

Gender in Indonesian Folklore: A Corpus Linguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This research aims to describe diction that reflects gender in Indonesian folklore. The gender of the characters in folklore is visible through the diction used. This research uses a mixed approach, namely combining a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach. This research uses corpus linguistics methods. The research data is in the form of 110 Indonesian folk tales downloaded from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Language and Literature Diversity Laboratory. Based on the use of diction, it is known that (1) the characters in Indonesian folklore are male and female; (2) the use of male characters is more numerous and widespread in Indonesian folk tales than female characters.

INTRODUCTION

Literature utilizes language as its primary medium. There is no literary work without language. Literature is the depiction of human experiences, emotions, ideas, and beliefs in an engaging manner through the use of language [1]. Literary works are miniature representations of life produced through the creative process of their creators. Without language, authors or poets would be unable to convey their ideas and imaginations to society. In literary works, the selection of diction must be done carefully because the appropriate diction has the ability to provide attractiveness, beauty, and the achievement of intended meanings. Diction plays a crucial role in creating allure in literature. Profound meanings will stimulate readers to think deeper in interpreting literary works. Indeed, diction greatly influences the success in achieving the second modeling system (the second level of language) in a literary work. According to [2], it is a mistake to consider word choice (diction) as something trivial and unimportant in the realm of language, including literary works. In other words, the quality of literary works is partly determined by the author's or poet's selection of words in their work.

Literary works, in general, are divided into three genres: prose, poetry, and drama. One form of prose genre is folklore. Folklore belongs to oral literature. Folklore is a narrative of local communities passed down from generation to generation, either in written or oral form. Nearly every region in the Archipelago has its own folklore. Therefore, the Archipelago possesses a vast and diverse collection of folklore representing each region within it. Folklore is the ethnic wealth of the people of the Archipelago. According to [3], folklore is fiction that does not contain factual elements, but it carries values and norms that are equally important as facts. Due to its regional nature and oral transmission, the diction used in folklore naturally possesses distinct characteristics when compared to modern literary works.

Literary works are a projection of real life. Literature serves as a miniature of real

life depicted from the author's perspective, including the portrayal of characters within the literary work. Characters are the actors within the story. Thus, characters in a folklore story are reflections of the society living at that time. Although not entirely valid since literature is the product of the author's imagination, at least through literature, we can understand how gender is portrayed through its characters.

Gender differs from sex or biological sex. Although often used interchangeably by society, they have distinct meanings. Biological sex pertains to the human biological aspect related to the body's organs and functions, while gender refers to a complex set of behaviors (psychological characteristics) that are manifested through one's social experiences when interacting with other humans, whether of the same or different sexes [4]. According to Fakhri [5], gender is an inherent attribute of sex, whether male or female, shaped by social and cultural factors.

Based on the background provided, the issue to be addressed in this scholarly article is how gender is portrayed in the characters used in folktales of the Archipelago. Furthermore, this research also aims to determine which gender predominates in the folktales of the Archipelago.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data source in the research is folklore taken by the Language and Literature Diversity Laboratory of the Ministry of Education and Culture which is accessed on the page <https://labbineka.kemdikbud.go.id/language/ceritarakyat> which consists of 110 Indonesian folktales. The research data is in the form of Indonesian folklore texts which were processed using the corpus linguistic program Ant Word Profiler 2.0.0 [6] which can be downloaded for free at <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antwordprofiler/>.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

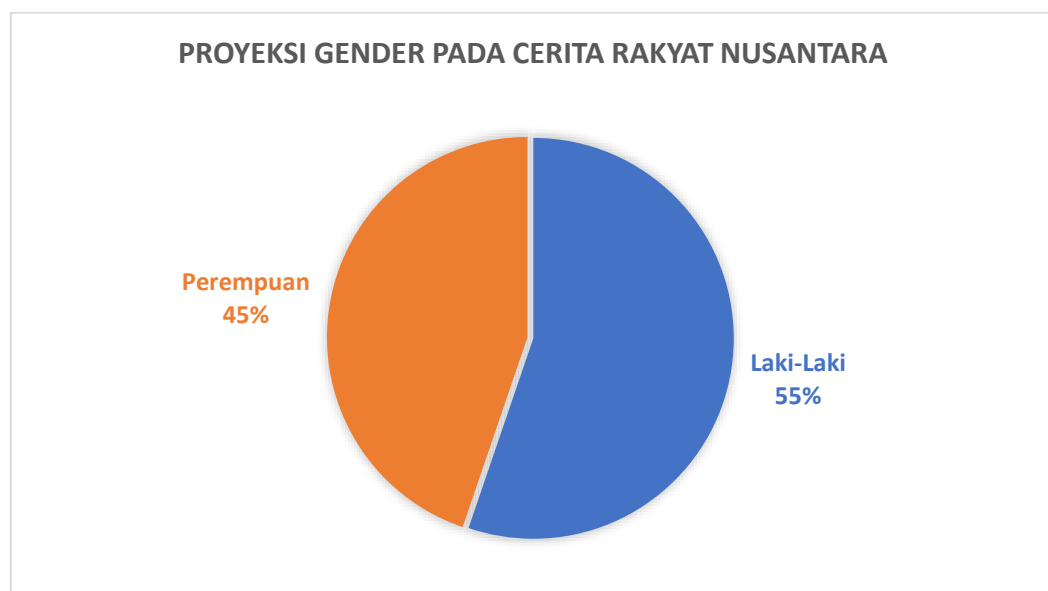


Chart 1. Gender percentage in Indonesian folklore

Patriarchy is a societal system that prioritizes male or paternal lineage. In Indonesian

