



GENDER ROLES IN DAHLIA RASYAD'S NOVEL *PEREMPUAN YANG MEMETIK MAWAR*: TALCOTT PARSONS' PERSPECTIVE

Peran Gender dalam Novel Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar Karya Dahlia Rasyad: Perspektif Talcott Parsons

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the constructed gender roles in Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* using a gender sociology perspective, specifically structural-functional theory (Parsons, 1949; Parsons & Bales, 1995). This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive method. The data in this study consist of words, phrases, and sentences from the primary data source, namely Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*, collected through the read-and-record technique. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, which were then verified using source and theoretical triangulation. The results of the study indicate that this novel constructs traditional gender roles, in which women perform expressive roles (domestic, nurturing, providing emotional support) and men perform instrumental roles (public, earning a living). However, the study also identified representations of masculine women who work hard and earn a living, as well as feminine men who perform domestic work and provide emotional support. This study contributes to the field of gender sociology while serving as a vehicle for social critique of gender inequality in Indonesian society, particularly within the context of the local culture of South Sumatra.

Keywords: Gender roles; gender sociology; structural functionalism

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu menganalisis peran gender yang dikonstruksikan dalam novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* karya Dahlia Rasyad menggunakan perspektif sosiologi gender, yaitu teori struktural fungsional oleh Parsons (1949) dan Parsons & Bales (1995). Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dalam penelitian ini adalah kata, frasa, dan kalimat dari sumber data utama, yaitu novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*, yang dikumpulkan melalui teknik baca dan catat. Analisis dengan cara reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan kemudian diverifikasi menggunakan triangulasi sumber dan teori. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa novel ini mengonstruksikan peran gender tradisional di mana perempuan menjalankan peran ekspresif (domestik, mengasuh, memberi dukungan emosional) dan laki-laki menjalankan peran instrumental (publik, mencari nafkah). Namun, ditemukan pula representasi perempuan maskulin yang bekerja keras dan mencari nafkah, serta laki-laki feminim yang melakukan pekerjaan domestik dan memberi dukungan emosional. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam studi sosiologi gender, sekaligus menjadi sarana kritik sosial terhadap ketidaksetaraan gender dalam masyarakat Indonesia, khususnya dalam konteks budaya lokal Sumatera Selatan.

Kata-kata kunci: Peran gender; sosiologi gender; struktural fungsional

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INTRODUCTION

Despite growing modernization and gender equality movements in Indonesia, patriarchal norms remain deeply embedded in social customs across many regions, making them difficult to dismantle. Patriarchy is defined by Walby (1991) as a social and structural system that results in the domination, oppression, and exploitation of women by men. She asserts that this system is a real and measurable structural entity, not merely an ideology or socialization process. In societies that adhere to the patriarchal system, gender relations usually view men as superior and women as subordinate. The patriarchal structure based on gender forces women to fill specific roles that ultimately place them in a subordinate position, both in the domestic environment and in the community (Herawati et al., 2025). This system confines women to passive, dependent roles while privileging men in the social structure, perpetuating inequality at both individual and institutional levels.

Gender roles are formed through socialization, reinforcement, and sociocultural construction by state and religious institutions, leading to their perception as natural and unchangeable (Maulana, 2024). In the Indonesian context, Ahmed (1992) notes that gender roles have historically been shaped not by biology alone but by social and cultural constructions. In the Indonesian context, Ramli & Basri (2021) explain that in Indonesian society in general, a social construct has been formed that men must be masculine and women must be feminine, so that individuals who do not conform to these standards are considered deviant from the ideal expected by society. Gender clearly distinguishes the social roles of men and women, with feminine roles typically associated with the domestic sphere or household affairs, while masculine roles are more dominant in the public sphere (Eagly, 2004).

The phenomenon of gender role construction and its impact on social life is not only evident in everyday reality but is also reflected in various literary works, such as novels. Literary works are used as a tool to critique unjust social structures such as discrimination and gender inequality, as well as the hegemony and dominance of patriarchal culture that reinforces male power and places women in a subordinate position (Umniyyah et al., 2024). As a literary work, the novel serves as a vehicle for criticism that can shed light on various issues, including the construction of gender roles and gender inequality, which are major problems in patriarchal societies such as Indonesia (Birahmatika, Z. P., & Robert, R. Y., 2025). The novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* by Dahlia Rasyad was published in October 2013 and 2019 (third edition) and won the Literary Award from the Yogyakarta Language Center for Best Literary Work in 2014. This award is a testament to how the story in this novel has touched the hearts and stirred the minds of many readers. In this novel, Dahlia Rasyad portrays men and women as they navigate their roles within a social structure dominated by patriarchal norms. This novel explores the construction of gender roles, struggles, and challenges faced by different genders within families and society. The reason for selecting Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* as the subject of this study is that research specifically addressing gender roles remains scarce, particularly when employing a gender sociology perspective in this novel. Existing research has focused solely on the cultural reflections of Ogan Ilir and the local cultural elements depicted in the novel, such as everyday objects, customs, and myths prevalent in the community, as well as their connection to literary education.

Some studies relevant to this research, such as Ram (2025), reveal a significant shift in the division of gender roles within families. Domestic tasks are no longer strictly determined

by gender but are instead assigned based on the abilities and agreements of the couple. This study of working women and housewives also found that digital technology plays a major role in opening up new opportunities for negotiation within family dynamics. Furthermore, research conducted by Taufik et al. (2022) shows that the community in Mattiro Village has implemented gender equality optimally, as there are no restrictions on individuals taking on roles in the domestic or public sectors. The determination of roles is based entirely on personal responsibility and is regulated on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. Meanwhile, research conducted by Neang et al. (2025) shows that modern families are still stuck in traditional patterns, where men act as heads of households and women as housewives, creating an imbalance in the division of household chores.

