



GENDER INEQUALITY AND FAMILY REPRESENTATION IN THE FILM *ANDAI IBU TIDAK MENIKAH DENGAN AYAH*

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of gender inequality in the Indonesian film *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* and the circulation of its meanings through audience discourse on TikTok. Using a qualitative approach grounded in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study analyzes the relationship between the filmic text, selected audience comments, and the broader social structures in which these discourses operate. The data consist of eight key scenes from the film and relevant TikTok responses that address domestic labor, emotional responsibility, and parental roles. The findings show that the film positions the mother as the narrative center who bears overlapping domestic, economic, and emotional burdens, while the father is represented through absent or destructive forms of masculinity. These representations contribute to the naturalization of women's double burden within patriarchal family structures. At the same time, digital audience discourse reveals forms of discursive negotiation and critique, particularly from women who relate personal experiences to the film and question the moralization of maternal endurance. This study demonstrates that film and digital media function simultaneously as sites for the reproduction and contestation of patriarchal ideology. It contributes to gender and media studies by situating gender performativity within Indonesian popular culture and participatory digital contexts.

Keywords: *Indonesian film; gender inequality; popular media; critical discourse analysis; patriarchy; TikTok*

A. Introduction

In recent years, popular media has become one of the most influential arenas in shaping public perceptions of identity, social values, and gender relations (Gill, 2007; Santoniccolo et al., 2023; Lestari & Elfattah, 2025). Film, as a powerful cultural form, does not merely reflect social reality but actively participates in constructing it. As Stuart Hall (1997) argues, representation is a process through which meaning is produced, not simply mirrored. Consequently, cinematic narratives play a crucial role in shaping how gender relations, inequalities, and power structures are understood and normalized within society. Through character construction, dialogue, and visual strategies, films often reproduce dominant ideologies that frame gendered roles as natural and unquestionable.

A growing body of international research demonstrates that cinema remains deeply entangled with gender bias. Large-scale computational analyses of film scripts

reveal that female characters consistently receive fewer speaking roles and are less likely to occupy positions of narrative authority compared to male characters (Haris et al., 2022; Bertsch et al., 2022). Women are frequently portrayed within domestic, emotional, and subordinated spheres, while men are positioned as decision-makers, leaders, or figures of authority (Kagan et al., 2020). These patterns suggest that gender inequality in popular cinema operates not only at a symbolic level but also functions as a mechanism for reproducing ideological frameworks that sustain patriarchal power relations.

Similar tendencies are evident in the Indonesian cinematic context. Studies of Indonesian films indicate that women are commonly represented as mothers who bear emotional and domestic responsibilities, while fathers are portrayed as emotionally distant or functionally absent figures (Adielah et al., 2025). Research on specific genres, such as horror films, shows that female characters often serve as moral anchors or sources of emotional gravity, yet remain confined within patriarchal narrative structures (Setiawan, 2024). Other studies highlight how maternal ideology in Indonesian cinema normalizes caregiving labor and self-sacrifice as women's "natural" roles, thereby obscuring the unequal distribution of domestic and emotional work (Kurnia & Hidayatullah, 2024). Collectively, these findings underscore the persistence of gendered power asymmetries in Indonesian popular films.

The film *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* provides a compelling site for examining these dynamics. The narrative foregrounds family relationships marked by gendered inequality, particularly through the portrayal of motherhood, fatherhood, and domestic responsibility. The mother is depicted as carrying both economic and emotional burdens, while the father appears passive, absent, or destructive. Such representations implicitly normalize the assumption that domestic stability and moral responsibility rest primarily on women's shoulders. Importantly, fragments of the film have circulated widely on TikTok, generating intense public discussion about parental roles, gendered sacrifice, and family inequality. This circulation suggests that the meaning of the film does not end with the cinematic text itself but continues to evolve through digital platforms where audiences actively negotiate and reinterpret its messages (Rejeb et al., 2024).