society, patriarchy greatly influences various social structures [7]. Patriarchal culture is very strong in the socio-cultural life of Indonesian society, but gender equality in Indonesian society has progressed [8]. Men and women have their respective roles in social life. Based on research data, it appears that the appearance of male characters is slightly more than that of female characters. In fact, based on the frequency of appearance, female characters are slightly superior, namely 9,362 times (see table below) compared to male characters, namely 9,265 times. In Indonesian folklore, male characters appear at 55%, slightly above female characters which appear at 45% of the 110 Indonesian folktales that are used as research data. The emergence of male characters occupying leadership roles such as the roles of kings, kings, sultans, princes and raden, while female characters have roles as male companions, such as empresses, ladies-in-waiting and queens. This is in line with research by [9] which explains that male characters obtain noble positions or positions. [9] explain that male characters still appear to dominate in Indonesian folklore.

Table 1. The occurrence (frequency) and range (range) of diction between men and women

Male Pronouns		
Diction	Frequency	Range
ayah	985	66
raja	4007	64
tuan	971	64
nak	386	60
putra	515	37
baginda	517	26
paman	245	26
dewa	623	24
kakek	339	24
pangeran	544	23
ki	906	18
datuk	736	12
sultan	448	12
raden	294	10
bang	241	10
gusti	169	10
imam	240	6
sutan	399	5
prabu	362	5
syekh	345	5
Total	9265	443

Female Pronouns		
Diction	Frequency	Range
ibu/ibunda	3506	83
gadis	597	59
putri	2264	58
nenek	643	37
permaisuri	523	30
dayang	269	24
bidadari	174	16
ratu	332	15
dewi	364	12
nyai	369	10
bibi	159	8
nyi	162	7
Total	9362	359

The figure of the mother or mother appears in 83 titles out of 110 folklore titles in the data sample. In other words, 75% of Indonesian folk tales contain mother figures. Apart from that, the diction "mother/mother" appears 3,506 times, which far exceeds other female characters. The mother figure is the main figure in life both socially and culturally. According to [10], apart from giving life in the world, in the story the mother figure also plays the role of protector and protector in life. In general, mother characters have characteristics that are feminist, patient, loving, and full of sacrifice. However, based on research by [11], in Indonesian folklore, the figure of the mother is also depicted as having a masculinity character. The character of masculinity in a mother usually emerges as a response to threats that arise that threaten herself and the people around her that she cares about. The masculinity character of a mother in Indonesian folklore appears in the form of sacrifice, hard worker, nurturing, protector, educator [10]. Based on these data, it appears that mother figures are widely used in Indonesian folklore.

Despite being the character that appears most frequently in the male gender, father figures do not appear as much as mother figures. The father figure only appears in 66 titles out of 110 Indonesian folk tales that were used as research data, or only 60%. In the socio-cultural life of Indonesian society, the father figure is the main backbone of the family. The father figure has a big responsibility in the family. Physiologically, fathers (men) are physically strong and dashing. Therefore, the father figure is depicted as a protector and savior from danger. When a child character appears in a story, the mother and/or father figures will automatically appear in the story because a child often cannot be separated from his parents before the child can live independently.

Several Indonesian folk tales use royal settings so they use characters who reflect royal life. Male gender figures in royal life in Indonesian folklore include king (64 titles), king (26 titles), prince (23 titles), sultan (12 titles), raden (10 titles), sutan (5 titles), and prabu (5 titles). Meanwhile, female characters in royal life in Nusantara stories include the

empress (30 titles), lady-in-waiting (24 titles), and queen (15 titles). Apart from appearing in 64 titles, the diction "king" appears 4,007 times in the research data. This indicates that the king is an important character in developing the storyline. Apart from that, in stories set in a kingdom, the characters in Indonesian folklore are dominated by male characters. This is not surprising because the social system of Indonesian society is dominated by a patriarchal social system. In a patriarchal system, a man will be born as a leader. Therefore, kings and several male figures (princes, sultans, raden, etc.) are the characters who often appear in stories set in kingdoms because they are leaders who hold power in determining policy.

The Nusantara Kingdom also adheres to a patriarchal system, namely the prince (son of the king) as the heir to the royal throne. Women occupy a subordinate role in the socio-cultural environment. Research data shows that the empress character is mentioned 523 times in 30 story titles, the lady in waiting is mentioned 269 times in 24 story titles, while the queen character is mentioned 332 times in 15 story titles. The appearance of the empress, lady-in-waiting and queen figures represents the subordination of the role of women in royal life in Indonesian folk tales.

CONCLUSION

The appearance and use of male characters still dominates Indonesian folklore, although this dominance is not very significant. This is in accordance with the social system used by the majority of ethnic groups in the archipelago. Gender in Indonesian folklore is more about the role of the character to support the storyline. Gender in folklore is more of a cultural representation that commonly occurs in society. Nusantara folklore is a literary work that is still natural in nature. This means that Indonesian folk tales were not created with the aim of campaigning for a particular ideology that contrasts with the socio-cultural system of the Indonesian people. Writers (creators) of Indonesian folk tales have not been able to escape the patriarchal ideology which is a traditional gender role that has been entrenched and accepted by Indonesian society.

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