
**THE REPRESENTATION OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN *TRAFFICKED*
(2017) MOVIE**

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis representasi ideologi patriarki. Studi ini secara khusus mengungkapkan bagaimana sistem patriarki yang terdapat didalam narasi dan adegan dalam film *Trafficked* (2017), serta bagaimana perlawanan karakter perempuan melawan dan bertahan dari sistem yang menindas. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu teori patriarki oleh Sylvia Walby untuk menemukan praktik patriarki yang di kelompokkan menjadi enam aspek; (1) Pekerjaan Berbayar, (2) Produksi Rumah Tangga, (3) Budaya, (4) Seksualitas, (5) Kekerasan, dan (6) Negara, Penelitian ini menggunakan teori feminis eksistensialis oleh Simone de Beauvoir untuk menemukan perlawanan yang dilakukan karakter perempuan terhadap sistem patriarki yang menindas, yang di kelompokkan menjadi dua aspek: (1) Perempuan melawan status “objek”, (2) Solidaritas perempuan melawan eksploitasi. Hasil penelitian ini mencakup 42 keseluruhan data yang dianalisis. Dengan rincian 29 data terkait praktik patriarki (13% data pekerjaan berbayar, 3% data produksi rumah tangga, 21% data budaya, 21% data seksualitas, 21% data kekerasan, dan 21% data negara), dan rincian 13 data terkait perjuangan perempuan (62% data perempuan melawan status “objek” Dan 38% data solidaritas perempuan melawan eksploitasi). Secara keseluruhan, data menunjukkan didalam film *Trafficked* (2017) terdapat empat aspek praktik patriarki yang dominan dan perempuan melawan status sebagai “objek” merupakan data dominan dari perjuangan perempuan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa film *Trafficked* (2017) merepresentasikan ideologi patriarki melalui berbagai bentuk penindasan terhadap perempuan seperti kekerasan, eksploitasi seksual, dan subordinasi.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme, Patriarki, dan Perjuangan Perempuan.

Abstract

*This research scrutinizes the portrayal of patriarchal ideology, focusing on the manner in which patriarchal structures are ingrained in dialogues and scenes within the film *Trafficked* (2017), alongside the strategies employed by female characters to resist and endure this oppressive framework. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study incorporates Sylvia Walby's*

theory of patriarchy to delineate patriarchal practices across six dimensions (1) Paid Employment, (2) Household Production, (3) Culture, (4) Sexuality, (5) Violence, and (6) State. The analysis further used Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory to explore female resistance, which is classified into two categories: (1) women against "object" status and (2) women's solidarity against exploitation. A comprehensive analysis was conducted on 42 data points: 29 instances of patriarchal practices (distributed as 13% paid employment, 3% household production, 21% culture, 21% sexuality, 21% violence, 21% state), and 13 instances of female resistance (62% opposition to "object" status, 38% solidarity against exploitation). The results indicate four predominant dimensions of patriarchal practices within the film, with women against "object" status emerging as the primary form of resistance. The research concludes that Trafficked (2017) encapsulates patriarchal ideology through the multifaceted oppression of women, encompassing violence, sexual exploitation, and subordination.

Keywords: *Feminism, Patriarchy, Women's Struggle*

INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the most effective media of social representation for voicing the reality of gender inequality and the system of domination that exists in society. In popular culture, film does not merely serve as entertainment but also acts as an ideological space where social values, including power relations between men and women, are constructed, maintained, and even normalized (Sen & Das, 2021, p. 20–24). One of the dominant ideologies consistently present in film narratives is patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system that positions men at the center of power and women in a subordinate role. Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 20), in *Theorizing Patriarchy*, defines patriarchy as a complex and systematic social structure that upholds inequality between men and women through six main structures: paid employment, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. These structures can operate independently or interdependently to preserve male dominance and restrict women's mobility and autonomy in daily life.

On the other hand, patriarchy in modern society does not stand alone, it operates and interacts with the capitalist system. Patriarchy provides the cultural and social foundation that enables capitalism to exploit women's labor and bodies as commodities. In this relationship, capitalism extends patriarchal practices by turning women into economic-producing objects through various forms of unpaid labor, domestic work, and forced sexual labor. Conversely, patriarchy facilitates capitalism by normalizing women's position as individuals who can be utilized without resistance. Thus, patriarchy and capitalism mutually reinforce one another in maintaining the stability of class and gender domination systems.

Simone de Beauvoir (2011, p. 680), in *The Second Sex*, highlights that women experience inequality not only structurally, but also existentially. Women are constructed as

“the Other”, which refers to a subject whose identity is shaped by male perspectives and needs. In this system, women lose the right to define themselves because their existence is always linked to and defined by men as the highest authority in society. Beauvoir emphasizes that women’s liberation can only be achieved through awareness of this oppression and through active women against “object “ status, including through women’s solidarity.