To analyze these processes, this study draws on Judith Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity, which conceptualizes gender not as a fixed identity but as the effect of repeated acts, utterances, and practices that reinforce social norms. In the context of film, performativity becomes visible through the repetitive depiction of mothers as patient, self-sacrificing caregivers and fathers as rational, authoritative, or emotionally absent figures. These repetitions construct gendered meanings that appear natural and inevitable. As a result, women are positioned within a "double burden," expected to participate in public labor while simultaneously maintaining responsibility for domestic and emotional work, whereas men's authority remains symbolically intact despite diminished participation.

Although scholarship on gender representation in Indonesian cinema has expanded, significant gaps remain. Existing studies often focus on female empowerment

or feminist narratives in specific films, such as *Hati Suhita*, without critically examining the family as a central site where gendered labor and emotional responsibility are reproduced (Nurfaizi, 2024). Other research explores audience reception but does not sufficiently address how domestic inequality and parental roles are discursively reinforced or contested through digital interaction (Wardani et al., 2025). Consequently, limited attention has been given to the intersection between cinematic representation, family-based gender inequality, and audience discourse within social media environments.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating textual analysis of film with an examination of audience discourse on TikTok. Specifically, the research aims to: (1) identify how *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* represents gender inequality through character construction, dialogue, and narrative structure; (2) examine how these representations are produced, circulated, and reinterpreted through TikTok comments; and (3) analyze how such discourses intersect with broader patriarchal structures and gendered divisions of labor in Indonesian society. To achieve these objectives, the study employs Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, encompassing textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This framework enables a comprehensive examination of how cinematic language, audience interaction, and socio-cultural context collectively shape and sustain gendered meanings.

B. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how gendered meanings are constructed and negotiated across cinematic and digital texts. CDA is applied as an analytical framework rather than a theoretical exposition, enabling close examination of linguistic, visual, and discursive patterns within the data (Fairclough, 1995). This approach allows the analysis to move beyond narrative description toward a critical reading of power relations embedded in media representation.

The data consist of two primary sources. First, the film *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* serves as the main textual corpus for analyzing representations of gender, domestic labor, and parental roles. Second, publicly accessible TikTok comments responding to circulating excerpts of the film are used to capture audience interpretations and discursive engagement. Units of analysis include selected scenes, dialogues, visual framing, and audience comments that explicitly address gender roles, emotional labor, and parental responsibility. Data were selected purposively to ensure relevance and analytical depth.

Data collection was conducted through repeated viewing and systematic documentation of the film, focusing on scenes that foreground gendered power relations within the family. Dialogues and visual elements were transcribed and annotated for analysis. TikTok comments were collected from public posts featuring excerpts of the film and were selected based on their thematic relevance to gender inequality, sacrifice,

and parental absence. As all comments were publicly available, their use complies with ethical standards for online qualitative research.

Data analysis followed Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA framework, encompassing textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. Linguistic and visual features were examined to identify dominant gendered meanings within the film, while audience comments were analyzed to trace patterns of acceptance, negotiation, and resistance. Judith Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity was used as an interpretive lens to explain how repeated representations of motherhood and sacrifice contribute to the normalization of patriarchal gender roles. Analytical rigor was ensured through theoretical triangulation, peer discussion, and reflexive evaluation throughout the research process.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Analysis of Gender Inequality Representation in the Film

This section explores how *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* presents gender inequality through everyday family life. The film does not announce its critique openly. Instead, unequal relations emerge through daily routines, ordinary conversations, and habitual expectations that shape how family members relate to one another. Gender roles are formed through repeated actions and silences, allowing inequality to appear familiar and acceptable within the domestic setting.

Three interconnected patterns structure the film's representation of gender relations. The first concerns the distribution of domestic and economic labor, where responsibility is consistently placed on the mother. The second involves emotional sacrifice, with the mother positioned as the primary figure responsible for maintaining harmony and absorbing tension. The third relates to the portrayal of masculinity through distance, avoidance, and the failure to fulfill familial responsibility. These patterns interact across scenes and reinforce a stable hierarchy within the household.

