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Discourse on Gender: A Linguistic Analysis of Body Autonomy and Patriarchal Narratives in *Wandiu-diu*

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Abstract

Wandiu-diu is a folktale from the Wolio community in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, that depicts a family with two children, where the husband is a fisherman and the wife is a housewife. The husband's role is crucial, as his occupation and actions contribute to the construction of gender roles and power. This article argues that this folktale serves as a mechanism of control over women's bodies, underpinning patriarchal structures through three roles: married women, mothers, and independent women. Using Simone de Beauvoir's gender framework, this study categorizes the data into these three roles and analyzes relevant narratives from the tale. Beauvoir's gender theory critiques the "Othering" of women, highlighting their historical subordination to men in social, cultural, and political spheres. The findings reveal that Wandiu-diu's transformation into a mermaid symbolizes patriarchal control over women's bodies. Marriage binds women to their husbands, motherhood renders them vulnerable through self-sacrifice, and seeking independence makes them objects of societal ridicule. The mermaid figure, rather than signifying freedom, eventually represents patriarchal constraints. Hence, the linguistic choices in Wandiu-diu reinforce patriarchal power, shaping portrayals of women's roles and struggles. Through lexical selection, narrative structure, and

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dialogue, the tale depicts women as subordinate, their autonomy met with resistance and punishment. Male speech, marked by imperative verbs and possessive pronouns, asserts dominance, while the mother's indirect speech reflects constrained autonomy. While appearing to symbolize female liberation, the tale eventually fortifies patriarchal oppression in the Wolio community of Southeast Sulawesi.

Keywords: Folktale, gender, inequality, patriarchy, women.

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of mermaids was first popularized by Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (Lee, 2018). Studies on mermaid narratives often focus on representations of female sexuality, particularly in Andersen's tale. Interestingly, mermaid narratives abroad emphasize transcendence in literary texts, while their animated adaptations tend to focus on subservience (Tampus et al., 2022). In Andersen's version, the mermaid exercises agency over her fate despite existing within a patriarchal system (Knight, 2003). Meanwhile, DeLoughrey (2015) presents subverted mermaid mythology from an environmentalist perspective, while *A Door into Ocean* (Tidwell, 2020) depicts sea creatures on aquatic planets as female guardians of peace. Given these varying interpretations, it's essential to examine mermaid representations in Indonesian folktales.

Indonesia also has a rich tradition of mermaid folktales, myths, and legends. In Central Sulawesi, the folktale *Asal Mula Ikan Duyung* [The Origin of the Mermaid] (Jaruki & Atisah, 2001), originally titled *Ikan Duyung* [Mermaid] (Sulistiati & Suharto, 1994), tells the story of a human who transforms into a mermaid due to family abuse. Another mermaid folktale, *To Minjari* from West Sulawesi, portrays mermaids as weak, passive figures subjected to male authority (Asyrah et al., 2022). In this tale, the mermaid is depicted as a mother confined to the domestic sphere. These narratives, which illustrate women as objects of violence and subjugation, serve as the foundation for this study's examination of *Wandiu-diu*, a folktale from Southeast Sulawesi.

Several relevant studies have examined women's social classification (Roberts, 1987), gender categorization and discrimination (Weißflog & Grigoryan, 2024), and the societal identity of women (Sharma & Markhandeshwar, 2022). Hidayati (2019) explored the depiction of women in folktales, drawing attention to both positive and negative portrayals. However, no prior research has specifically categorized women in *Wandiu-diu*. This study categorizes female figures in the tale into three roles: married women, mothers, and independent women. These classifications not only provide insights into women's representation and roles as mermaids but also emphasize the necessity of further research on gender representation in folktales.

This study is limited to analyzing the categorization of women in *Wandiu-diu* within the framework of body control. The transformation of women into mermaids in the tale reflects a form of patriarchal control over the female body, as demonstrated through the three identified categories of women. Given the regional similarities in mermaid folktales, this study aims to analyze *Wandiu-diu* from Southeast Sulawesi to explore how women's images and roles are constructed to validate patterns found in mermaid folktales across regions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Folktale in Literature

A folktale is an oral literary work that is the property of a community and is transmitted orally, for instance, through a movement or even a tool that might aid in memory and acknowledge shared ownership from one generation to the next (Rauf & Raemon, 2024; Subuh et al., 2024). Folktale comprehends more than meaningless stories and activities; they also provide guidance in life and information about local customs (Suhardi, 2021).