One of the social practices that illustrates the close collaboration between patriarchy and capitalism is human trafficking, particularly of women. The UNODC report (2024) notes that the majority of human trafficking victims worldwide are women and children, primarily for sexual exploitation and forced labor. In this practice, women’s bodies are commodified and systematically traded by global trafficking networks that exploit weak legal protections and economic inequality. Schwarz (2023, p. 536) points out that the neoliberal economic system has intensified this pattern of exploitation by positioning women’s bodies as part of the free market. This phenomenon becomes even more complex when wrapped in patriarchal cultural norms that justify exploitation in the name of morality, honor, or even love.

The film *Trafficked* (2017) is a modern literary work that vividly portrays how women’s bodies become a battleground for patriarchy, capitalism, and state power. The film tells the story of three women from different countries, such as Sara from the United States, Amba from India, and Mali from Nigeria, who become victims of human trafficking and are forced into sexual labor in a system operated by men, secured by authorities, and perpetuated by cultural ideologies. Through explicit scenes depicting violence, sexual abuse, and strict surveillance in brothels, the film reveals how domination operates systematically and across borders.

Several previous studies have addressed similar themes, such as Nirwana (2018), who examined *Women’s Subordinate Position in the Patriarchy System Depicted in Anna Jacobs’ An Independent Woman*, and Maulidah et al. (2022), who analyzed *Women’s Freedom from Patriarchy in Abi Dare’s The Girl With The Louding Voice*. However, few studies specifically discuss patriarchal practices and women’s struggles within the context of human trafficking using both structural and existential approaches. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap with the following objectives: (1) to identify representations of patriarchal practices based on the six structures proposed by Sylvia Walby, and (2) to analyze forms of women’s resistance in the film *Trafficked* (2017) based on two categories from Simone de Beauvoir’s thought : women against “object” status and women’s solidarity against exploitation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of uncovering the representation of patriarchal ideology and the forms of women's resistance in the film *Trafficked* (2017). This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to analyze the social meanings, power structures, and narratives within the film text in a deep and contextual manner. Sugiyono (2020, p. 22) states that a qualitative approach is suitable for examining social realities in their natural setting by emphasizing the meaning behind the phenomena being studied.

The data in this research consist of dialogues, scenes, and narratives related to the themes of patriarchy and women's resistance, which are directly sourced from the film *Trafficked* (2017). The researcher watched the film in its entirety, transcribed important dialogues, and selected relevant scenes. Data were collected through textual observation and documentation, by noting and classifying excerpts that reflect the six structures of patriarchy proposed by Sylvia Walby (1989), namely paid employment, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state. Additionally, the analysis of women's resistance is based on Simone de Beauvoir's (2011) existentialist concept, particularly regarding women against "object" status and women's solidarity against exploitation.

The data analysis technique used is content analysis, which aims to identify the underlying meanings behind representations that appear in the film text. The analysis process was carried out by systematically, interpretively, and critically linking the data to the theoretical framework. Data validation was conducted through theoretical triangulation, namely by comparing the analytical results using two different theoretical approaches to strengthen the interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Concepts of Patriarchy by Sylvia Walby

a. Paid Employment

Datum 20/Minute 00:42:07-00:42:53

Jenna : I was waiting table to save money for my college. One day, this customer tells me he's looking for models. So I went to his agency, and I spoke to the other

girls. He even saw their portfolios and the money he promised was unreal. So I did one shoot and then I went back for the second.

This quotation illustrates how Jenna, a young woman, becomes trapped in a system of sexual exploitation through what initially appears to be a legitimate job offer. Her original intention to fund her college education becomes a vulnerability exploited by a human trafficking network that force her into the illegal pornography industry. Jenna's case reflects how the patriarchal structure operates within the wage labor system by exploiting women's economic vulnerability and aspirations for independence. As Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 77-78) argues, patriarchy not only excludes women from prestigious jobs but also pushes them into risky domestic sectors such as the entertainment and sex industries, which are often unregulated and lack legal protection. In this context, capitalism and patriarchy are mutually reinforcing : capitalism commodifies the female body, while patriarchy maintains women's position as exploitable and controllable subjects. Jenna's exploitation is not merely an individual incident but the result of a social system that neglects gender justice and creates conditions where women, especially those from lower social classes, have no access to safe and dignified employment. *Trafficked* (2017) movie critically portrays how gender and economic inequalities intersect to entrap women in modern slavery, disguised as legitimate work.

b. Household Production

Datum 12/Minute 00:20:44

Simon : after 500 men, you're free to fuck off or you could stick around, you make some cash. How does that sound? We work seven days a week, all right?.