The film develops these meanings through repetition rather than dramatic confrontation. Domestic tasks recur without discussion, emotional restraint is expected from the mother, and paternal responsibility is repeatedly delayed or absent. Over time, these small moments accumulate into a broader narrative about power and obligation within the family. Inequality becomes embedded in routine practices, making it appear ordinary rather than contested.

The following subsections examine these patterns in detail. By focusing on selected scenes, dialogue, and visual framing, the analysis shows how gender inequality is produced through familiar interactions and sustained through everyday practices. Sections below address domestic labor, emotional sacrifice, and masculine absence as interrelated elements that shape the film's portrayal of family life.

a. Women's Double Burden in Domestic Activities

The film portrays women's double burden through a series of ordinary domestic practices that place continuous responsibility on the mother without explicit negotiation.

Domestic labor is presented as routine and unquestioned, extending beyond household chores to include income-generating activities, technical repairs, and emotional endurance. These responsibilities are not framed as temporary responses to crisis but as a stable arrangement that sustains everyday family life.

This pattern is evident in the scene at minute 05:44, where the mother rides a bicycle to collect laundry from customers. A customer remarks, “Stop by, have a rest, you work all the time, you’ll get thinner.” Linguistically, the phrase “work all the time” acknowledges constant labor while leaving its causes unexamined. Attention is redirected to the mother’s body as visible evidence of exhaustion rather than to the unequal distribution of work that produces it. Visually, the camera follows the repetitive movement of cycling, allowing fatigue to be conveyed through motion instead of complaint. Recognition appears only when physical strain becomes visible, reinforcing the normalization of continuous labor.

Domestic crisis further reveals how responsibility is assigned within the household. At minute 13:49, heavy rain causes the ceiling to collapse, yet the father is absent from the scene. The mother responds by saying, “It’s okay, I’ll fix it myself.” The statement closes the possibility of discussion and frames action as necessity rather than choice. Visual framing centers on the mother’s movement during the emergency, while the father’s absence remains unexplained. The scene confirms an established expectation: when damage occurs within the household, responsibility falls automatically on the mother.

The cumulative consequences of this arrangement are articulated explicitly at minute 105:35. After the father breaks a glass while intoxicated, Alin states, “If mother hadn’t married father, she wouldn’t have to wash clothes every day until her hands were ruined.” The conditional structure directly links marriage to repetitive domestic labor and long-term bodily damage. The phrase “every day” emphasizes duration, while “hands were ruined” gives material form to accumulated exhaustion. In this moment, domestic work is no longer framed as care or moral duty but as the outcome of an unequal relationship.

As summarized in Table 1, the film constructs women’s double burden through repetition, silence, and unmarked absence. Domestic labor appears continuous and normalized, while acknowledgment remains limited to bodily signs of fatigue rather than structural inequality. Through these recurring practices, gendered responsibility becomes embedded in everyday routines and accepted as a natural condition of family life.

Table 1
Analysis of Women’s Double Burden in Domestic Activities

Scene Code	Key / Visual Moment	Dialogue	Linguistic Analysis (Word Choice & Expression)	Visual Analysis (Emotion & Framing)	Character Construction	Gendered Discursive Meaning
05:44	The mother rides a bicycle to collect	Constant labor is named without		Repetitive movement	The mother appears as a tireless worker;	Women’s labor is normalized and

		laundry; a customer says she works all the time and will get thinner.	questioning its causes; the body becomes proof of overwork.	foregrounds physical strain.	recognition comes from outsiders.	acknowledged only through visible exhaustion.
13:49	Heavy rain collapses the ceiling; the mother decides to repair it herself; the father is absent.	The statement closes discussion and frames action as necessity.	The camera centers on the mother during crisis; absence is left unexplained.	The mother assumes technical and domestic responsibility.	The mother	Crisis management is positioned as women's obligation.
105:35	The intoxicated father breaks a glass; Alin links marriage to daily washing and ruined hands.	Conditional structure establishes cause and effect; repetition and bodily damage are emphasized.	Broken objects trigger the exposure of accumulated burden.	Alin critique; the mother bears long-term burden.	voices	Domestic labor is shown as the result of unequal relations, not natural duty.