Folktale is not only transmitted orally but also through behavioral examples (Ajam et al., 2023; Rauf & Raemon, 2024). It was first recorded for cultural preservation by certain writers who felt that certain aspects of folktale and folklore were disappearing and should be preserved in written form (Ihueze, 2015). Folktale and folklores includes the traditional creation of people, whether primitive or civilized (Harper & Row, 1996). The study of folktales and folklores in literature has two basic concepts. The first is objective and empirical; the second is subjective and speculative (Dundes, 1965). Furthermore, Endraswara (2009) offers an ethnopoetic, naturalistic, pragmatic, phenomenological, humanistic, and holistic approach to studying folklore, including gender issues.

2.2 Women in Folktales

Women's roles in folktales and fairy tales are foundational, with their powerful voices and presence depicted through characters such as stepmothers, queens, princesses, maids, and witches. Various female representations legitimize the depiction and worth of women in various cultures by facilitating extensive discussions on themes such as evil and good (Al-Barazengi, 2015). In Greek mythology, women are portrayed as cunning and manipulative, while the fall of males is associated with harsh punishment and forced isolation, illustrating the country's patriarchal culture (Meehan, 2017). In African folktale, Sheik (2018) found that it fights against or undermines the patriarchal oppression of women and their exclusion, manipulation, and control. folktale plays a role in establishing and maintaining conservative social hierarchies, where gender intersects with other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, class, ability, and sexual orientation (Gilman, 2019). This also extends to the representation of women in folktales, requiring validation to assess whether these hierarchies are unequal or equal.

Women in Indonesian folktales are not just characters but significant figures who assume diverse roles, from kings, heroes, and angels to objectification. The stories of *Ratu Kidul* in the South Sea and *Dewi Rengganis* in Argopuro affirm this, as they rose to become kings and heroes. The folktale also features stories of angels from various tribes, such as *Suku Mee* in Papua, *Marga Tehupelassury* in Maluku, *Suku Toraja* in South Sulawesi, *Asung Luwan* from the Dayak Tribe, and *Bundo Kanduang* from Minangkabau. However, not all roles are empowering, as several Indonesian folktales depict women as objectified, such as *Putri yang Berubah menjadi Ular* (North Sumatra), *Putri Mambang Linau* (Riau), *Putri Tujuh* (Riau), *Ning Rangda* (South Kalimantan), and *Dewi Luang Indung Bunga* (South Kalimantan).

2.3 The Folktale of Wandiu-diu

The oral storytelling of Wandiu-diu is a unique narrative told by the Butonese people (Rauf & Raemon, 2024). The Butonese people (*orang Buton*) are an ethnic group from Buton Island, located in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Buton Island is part of Baubau City and Buton Regency, as well as other administrative regions within Southeast Sulawesi Province. The Butonese are known for their rich maritime culture, traditional kingdom history (the Sultanate of Buton), and unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

Similar to other fables, the author of the Wandiu-diu narrative has yet to be discovered because its date of creation is unknown. However, according to several accounts, Wandiu-diu has existed since ancient times. It is still in use today by most Butonese, both in the Buton Archipelago and on Mainland Buton (Muarifuddin, 2016). The Sultanate of Buton, which covers both the Buton Mainland and the Buton Archipelago, has witnessed the expansion of the Wandiu-diu folktale across various regions. This folktale originally emerged in Kaledupa, an island in the eastern half of Buton. As the story spread, a new version evolved, blending elements from the mainland and the archipelago version (Muarifuddin, 2016).