The quotation from Simon above reveals the extreme exploitation of women's bodies within a labor system that mirrors patriarchal domestic production. Women are forced to serve 500 clients as a condition for their release, yet the promise of "freedom" is itself an illusion; even after fulfilling that quota, they are persuaded to stay and continue working for money, while the entire system remains under male control. In this context, women have no real agency or autonomy over their bodies and time. Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 65) explains that domestic production in patriarchy is a form of hidden labor, unrecognized officially yet continually exploiting women's work for male benefit, both economically and symbolically. The brothel in *Trafficked* (2017) functions as a "home" in its most repressive form: a closed, monitored space operated like a private economic institution where women's bodies serve as the primary means of production. The women work seven days a week without access to healthcare, safety, or freedom. This illustrates how forced sexual labor is not only a form of violence but also a contemporary version of patriarchal domestic labor, disguised as a rational choice while in fact constituting a form of covert slavery. Thus, the patriarchal system of domestic production extends beyond the family sphere and is deeply embedded in the shadow economy that organizes forced labor against women

c. Culture

Datum 3/Minute 00:11:19

Madam : I will ring the Japanese man. The Japanese man was waiting for four days when you called. Just for a virgin.

The quotation above demonstrates how the value of virginity is positioned as the most prized commodity in human trafficking transactions, while also revealing how women's bodies are not only sold physically but also symbolically. In patriarchal culture, the construction of virginity does not stand alone, it is embedded within a value system that links the purity of women's bodies to honor, obedience, and conformity to male-defined standards. Women are considered "more valuable" if untouched, a standard created to control their sexuality from the outset. Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 21) explains that culture is one of the key structures of patriarchy because it plays a role in reproducing ideology through norms, symbols, and narratives that are socially disseminated. In *Trafficked* (2017) movie, the cultural value attached to virginity is exploited to increase the market price of Amba, a character who is still a virgin, thus making her body more desirable to male clients. This not only illustrates the objectification of women's bodies, but also how cultural values are distorted to justify exploitative practices. Furthermore, patriarchal culture does not only exist within social systems, but is also embedded in collective perceptions that shape the black market of human trafficking. The film clearly shows that the myth of virginity serves as one of the ideological foundations sustaining male control over women's bodies, and that patriarchal culture is not abstract, women live within real economic and violent practices

d. Sexuality

Datum 17/ Minute 00:31:50

Mike : How does a Mike make butter better? Let me take a peek under that hood.

The quote spoken by a customer to a woman in the brothel crudely illustrates how female sexuality is reduced to a commodity that can be seen, examined, and purchased. This expression reflects an extremely unequal power relation in which men act as active subjects who hold full authority over women's bodies, while women are positioned passively as objects of sexual consumption. In a patriarchal system, as explained by Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 110), sexuality is not merely a private matter but a space of power where male domination is institutionalized and justified. In this context, female sexuality no longer represents an equal intimate relationship but becomes a legitimate form of ownership over a body that is considered accessible without consent. *Trafficked* (2017) movie shows how control over female sexuality is carried out systematically through surveillance, intimidation, and the enforcement of fixed roles. Women have no power to express their

own will, even over their own bodies, because male desire is treated as the only valid parameter. Sexuality, within the patriarchal system portrayed in the film, is detached from female subjectivity and transformed into a commodity within a brutal and dehumanizing sexual market. Thus, the film not only exposes the practice of human trafficking but also reveals how patriarchy is deeply embedded in the construction of sexuality that oppresses and denies women control over their own bodies and identities.

e. Violence

Datum 13/Minute 00:20:38

Simon: There's cameras everywhere, so don't do anything stupid. You just obey the rules and we're gonna get along. You break'em, I'm gonna break you.

This quote explicitly reveals the form of organized violence within the patriarchal system implemented in the brothel where women are confined and exploited. The threat is not merely a verbal warning but serves as a symbol of the absolute power men hold over women within a closed space of authority. Simon not only controls the women physically through camera surveillance but also creates a psychological atmosphere of terror that fosters fear and helplessness. When Sara attempts to escape, she is brutally beaten, emphasizing that violence in the film is a systemic tool used to subjugate and silence women. Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 128) states that violence is a crucial mechanism within the structure of patriarchy, employed to maintain control and enforce obedience when other forms of domination fail. In this context, violence does not merely emerge as a reaction but becomes an integral part of managing women's bodies by patriarchal actors. *Trafficked* (2017) movie demonstrates that the fear generated by threats and physical violence not only maintains order in the brothel but also erases women's bargaining power over their bodies, voices, and even their thoughts. Violence becomes the primary language of domination, and in this way, patriarchy operates not only through ideology but also through pain and concrete threats to women's lives. The submission portrayed is not a form of acceptance but the result of brutal control continually reinforced through violence.

f. The State

Datum 21/ Minute 00:39:30

Christian: I'm good. They treat you good?