Source: Primary data from selected scenes of *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah*, analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis..

b. The Mother as the Center of Emotional Sacrifice

The film consistently positions the mother as the emotional center of the family, assigning her the responsibility of absorbing conflict, disappointment, and moral tension. Emotional endurance is not portrayed as a personal choice but as an expectation attached to motherhood. Through dialogue, silence, and bodily gestures, the film shows how emotional labor becomes a routine obligation that sustains family stability, even when it requires the suppression of personal desire and grievance. This pattern reflects broader cultural constructions in which maternal patience and sacrifice are treated as moral virtues rather than social demands (Hall, 1997; Kurnia & Hidayatullah, 2024).

This construction is clearly articulated in the scene at minute 75:32, when Alin asks her mother, "Why did you want to marry Father?" The mother responds, "If I had not married him, there would be no you." Alin replies, "I did not need to be born, as long as you could have had a better life." Linguistically, the mother invokes maternity as moral justification for her life decision, positioning the child's existence as the ultimate validation of sacrifice. Alin's response reverses this logic by negating her own presence to emphasize the cost of that sacrifice. The scene ends with an embrace, which resolves tension affectively rather than structurally. The mother's body becomes the medium through which conflict is softened, reinforcing her role as emotional stabilizer rather than as a subject entitled to grievance.

Emotional sacrifice is further constructed through the redirection of unrealized aspirations. At minute 37:46, while hanging laundry, the mother says, "I used to want to

become a doctor, but it never happened. Now I want you to become a doctor.” The expressions “used to want” and “never happened” mark the closure of personal ambition, while the shift toward the child signals the transfer of hope. The visual setting of domestic labor frames this confession, linking emotional loss directly to everyday work. Rather than appearing as a moment of empowerment, the scene illustrates how women’s unrealized aspirations are reframed as moral investments in the next generation, reproducing sacrifice as a generational pattern (Sedacca, 2022).

A similar mechanism operates during open family conflict at minute 51:48. The father states, “I know I am not a good father, but I also want to be appreciated.” One of the children responds by pointing to the mother’s continuous labor and declining health. Throughout the exchange, the mother remains silent. Her silence functions as emotional containment: she does not intervene, yet her suffering becomes the ethical reference used by the children to challenge the father’s claim. Emotional authority is established not through speech but through restraint. In this context, silence does not indicate passivity; it reflects the normalization of emotional labor as a responsibility that must be carried quietly (Fairclough, 1995).

As summarized in Table 2, maternal emotional sacrifice in the film is constructed through acceptance, silence, and the redirection of desire. The mother is repeatedly positioned as the figure who maintains cohesion by absorbing tension and deferring her own needs. Through these recurring patterns, emotional labor is naturalized as an essential component of motherhood, allowing unequal emotional demands to persist without meaningful transformation.

Table 2
Analysis of Maternal Emotional Sacrifice

Scene Code	Key Visual Moment	Linguistic Analysis (Word Choice & Expression)	Visual Analysis (Emotion & Framing)	Character Construction	Gendered Discursive Meaning
75:32	Alin asks why the mother married the father; the mother replies that without marriage there would be no Alin; Alin rejects this logic; the scene ends with an embrace.	The mother uses maternity as moral justification; Alin negates herself to emphasize sacrifice.	The embrace closes emotional tension and restores calm.	The mother functions as emotional healer; Alin voices critique.	Maternal sacrifice is legitimized through the narrative of “for the child,” while critique is softened affectively.
37:46	While hanging laundry, the mother says she once wanted to become a doctor and now wants	Unfulfilled desire is marked linguistically and redirected	Domestic labor frames the confession, linking work and	The mother abandons personal aspiration and projects it onto the child.	Emotional sacrifice becomes generational and normalized.

her child to toward the emotional loss. become one. child.					
51:48	The father demands appreciation; the children cite the mother's labor and illness; the mother remains silent.	Repetition and bodily reference are used to establish moral authority.	The mother's silence dominates the emotional space.	The mother is the ethical reference without speaking.	Emotional labor operates through restraint and containment.