The folktale of Wandiu-diu (Hanan, 2017) tells the story of an unbalanced family life between a husband and wife with two young children. Their unhappiness curtails from a life of relative hardship and limited well-being. Additionally, the wife defies her husband's instructions, while the husband, in turn, shows more affection for a fish than for his own children. This dynamic

leads to ongoing conflicts between the couple, eventually resulting in the wife divorcing her husband due to his harsh behavior. In the end, the children become the true victims of their parents' struggles. Overcome with despair, the wife walks to the shore, removes her *azamant* stone (a type of object or inscription that is hung on the body that is believed to have a magical power to protect its owner, ward off diseases, and repel misfortune), and transforms into a mermaid or fish (Hanan, 2017).

2.4 Women's Category Concept

Men believe women are responsible for household chores and childcare. Women have traditionally borne the primary burdens of housework, childcare, and family responsibilities (Mussida & Patimo, 2021; Samtleben & Müller, 2022) and are perceived as naturally competent in these roles. Traditional gender roles persist as women strive to be ideal wives, reinforcing male authority and limiting their freedom (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). Expected to balance conflicting desires, women view situations from multiple perspectives (Muslimin, 2019). George Eliot illustrates their struggle for independence, though it remains incomplete, as decisions are often made in half-measures (Rauf & Ulya, 2021). This section explores Simone de Beauvoir's concept of the categorization of women.

2.4.1 Married women

The first category in Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women is that of married women. Marriage holds different implications for men and women (Rauf et al., 2020). While both sexes depend on each other, their needs do not create mutual conditions; women do not establish social castes through equal exchanges and contracts with men (Rauf et al., 2024). Beauvoir (2016, p. 222) observed that "men are viewed as autonomous persons in society, primarily recognized as contributors whose presence is validated by their collective labor."

For women, marriage is often the only means to secure support and affirm their existence (Rauf et al., 2020). The first reason for this is the expectation that women must bear children for society. Secondly, women are not only expected to fulfill the sexual needs of their male partners but also to attend to their husbands' daily needs. Society assigns these roles to women and values them as special services they provide to their partners; in return, men are expected to offer gifts, marital satisfaction, and financial support (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 224).

However, women's household labor does not grant them autonomy, nor is it recognized as directly beneficial to society. It does not pave the way for future opportunities or yield tangible contributions (Rauf et al., 2020). Women's work gains meaning and authority only about the existence of others, making them dependent on their husbands and children. In this sense, women are perceived as mere mediators, lacking individual significance. Their contributions remain undervalued, reinforcing their position as secondary to men and often being regarded as parasites (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 264).

The tragedy of marriage does not stem from its failure to convince women of the promised happiness (Rauf et al., 2020). Rather, the institution itself imposes limitations on women. While marriage initially offers comfort and security, it ultimately subjects women to monotony and repetition. The first twenty years of a woman's life are filled with discovery and personal growth. However, upon marriage, she assumes the role of a hostess, permanently bound to her husband and children. This reality persists indefinitely, as major life decisions and opportunities remain the prerogative of men. Meanwhile, women's work is often exhausting yet only partially fulfilling. Marriage demands devotion and surrender, leaving women in a paradox where they are both constantly occupied and increasingly perceived as unnecessary (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 294).

2.4.2 Mothers

Women fulfill their biological destinies by becoming mothers (Rauf et al., 2020). Beauvoir, (2016, p. 301) states, "motherhood is nature's call because her entire organic structure is adapted

for the continuation of her species.” Portraying a woman’s happiness and suffering during childbirth is natural. However, when a woman is depicted as involved in abortion, she is often condemned for committing sin and displaying indecent behavior (Beauvoir, 2016).

Motherhood marks a transition as a woman takes on the role her own mother once held. If embraced willingly, it brings joy and courage. However, if she remains under her mother’s influence, she continues to submit to her authority. Beauvoir (2016, p. 315) notes, “unlike her offspring, the newborn will resemble her brother or sister.” A woman’s feelings toward pregnancy and motherhood are often shaped by her relationship with her husband. If she loves her husband, she may mirror his emotions, either embracing motherhood with happiness or rejecting it based on his sense of pride or discomfort. In some cases, a woman may desire children to strengthen her marital relationship. However, after having one or two children, a young wife may become overwhelmed and increasingly dependent on her husband. Beauvoir (2016, p. 316) describes this state, explaining that “she is in a state of fear, wants her husband to stay at home more, interferes in his work, exaggerates small incidents into significant matters, and frequently seeks his help to escape the confines of the home.”

