion of the law makes her feminist spirit disabled in thinking and attitudes, such as justifying crimes, acting like a victim or playing victim, not feeling guilty when hurting others, and doing everything possible to achieve her goals. Thus, the feminist spirit of Imelda's character in fighting for her rights and equality is said to be radical or harsh because of the influence of neutralization.

3.3. The Impact of Neutralization on Masculinism

According to him, masculine is an ideal trait that is attached to men formed from culture. The term masculine comes from the English language, namely muscle which in Indonesian means muscle (Pratami & Hasiholan, 2020; T. L. Putri et al., 2024). That is, masculine is based on traits that focus on physical strength or muscles. The term was finally associated with men because they were considered creatures who had strong physical strength compared to women. The concept of masculinism always refers to how the essence of men behaves, uses thoughts, attitudes, and shifts. Masculinism, in generations, is inherited from previous generations. Based on historical records, it tends to narrate men as a physically strong gender, macho, and leader (Huriani, 2021; Nur, 2022). Thus, masculinism is a movement that fights for male equality.

The difference between masculinity and feminism lies in the concept. If feminism tends to be a movement that strives to be equal in the highest hierarchy in society (Eaton, 2023; Mahfudoh, 2020). While masculinity is the opposite, namely equality that is more pointed downwards. That is, equality in the context of masculinism refers to the right of men to be more emotionally expressive. The presence of patriarchal culture in the social order always puts male gender in the highest power in various aspects. Therefore, men are required to be able to be the ideal criterion of gender formed by society (Nina, 2012; Zahid et al., 2023). Thus, the criteria of men in the perspective of society are not showing emotions, not being controlled, and being social controllers. On the Table. 2 is an illustration of the influence of spirit neutralization on feminism.

Table 3. The Impact of Neutralization on Masculinism in the Novel *Patient* by Naomi Midori

No	Citation	Neutralization measures	Data code
1	"Every working day is noisy! I'll kill you too!"	Verbal Violence	P/D01/28
2	"Where is there a mental hospital in a small village like this! After all, when he was taken to the psychiatric hospital next door, your brother was often beaten there."	Toxic Positive	P/D02/28
3	"Your grandmother couldn't bear it. Your uncle was once taken to another psychiatric hospital quite far away and expensive."	Compassion	P/D03/51
4	"Yes, it is better for me to marry your uncle's daughter than to date you. He's a lot older than	Vanity	P/D04/55

us, but at least I wouldn't have a hard time
marrying him, would I?"

Data code description in the table:

P: Patient

D01-D04: Finding Data 01 – 04

In Table 3, it is found that there is an impact of neutralization on masculinity. It is marked by several words from the characters of Father Imelda and Adam who say sentences as if to show their pride as a man. The form of masculinity implied in the impact of neutralization on the masculinity of the figure of Adam is emphasized in the way the figure interprets the laws of society as the most superficial arrogance in life as in P/D01/55.

The effect of neutralization on masculinity in Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* is that it puts men in an inhuman and emotionally unhealthy figure. This means that because of the demands of society, men tend to feel alienated compared to women. Related to this, the form of neutralization that affects masculinity is toxic masculinity, which is a set of thoughts and behaviors that glorify the idea of masculinity and consider self-care to always lead to feminists. Toxic Masculinity has always insisted that a real man is to treat himself like a machine and push himself in without limits. It gives a different perception that men's compliance with society's masculine stigma risks an identity crisis (Rahayuningsih et al., 2023). Thus, the effect of neutralization on the concept of masculinity is the tendency to be unemotional and an identity crisis in the context of toxic masculinity.

4. Conclusion

The spirit of feminism implied in the novel *Pasien* by Naomi Midori has a tendency to be influenced by neutralization factors. The form of neutralization in Imelda's spirit of feminism is the justification of crime in the context of gender equality. Meanwhile, the influence of neutralization on masculinity is in the form of obedience and powerlessness in society. In relation to this, the neutralization form of feminism can be identified in the cover and narrative flow of the novel *Pasien* by Naomi Midori. The novel socializes the way society views women, the construction of the male ideal, and the crimes that Imelda's character justifies in order to be equal. For this reason, the novel *Pasien* is not merely a narrative work, but a reflection of social events, developed with the author's imagination.

The implication of this study is that it can conduct studies from different literary perspectives, such as psychology and anthropology. This shows that Naomi Midori's novel *Patient* can not only be studied from one field. Diverse assessments can provide developments in both theoretical and practical aspects. This means that the more research is conducted with the same data source, the more likely it is to become a medium for discussion between literary sciences. The weakness of this study is the limitation of previous research references, so that the research results obtained are less than optimal and do not interpret it in its entirety. For this reason, it is hoped that the next research can focus on the study of the construction of personality of figures and the culture of the hierarchy of figures in society.

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