Jimmy: Absolutely.

The quote above reveals the conversation between Christian, a border guard, and Jimmy, a police officer who is also a customer at the brothel, implicitly highlighting the state's involvement in patriarchal practices. The police, who are supposed to protect the public and uphold the law, instead

become part of the system of sexual exploitation of women. When state officials themselves become clients in an illegal brothel, they not only fail to protect the victims but also actively contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence. Sylvia Walby (1989, p. 153) emphasizes that the state is one of the structures of patriarchy, operating through policies or institutional neglect that reinforce the subordination of women. In this film, the state is portrayed not as a neutral entity but as a participant in a system of domination, both passively and actively, which exacerbates the suffering of women who are victims of human trafficking.

B. Woman Struggle

a. Women Against “Object” Status

Datum 36/ Minute 01:08:32

Sara: Tomorrow night, I have a plan and my plan will work.

This dialogue marks a turning point in Sara’s awareness as a woman who has long been treated as a sexual object under Simon’s control. Her words reveal determination and courage to plan an escape from the brothel. Sara realizes that freedom will not come without resistance, and that the only way out is to act against the system that has oppressed her. In the context of Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist feminism (2011, p. 856), Sara rejects the status of “the Other” and begins to assert herself as a subject with free will and full awareness of her existence. This act represents a process of liberation from being an object to becoming a subject, no longer submissive to patriarchal domination. The film critically illustrates that women's resistance is not only physical but also rooted in ideological awareness of their subordinate position, which must be actively rejected.

b. Women’s Solidarity Against Exploitation

Datum 39/ Minute 01:12:14

Mali: Amba, I know you’re feeling. I feel it too. Don’t think about going back, just think about getting out. We can do this, okay?

This quote reveals the emotional solidarity and concrete action shared between two women who are victims of human trafficking. Amba, who feels worthless after losing her “honor” and disappointing her family, is on the verge of giving up. However, Mali becomes a source of moral strength, offering empathy and encouraging her to survive and escape together. This dialogue illustrates a form of collective female resistance against the systemic exploitation they endure. Such solidarity aligns with Beauvoir’s view (2011, p. 833) that women must support one another in breaking free from the chains of patriarchy and in rebuilding confidence as individuals who deserve

freedom and dignity. In the film, solidarity is portrayed not as pity, but as a strategy for survival and collective empowerment that leads to liberation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The findings reveal 42 main data points, consisting of 29 instances of patriarchal practices and 13 instances of women's resistance. Among Sylvia Walby's six structures of patriarchy, four appear dominantly in the film: culture (21%), sexuality (21%), violence (21%), and the state (21%). The remaining two structures, paid work and household production are also present but in smaller proportions. These patriarchal practices are visualized through sexual exploitation, forced sex work, objectification of women's bodies, and institutional neglect by the state regarding gender-based violence. On the other hand, the women's resistance in the film is categorized into two forms of defiance, based on Beauvoir's concept: women resisting their status as objects (62%) and women showing solidarity against exploitation (38%). These acts of resistance reflect the existential awareness of women regarding their position within the patriarchal system and demonstrate that opposition to oppression can emerge both through individual consciousness and collective action.

Overall, *Trafficked* (2017) movie not only portrays the violence and exploitation endured by women but also gives voice to the forms of resistance that arise from within the female characters. The film illustrates how patriarchy and capitalism intersect in the commodification of women's bodies, while also emphasizing that women possess the capacity to recognize their oppression and act against it.

Suggestion

This research is expected to serve as an initial contribution to gender studies, particularly in the context of representing patriarchal ideology and women's struggles in popular media such as film. Given the complexity and interrelation between patriarchy, capitalism, and the exploitation of women's bodies, this study can be a reference for analyzing other films that address similar issues, both from structural and existential perspectives. Future researchers are encouraged to adopt an intersectional feminist approach to broaden the scope of analysis, particularly by considering variables such as race, social class, religion, and cultural background, which also shape women's experiences of oppression. Furthermore, it is essential to explore the role of media in shaping power discourses and reinforcing gender constructions in society.

For academics, it is important to view media not merely as a form of entertainment but as a cultural-political tool that significantly influences how society understands social issues, including gender-based violence. Therefore, the production of films with a gender justice

perspective that sides with victims of exploitation should be continuously supported. Likewise, regulations that protect women's rights and eliminate discriminatory practices must be strengthened through collaboration among the state, communities, and creative industry stakeholders. Only through collective awareness and narratives that advocate for justice can sustainable social change be achieved.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rindu Putri Ananda is a student at the University of Bangka Belitung. She was born in Belinyu on May 22, 2003. She has a deep interest in the arts, including painting, novels, and film. Being part of the English Literature program supports her passion for exploring literary works.

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