According to Beauvoir (2016, p. 331), “some women say giving birth grants them creative power; they have completed a productive and voluntary task.” In some cases, women feel passive, viewing themselves as instruments of suffering and sacrifice, finding fulfillment in being needed. What makes motherhood both a hardship and a source of greatness is that it does not demand reciprocity. Unlike a man, a hero, or a demi-god, the mother is tied to a fragile and dependent being, a child who holds no inherent value or ability to reciprocate. Beauvoir (2016, p. 340) observes, “a mother still feels alone; she expects nothing in return for what she has given. Everything she does validates her existence.”

2.4.3 *Independent women*

For men, it often seems natural that a wife should assume domestic responsibilities, including household maintenance and child-rearing. However, independent women view marriage as a constraint that threatens their personal autonomy. They fear that their husbands might feel deprived of the ideal marriage experience with a more traditional wife. As a result, independent women strive to balance obedience, domestic duties, and their own aspirations; they seek to be good housekeepers, devoted mothers, and traditional wives while maintaining their individuality. Women often expect mutual commitment in marriage, yet they are expected to obey and accept male superiority (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 595).

The maternal role, central to traditional femininity, is difficult to fulfill with complete freedom. Society stigmatizes unmarried women, and children born outside of marriage often face social rejection. The responsibilities of motherhood can significantly hinder a woman’s professional and personal pursuits, making it nearly impossible for her to engage in work unless she can rely on family, friends, or hired caregivers for support (Beauvoir, 2016, p. 598).

Truly independent women, who actively seek adventure and personal experiences, remain rare. Many pursue careers to build happiness, yet they often struggle within a male-dominated society that limits their confidence and opportunities for advancement. While women take pride in their work and strive for excellence, they frequently undervalue their achievements. Their tendency to reflect on past progress rather than focusing on future goals can hinder their development. Beauvoir (2016) argues that women’s greatest barrier is self-doubt; lacking self-forgetfulness, they prioritize identity over success in a world historically shaped by men.

3. METHODS

3.1 Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which characterizes data in words or sentences that are categorized based on specific aspects related to the research objectives. As a

literary research project, the primary data for this study are drawn from Wandiu-diu, a collection of folktales from Southeast Sulawesi (Rasyid, 1998). The analysis incorporates a gender approach, supported by repeated readings to refine and adjust the material for evaluation (Grabe, 2020; Rauf et al., 2024; Rossi, 2017). The theoretical foundation of this study is Simone de Beauvoir's gender theory, particularly her critique of women's social categorization as the "Other." In *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1953), Beauvoir argues that women have historically been positioned as subordinate to men, perceived as passive counterparts in social, cultural, and political contexts. This study applies Beauvoir's concept of "Othering" as a central analytical framework to examine the gender narratives in Wandiu-diu. By critically analyzing these narratives, this research aims to challenge and reshape dominant gender perspectives embedded in the folktales.

3.2 Data Collection

The research data consists of primary and secondary sources. The primary data are derived from direct story excerpts within Wandiu-diu in Rasyid (1998), while secondary data, including books, journals, papers, and articles, serve as supporting references for the gender analysis. The data collection process involves the following steps (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012): (1) conducting intensive and repeated readings of the Wandiu-diu folktale text; (2) identifying and selecting literary texts that reflect gender narratives; (3) extracting story excerpts related to gender inequality; (4) analyzing the data using Simone de Beauvoir's gender theory, with a focus on women's categorization; and (5) synthesizing the findings into a comprehensive research report.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis used a descriptive and explanatory approach (Imbeau et al., 2021), describing and explaining the women mentioned in Wandiu-diu. The analysis was conducted in the following steps: 1) carefully reading the Wandiu-diu manuscript using Beauvoir's gender concept, focusing on three categories of women: married women, mothers, and free women, 2) sorting data into three categories: married women, mothers, and free women, and 3) examining the gender context by placing the work in its appropriate context. The Wandiu-diu manuscript discusses the reasons behind significant social and cultural changes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the linguistic analysis of Wandiu-diu, focusing on gender discourse, body autonomy, and patriarchal narratives. The analysis reveals how language constructs and underpins gender roles, stressing the tension between traditional expectations and individual independence.