Source: Primary data from *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah*, analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis.

c. Absent Masculinity and Failed Responsibility

The film represents masculinity primarily through patterns of absence, avoidance, and episodic disruption, positioning the father as a figure who repeatedly fails to assume domestic and emotional responsibility. Masculine authority is asserted symbolically but rarely enacted in practice. As a result, the consequences of this failure are redistributed to other family members, particularly the mother and children. Through dialogue, silence, and visual framing, masculinity is constructed as unstable and unreliable within the household, while its symbolic status remains largely intact.

This pattern is established early in the scene at minute 09:36, where the father is shown engaging in online gambling and submitting loan applications. After losing, he shouts in frustration, directing his language toward personal failure rather than its impact on the family. The repeated focus on “losing” situates masculinity within a competitive logic detached from care or accountability. Visually, the scene isolates the father, showing a shift from anger to quiet anxiety as loan notifications appear on his phone. Financial risk is framed as an individual crisis, yet its consequences are implicitly transferred to the domestic sphere.

Masculine absence becomes more pronounced during moments of household crisis. At minute 13:49, heavy rain causes the ceiling to collapse, yet the father is not present. The mother immediately takes responsibility for repairing the damage. The absence is neither explained nor questioned within the narrative, allowing it to appear normal rather than exceptional. Visual framing centers on the mother's physical effort, while the father's non-presence functions as a silent marker of failed responsibility. In this moment, the symbolic role of “head of the household” collapses precisely when protection and action are required.

A similar pattern emerges at minute 51:49, when the father states, “I know I am not a good father, but I also want to be appreciated.” Linguistically, the demand for appreciation is framed as entitlement rather than accountability. When challenged by the children, the father withdraws from the interaction and leaves the scene. Dialogue gives way to exit, and confrontation is avoided. Masculinity is asserted verbally but abandoned when subjected to moral scrutiny, reinforcing a gap between authority and responsibility (Fairclough, 1995).

The most explicit form of destructive masculinity appears at minute 105:35, when the father, intoxicated, breaks a glass belonging to the mother. The act transforms masculine presence into a source of instability rather than protection. Alin directly links the damage within the household to the father's behavior, making visible the accumulated consequences of his actions. Here, domestic objects become symbolic markers of deeper relational harm, revealing how masculine disruption materializes within everyday life.

Long-term effects of masculine absence are articulated poignantly at minute 43:44, when a younger child states that debt collectors come to the house more often than the father does. This comparison replaces paternal presence with institutional intrusion. Linguistically, the contrast emphasizes frequency and pattern rather than isolated incidents. The home, which should function as a space of security, is instead shaped by financial pressure generated through the father's decisions. Absence, in this sense, operates not as neutrality but as a form of power that displaces responsibility while preserving symbolic status (Hall, 1997).

As summarized in Table 3, masculinity in the film is constructed through repeated failure to assume responsibility. Absence, avoidance, and episodic disruption replace care and accountability, while authority remains symbolically recognized. Through these patterns, the film reveals how patriarchal legitimacy can persist even when masculine roles collapse in practice, leaving women and children to absorb the social and emotional costs.