4.1 Married Women

Compared to men, married women in the folktale occupy a lower status. Their role is primarily confined to childcare and household responsibilities, indicating that marriage does not guarantee equal rights between men and women. These conditions are shaped by gender (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The following story excerpt from the folktale illustrates this:

- (1) Once upon a time, a man lived with his wife and their two children, a daughter and a son. The eldest, a girl, was named Wa Turungkoleo, while her younger brother was named La Mbatambata. One day, Wa Turungkoleo's father went to the sea to set up a fishing net. The next morning, he went down to check it and found a fish trapped in the net. However, it was not a fish but a mouse. He took it, cut it open, and salted it. Upon returning home, he hung the fish on the kitchen rack. (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 18-19)

This passage reflects traditional gender roles, where the father is depicted as the breadwinner, while the mother's responsibilities are implied rather than explicitly mentioned. His role as a provider is emphasized through labor-intensive fishing, whereas her absence suggests an assumed responsibility for managing the household. This division aligns with patriarchal norms that associate men with economic survival and women with caregiving. Such representations reinforce conservative gender roles (Nascimento et al., 2021).

Furthermore, husbands often hold the highest status within the household, while women are relegated to subservient roles, sometimes akin to enslaved laborers. The following story excerpt exemplifies this condition:

- (2) When Wa Turungkoleo's father went back to the sea to set his fishing net, he instructed his wife, "Do not, under any circumstances, take the fish or give it to anyone, no matter who asks for it." His wife replied, "Who would dare take it, except for your own children?" "Even if they ask, do not give it to them!" he firmly responded before taking his net and leaving.
(Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

This passage supports the notion that men hold the dominant role in the household, while women are perceived as subordinate. The unequal distribution of power between men and women can lead to family conflict (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Here, the father is portrayed as the authoritative decision-maker, while the mother remains a passive caretaker. His firm directive asserts control over household resources, and her deferential response reflects submission. She accepts his authority, reinforcing patriarchal norms.

Moreover, Wandiu-diu received domestic violence as a consequence of a woman challenging male authority (Hanan, 2017; Rasyid, 1998). The folktale suggests that a man's position as head of the family justifies violent actions against women in subordinate roles. The father physically punishes the mother simply because of her love for her children, illustrating how patriarchal ideology condones male aggression against women (Rauf & Amalia Masri, 2019). This structure reinforces traditional gender roles, increasing vulnerability to violence (Bingham, 2004).

From this analysis, it can be concluded that marriage often leaves women powerless to resist men's oppressive behavior, trapping them in a cycle of submission, shame, and humiliation. While men's mistakes are overlooked, blame is shifted onto women, who are subjected to anger, threats, and coercion. This leads to societal hostility toward women (Teng et al., 2023). Even in moments of silence, men's actions create moral fractures that deepen gender inequality (Finke & Scheitle, 2009).

4.2 Mothers

A woman is depicted as an enslaved figure to her children, compensating for the emptiness in her heart and punishing herself through extreme self-sacrifice, a phenomenon known as masochistic devotion (Symmonds, 2019). This devotion is illustrated in the Wandiu-diu folktale, as shown in the following excerpt:

- (3) Not long after Wa Turungkoleo's father left, his son, La Mbatambata, began crying, insisting on eating the *kawole* (dried fish) that belonged to his father. His mother offered him cooked fish instead, but he refused, throwing a tantrum and flailing on the floor. Feeling sorry for her son, she decided to cut off a small piece from the tail of the *kawole* and roasted it for him. In her distress over his relentless crying, she forgot her husband's strict instructions. As La Mbatambata was eating, his father suddenly returned home. Seeing his son enjoying *kawole*, suspicion arose in his mind. "Could that be my fish?" He rushed to the kitchen to check, and sure enough, the tail had been cut. Realizing that his son had eaten from his *kawole*, his anger flared. He turned to his wife and shouted, "Why did you dare give him that fish?" With a trembling voice, she replied, "I couldn't bear to see our son cry and beg for it, so I only took a small piece from the tail." Instead of calming down, her words fueled his rage even further. In a blind fury, he grabbed a weaving tool and struck her repeatedly until it broke. His violent outburst left her bruised and bloodied, with blood trickling from her nose and ears.
(Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

According to Beauvoir (2003), masochistic devotion is embodied by Wandiu-diu, who sacrifices herself for her child. She is too weak to resist her husband, while the father skillfully performs his duties as a man. This suggests that Wandiu-diu perceives herself as a victim of injustice, forced into submission. Meanwhile, the father's mistake, scolding and striking her, was both tangible and direct, yet he absolved himself by shifting responsibility onto the mother.

Men and women exist in a hierarchical structure where men dominate, while women remain in subordinate roles. Women face numerous challenges in defining their existence and responding to evolving societal problems (Riant, 2011). A mother's domestic duties function as an interconnected unit, similar to a marital relationship. A wife may willingly undertake household responsibilities because she finds happiness in her children and maintains patience with her husband (Rauf et al., 2024). For a mother, a child is priceless; her devotion requires no reciprocation, justifying her role as a caregiver. Since childhood, women are conditioned to believe their purpose is to bear children, and the glory of motherhood is continually praised (Posada, 2008). The pain, suffering, and arduous housework they endure are justified by this perceived privilege. Conversely, men view these hardships as inevitable struggles that women must accept as part of their natural role.

Wandiu-diu's deep love for her children, especially the youngest, La Mbatambata, is evident in her fateful decision to give her son the fish reserved for her husband's meal. This maternal sacrifice profoundly impacts the narrative, shaping the characters and their relationships. As a result of her actions, Wandiu-diu becomes a tragic figure, losing her feminine values and finding herself in direct opposition to male-centered ethics (Beauvoir, 2003).

- (4) After the beach had grown quiet and the fishermen had returned home, their mother suddenly appeared, holding a large string of fish. She stepped onto the shore, sat on the sand, and handed the fish to her daughter, Wa Turungkoleo. She then took La Mbatambata onto her lap and nursed him until he was full. Meanwhile, Wa Turungkoleo noticed that scales had begun to form on the back of her mother's feet. As she continued nursing La Mbatambata, tears streamed down her face, and she lamented, "If only you hadn't been so picky about food, we wouldn't have to part like this, my child!" Once La Mbatambata had finished nursing, she handed him to Wa Turungkoleo to carry and told them to go home. However, neither Wa Turungkoleo nor her brother wanted to leave their mother. Gently, she urged them to return, "Go home now. Come find me again tomorrow morning. Hurry back and cook your fish. Do not follow me, for... I may soon turn into a fish. Look at my feet, they are already covered in scales!" Hearing their mother's words, fear crept into Wa Turungkoleo and her brother's hearts. (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 21-22)

Despite her transformation into a fish, Wandiu-diu continues fishing for her children, ensuring they always have something to eat when they visit her at the beach. This act not only replaces her husband's role as the family's provider but also serves as atonement for her son's mistake. Her sacrifice reshapes her personal life while reinforcing her victimhood. She seeks to absolve her children of punishment (Beauvoir, 2003). However, Wandiu-diu does not resist this suffering, as women are conditioned to accept such hardships. While pain and distress may be felt initially, women endure these burdens because they believe they are to blame (Beauvoir, 2003).

- (5) They bid farewell to their mother and returned home, carrying the string of fish she had given them. On the way, Wa Turungkoleo remembered her mother's instructions: she must never tell her father that the fish was from her mother. Instead, she had to say that a kind-hearted person had given it to them. If asked whether they had seen their mother, she was to deny it. When Wa Turungkoleo arrived home, her father immediately questioned her, "Where did you get that fish? Did you meet your mother?" She replied, "A compassionate person gave it to us, and no, we did not see our mother." Her father took the fish and cooked it. Once it was ready, they ate, but he only gave his children the fish bones. Time and again, Wa Turungkoleo and her brother went down to the beach to see their mother. After being nursed, they would return home, bringing fish with them. (Rasyid, 1998, p. 22)

This final exchange highlights Wandiu-diu's ultimate sacrifice, erasing herself from her children's lives to protect them from their father's wrath. In this context, she suffers not only as a wife and mother but also as a commoner and housekeeper, lacking any distinction (Clarke,

2012). The narrative captures the deeply entrenched belief that a mother must endure suffering for the sake of her children, further showing the cycle of female subjugation.