Table 3
Analysis of Absent Masculinity and Failed Responsibility

Scene Code	Key Dialogue / Visual Moment	Linguistic Analysis (Word Choice & Expression)	Visual Analysis (Emotion & Framing)	Character Construction &	Gendered Discursive Meaning
09:36	The father gambles online; after losing he and shouts and later sits silently when loan notifications appear.	Language centers on personal loss and competition, not family impact.	Emotional shift from anger to anxiety; isolation is emphasized.	The father appears impulsive and financially isolated.	Masculinity is linked to risk and instability.
13:49	The ceiling collapses during heavy rain; the father is absent; the mother repairs it.	Absence is unmarked and unquestioned.	The frame centers on the mother's physical effort.	The father fails to fulfill protective responsibility.	Masculine authority collapses in moments of crisis.
51:49	The father demands appreciation	Respect claimed as entitlement	Withdrawal replaces engagement.	The father avoids confrontation.	Patriarchal privilege is

		and leaves without after being accountability. challenged.			asserted but not sustained.
105:35	The intoxicated father breaks a glass; Alin links household damage to his behavior.	Causal language assigns responsibility for harm.	Broken objects symbolize domestic instability.	The father becomes a source of disruption.	Masculine presence appears destructive.
43:44	A child says debt collectors come more often than the father.	Frequency contrast replaces presence with consequence.	External intrusion dominates domestic space.	The father is absent but leaves lasting effects.	The breadwinner role collapses into economic threat.

Source: Primary data from *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah*, examined using Critical Discourse Analysis.

2. Discursive Practices: The Production, Circulation, and Reproduction of Meaning in Digital Spaces

Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah does not operate solely as a cinematic text confined to theatrical viewing. After its release, excerpts from the film circulated widely on TikTok, allowing the narrative to acquire a second life in digital space. Short clips were reposted, reframed, and accompanied by emotionally charged captions that invited audience response. Through this process, the film shifted from a finished text to an ongoing discursive event shaped by interaction, algorithmic visibility, and participatory engagement (Rejeb et al., 2024).

Audience comments reveal a strong alignment between the film's representations and viewers' lived experiences. Many users interpret the narrative through personal memory, particularly in relation to maternal sacrifice and paternal absence. Statements such as "*It feels like my mother's story*" indicate how viewers reposition the film as a reflection of their own family histories. In this sense, meaning is reproduced not through passive reception but through identification and emotional recognition, where private experience becomes a lens for public interpretation. At the same time, the comment space functions as a site of negotiation. While some responses affirm the moral value of maternal endurance, others explicitly question it. Comments rejecting the idea of staying in unequal relationships "for the sake of children" reframe sacrifice as harmful rather than virtuous. These responses illustrate how digital interaction allows dominant meanings to be contested and reinterpreted, rather than simply reinforced (Suryawardhani & Khairunnisa, 2023).

Several comments extend interpretation beyond individual emotion to structural reflection. Viewers frequently highlight patterns of fatherly absence and the normalization of women's double burden, treating these conditions as recurring social realities rather than isolated narrative elements. Through repetition across comments,

individual testimonies accumulate into shared observations, transforming personal stories into collective discourse about gender, marriage, and responsibility.

TikTok also enables reflexive engagement across generations. Some users articulate guilt toward their mothers or reassess past judgments directed at them, while others imagine alternative futures in which women are not constrained by unequal marital expectations. These responses indicate that digital discourse does not merely mirror the film's message but actively reshapes it, allowing viewers to articulate critique, regret, and aspiration within a shared communicative space (Vickery, 2022).

Through its circulation on TikTok, the film's meaning is continuously reproduced and transformed. Emotional language, visual repetition, and audience interaction extend the narrative beyond representation into social commentary. Discursive practice thus becomes a key site where patriarchal meanings are simultaneously reinforced and questioned, revealing how popular media and digital platforms jointly shape the negotiation of gender norms in everyday life (Fairclough, 1995).

3. Social Practices: Patriarchal Structures and the Naturalization of Women's Double Burden in Indonesian Society

The representations constructed in *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* and the audience discourse circulating on TikTok are embedded within broader social structures that shape family life in Indonesia. Beyond individual narratives, the film reflects a social order in which patriarchal norms operate through everyday expectations rather than overt coercion. In this context, patriarchy is sustained through habits, moral ideals, and emotional obligations that position women as primary bearers of domestic and emotional responsibility, even under unequal conditions (Eriyanto, 2020; Fairclough, 1995).