- (6) One day, Wa Turungkoleo and her younger brother went down to the beach again. There, they saw that their mother's body was now almost entirely covered in scales, with only her chest remaining unchanged. It was clear that she could no longer come ashore.
- As usual, she held La Mbatambata in her arms and nursed him. While doing so, she spoke to her children, "Tomorrow, do not come here anymore. I can no longer set foot on land, look at my body, it is completely covered in scales. This will be our last meeting. From now on, I will remain here forever."
- As the sun began to set, she told them to go home. "Go now, my children, for I must dive into the water." With tears in her eyes, she submerged herself beneath the waves and never surfaced again.
- Wa Turungkoleo, carrying her little brother, returned home in tears. When they arrived, their father scolded them for coming back so late in the dark. Wa Turungkoleo replied, "We were late because we saw our mother. Today was our final meeting. She has transformed into a fish and can never come back to land."
- The next day, Wa Turungkoleo tried once more to go down to the shore, carrying her younger brother as always. She sang:
- "Mother Wandiu-diu
My little brother La Mbatambata
Come and nurse my brother
I am Wa Turungkoleo."
- She sang until she was exhausted, but her mother never appeared from the water again. Heartbroken, she and her brother returned home, mourning their fate. And so ends the tale of Wandiu-diu.
- (Rasyid, 1998, p. 23)

This story excerpt suggests the mother resigned herself to fate, recognizing resistance as futile. Valued only for labor, she was easily replaceable. Women who live in fear prioritize reputation but struggle to uphold it. They follow societal laws yet suffer for transgressing them. Societal structures can confine women to traditional roles, limiting their autonomy and self-expression. Goodwin (2020) argues that these constraints often lead women to suppress their individual identities in favor of familial responsibilities, perpetuating a cycle of undervaluation and vulnerability.

4.3 Independent Women

In Wandiu-diu's story, women are portrayed as independent individuals striving to break free from male dominance. According to Beauvoir (Knowles, 2019), under French law, a woman's obligation to obey her husband no longer applies, and every female citizen has the right to vote. However, this independence is not entirely liberating, as illustrated in the following passage:

- (7) When Wa Turungkoleo's father went back to the sea to set his fishing net, he instructed his wife, "Do not, under any circumstances, take the fish or give it to anyone, no matter who asks for it." ... "Even if they ask, do not give it to them!" he firmly responded before taking his net and leaving.
- (Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

This passage highlights male dominance in family structures, where the father holds the highest authority (Beauvoir, 2003). In the story, the mother defies her husband's orders to feed her child, illustrating the burdens placed on women. According to Beauvoir (2003), women's success is often measured by their ability to maintain a household and please men. This theme is reinforced when the mother continues to serve her husband upon his return.

- (8) Feeling sorry for her son, she decided to cut off a small piece from the tail of the *kawole* and roasted it for him. In her distress over his relentless crying, she forgot her husband's strict instructions. As La Mbatambata was eating, his father suddenly returned home...
- (Rasyid, 1998, p. 19)

The mother finds herself trapped in an abusive marriage, longing for freedom yet heartbroken at the thought of leaving her children. To escape, she must abandon them, yet her

love remains. Tearing her dress, she leaves a trail, a final act of love and longing, ensuring they can always find her.

- (9) After some time, Wa Turungkoleo's father's anger subsided, and he regretted his actions when he saw his wife lying unconscious. After a while, La Mbatambata's mother regained consciousness. She called her two children to her side, gently stroked their heads, and, with tears in her eyes, said, "I must leave you, for your father loves the kawole more than his own children."
- She took La Mbatambata onto her lap and nursed him until he was completely full. Then, she embraced and kissed him with all the love she had. Turning to her eldest child, she said, "Take care of your little brother and protect him well." She then spoke to La Mbatambata, "If only you had not wanted to eat your father's kawole, I would not have suffered like this."
- Once La Mbatambata had finished nursing, she placed him gently in his bed. Then, she took her sarong and blouse, told her children she was leaving, and set off.
- As she walked away from the house, she tore pieces of her sarong and dropped them along the path she traveled. When her sarong was completely torn, she did the same with her blouse, scattering the fabric along the way. She did this so that her children would be able to follow her trail if they ever came looking for her.
- When she reached the shore, she untied the *azamat* (charm) that had been wrapped around her waist and placed it on a rock by the water's edge.
- (Rasyid, 1998, p. 20)

The father deems the mother reckless for defying his authority, reinforcing the notion that women face greater consequences for disobedience than men. Beauvoir (2003) argues that while men's carelessness is often excused, women's defiance is met with severe repercussions. Women are expected to suppress their emotions and grievances. The mother's silent suffering exemplifies female resistance. According to Beauvoir (2003), women resist male dominance by expressing their thoughts rather than merely listening, demonstrating intellect and deep emotions. However, their resistance is often met with male retaliation (Rauf et al., 2020). Furthermore, societal expectations dictate that women must efficiently manage households (Hekman, 2015), reinforcing traditional gender roles. This expectation is evident in Wandiu-diu's story, where the mother's attempt to resist her husband's authority ultimately leads to punishment. Her perceived independence results in her transformation into a fish, as described in the following passage:

- (10) One day, Wa Turungkoleo and her younger brother went down to the beach again. There, they saw that their mother's body was now almost entirely covered in scales, with only her chest remaining unchanged. It was clear that she could no longer come ashore.
- (Rasyid, 1998, pp. 22-23)

This transformation symbolizes the paradox of women's liberation, despite seeking freedom, women remain constrained by societal expectations. La Mbatambata attempts to escape his father's anger, yet his mother's defiance leads to her marginalization. According to Beauvoir (Rauf et al., 2020, 2024), women are often criticized for challenging male authority. Wandiu-diu is depicted as having erred by disobeying her husband's directive, despite acting out of concern for her child.

In the end, the story suggests that independent women do not truly experience freedom. While they may make choices, their decisions remain constrained by societal norms. Women's autonomy, including motherhood, is often defined by their husbands' pride or discomfort (Beauvoir, 2016). This condition has significant implications for women's mental and physical well-being (Forth et al., 2022). Male dominance persists, with men justifying their actions to maintain power (Wolf, 1997), though women are not seeking superiority over men but rather equal rights and freedoms.

6. CONCLUSION

Wandiu-diu folktale reinforces patriarchal structures by regulating women's bodies through three roles: wives, mothers, and independent women. The linguistic choices in this folktale strengthen the entrenchment of patriarchal power, shaping how women's roles and

struggles are portrayed within the narrative. Through lexical selection, narrative structure, and character dialogue, the story constructs women as subordinate figures whose attempts at autonomy are met with resistance and punishment. The repeated use of imperative verbs and possessive pronouns in male speech, such as commands and assertions of ownership, emphasizes male dominance, while the mother's indirect speech and emotional expressions illustrate her constrained autonomy. Additionally, the symbolic transformation of the mother into a fish serves as a metaphor for the paradox of female resistance, while she seeks freedom, she remains entrapped within societal constraints. This linguistic framing aligns with Beauvoir's argument that women's independence is often illusory, reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies through discourse. These findings illustrate how language not only reflects but also perpetuates gendered power structures. This establishes the critical role of linguistic analysis in understanding societal norms and their impact on women's autonomy.

This study focuses on Wandiu-diu folktale, exploring female entities in Indonesian mythology and their categorization. It reveals that women raising half-human, half-animal beings are confined within patriarchal structures and traditional gender roles. Future research should expand this analysis to a broader range of Indonesian folktales, examining how female characters are categorized and how patriarchal norms shape their representation.

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