Viewer responses indicate how deeply these norms are internalized. Statements such as "*Don't survive on love alone*" reveal a critical awareness of the limits of romantic sacrifice while simultaneously exposing how endurance has long been framed as a moral virtue for women. Love is celebrated as the foundation of family life, yet it becomes insufficient when paired with structural imbalance. This tension illustrates how hardship is often accepted as proof of devotion rather than recognized as a condition requiring change, a pattern identified in studies of maternal ideology in Indonesian cinema (Kurnia & Hidayatullah, 2024).

Other comments further demonstrate the moralization of endurance. Appeals to remain strong "*for the children*" frame patience and suffering as ethical obligations. Within this logic, women's emotional restraint becomes a marker of moral worth, shaping self-understanding and everyday practice. Such framing exemplifies a subtle operation of patriarchy, where unequal arrangements persist through internalized values rather than force (Hall, 1997).

I Intergenerational reflections further expose how patriarchal family structures shape lived experience. Expressions of disappointment toward fathers and regret over mothers' suffering indicate awareness that personal pain is rooted in social arrangements rather than individual failure. When viewers imagine alternative life paths for their

mothers, they symbolically reject expectations that women must marry, endure, and sacrifice to fulfill normative family ideals (Sengar & Shah, 2024).

Several comments also highlight the gap between symbolic male authority and practical responsibility. Even when women act as economic providers and heads of households, men often retain recognition as “*heads of the family*” at the level of social meaning. This separation allows patriarchal legitimacy to persist despite the absence of enacted responsibility, reinforcing women’s double burden while preserving male status (Fairclough, 1995).

Cultural narratives that romanticize mothers as pillars of strength further obscure these inequalities. By celebrating endurance, such narratives divert attention from the structural conditions that make sacrifice necessary. The film reinforces this pattern through repeated depictions of maternal labor and emotional restraint, presenting sacrifice as admirable while leaving its causes largely intact (Kurnia & Hidayatullah, 2024; Setiawan, 2024). Digital interaction, however, introduces cracks in this ideological continuity. Comments urging women to reconsider marriage or resist social pressure suggest a growing willingness to question long-standing norms. Through shared reflection and personal testimony, social media functions as an alternative space where values are reassessed and different futures are imagined (Rejeb et al., 2024).

The film and its circulation on TikTok show that patriarchal ideology remains deeply embedded in Indonesian social life while increasingly subject to reflection and critique. Patriarchy persists through care, loyalty, and moral expectation rather than overt domination. Yet the articulation of lived experience in digital spaces signals a gradual shift toward critical awareness, as women and younger audiences begin to question the normalization of unequal gender roles and reconsider the meanings of responsibility, care, and family relations.

D. Conclusion

This study shows that *Andai Ibu Tidak Menikah dengan Ayah* constructs gender inequality through ordinary family routines that place women at the center of responsibility. The mother’s narrative prominence reflects an unequal redistribution of labor, where domestic, economic, and emotional tasks accumulate on one figure as paternal responsibility weakens or withdraws. The film presents endurance as necessity, allowing unequal arrangements to persist without open confrontation.

Through a critical discourse analysis of the film and its circulation on TikTok, the study demonstrates how gender norms are reproduced and contested across media spaces. The repetition of maternal sacrifice and masculine absence stabilizes patriarchal expectations within the narrative, while audience responses reveal growing discomfort with the moralization of women’s endurance. Digital discourse becomes a site where lived experience transforms representation into critique, enabling viewers to question long-standing assumptions about marriage, care, and responsibility.

Theoretically, the findings extend discussions of gender performativity by situating repeated acts of care and restraint within Indonesian popular culture and

participatory digital contexts. Practically, the study underscores the need for more reflective film production that avoids normalizing unequal burdens, as well as stronger media literacy that supports critical reading of gendered narratives. Future research may broaden this approach across genres and platforms to further examine how digital participation reshapes the negotiation of gender roles in contemporary Indonesian society.

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