Fundamentally, previous studies have examined the social practices of gender roles in real life using an empirical sociological approach, while this study examines the representation and construction of gender roles in literary texts. This study specifically uses Parsons (1949) and Parsons & Bales (1995) structural functional theory to analyze the construction of expressive and instrumental roles in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*, something that previous studies of this novel have not done. It not only focuses on the representation of women in traditional expressive roles but also explores the phenomenon of masculine women who perform instrumental roles and feminine men who perform expressive roles, something that has not been widely analyzed in previous studies. This difference creates different but complementary scientific contributions: previous research provides an understanding of how gender roles are practiced in social life, while this research provides an understanding of how gender roles are represented, constructed, and critiqued in literary works as a reflection and critique of social reality. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to enriching gender sociology studies by presenting a more systematic, comprehensive, and multi-perspective analysis of the construction of gender roles in contemporary Indonesian literary works.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to: (1) analyze the construction and representation of expressive gender roles in Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*; (2) analyze the construction and representation of instrumental gender roles in the novel; and (3) examine the forms of gender role transformation depicted in the novel and their relation to broader social critique of patriarchal structures in Indonesian society. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically: theoretically, by enriching the application of structural-functional theory in literary gender studies; and practically, by providing insights that can inform gender equality education and policy efforts in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gender and Gender Roles

Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women, which are determined by norms and values shaped by society and culture as a social construct (Dalimoenthe, 2020). Gender is a cultural concept that aims to distinguish men and women in society based on their roles, positions, behaviors, and psychological and emotional characteristics (Tanjung et al., 2025). In line with Grob *et al.* (1994, as cited in Anwar & Sofi'i, 2024), gender is understood as a cultural concept that grows and develops within society, serving to differentiate the roles, attitudes, mentalities, and emotional characteristics between men and women. Role is the dynamic dimension of status; if status refers more to the position a person holds, then role emphasizes more how a person displays or carries out that position. position (Dalimoenthe, 2020). Thus, gender roles are a set of expected behaviors, norms, and values that are considered appropriate for men and women in a particular social context. Gender

roles are dynamic in nature and can change over time and vary from one culture to another (Fakih, 2008).

Expressive and Instrumental Roles

According to the functional structural theory proposed by Parsons (1949), gender role division is seen as a functional necessity in maintaining the stability and order of the social system. Parsons & Bales (1995) argue that feminine roles are associated with expressive functions, while masculine roles are associated with instrumental functions. Expressive roles attached to women are oriented towards domestic affairs, responsible for providing emotional support, and creating harmony in the household. Women are considered to have a natural ability to care for others, maintain interpersonal relationships, and maintain the emotional stability of the family. Conversely, the instrumental roles associated with men are oriented towards public affairs, focusing on the economic and practical functions of the family. Men are positioned as the main breadwinners, decision makers, and liaisons between the family and the outside world. This role emphasizes rationality, productivity, and an orientation toward achieving material goals for the family (Karwati, 2021). This condition is certainly seen as a driver of gender inequality in society (Fakih, 2008).

In order to operationalize these two role categories in the analysis of the novel, this study uses the following indicators. Expressive role indicators include: (1) performing household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and washing; (2) providing emotional support and psychological care to family members; (3) carrying out childcare and socialization responsibilities; and (4) fulfilling service obligations toward the husband. Instrumental role indicators include: (1) engaging in productive work outside the home to earn a living; (2) exercising leadership and making decisions for the family or community; (3) holding authority in the social or religious environment; and (4) acting as a bridge between the family and the external world. These indicators guide the identification and classification of textual evidence in the novel, while also providing the basis for analyzing how the social system described by Parsons is affirmed, stretched, or contested within the literary work.

Structural Functional Theory of Talcott Parsons

The functional structural theory proposed by Parsons (1949) and Parsons & Bales (1995) is a conceptual framework that views society as a functionally integrated system that manifests itself in the form of equilibrium (Sulistiawati & Nasution, 2022). In short, every part of society has a specific role and function that helps maintain the stability and balance of the overall social system. Thus, this approach serves as a framework for analyzing society as a functionally organized system that can adapt and maintain its continuity by fulfilling its main functions. In other words, a person's social role or behavior must be in accordance with the values, norms, and culture that apply in society for the sake of the system's balance.

In relation to the analysis of gender roles in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*, the concept of social system equilibrium (Parsons, 1949; Parsons & Bales, 1995) serves as a central analytical lens for interpreting the behavior and social position of each character. According to Parsons, social equilibrium is maintained when each member of society fulfills their designated role in accordance with the prevailing norms and values (a condition he termed the "normative integration" of the system). Within this framework, the family functions as the smallest and most fundamental social subsystem, in which women's expressive roles and men's instrumental roles are assigned specific, complementary functions that together sustain the whole. When applied to the novel, this theoretical premise allows for the identification of two simultaneous dynamics: first, the reproduction of social equilibrium through characters who conform to prescribed gender roles, thereby reinforcing the system's stability; and second, the

disruption or negotiation of that equilibrium through characters whose behaviors transgress or challenge the assigned roles. For instance, female characters who assume the instrumental role of breadwinner (such as Sauya and Hayanun) represent a functional departure from the Parsonian model, generating tension within the system that the narrative must then resolve or accommodate. Conversely, male characters who perform expressive, domestic roles (such as Lamtoro) expose the constructed, rather than natural, character of role assignments. By tracking these moments of conformity and deviation, this study uses Parsons' equilibrium concept not to validate the gender hierarchy it describes, but to map the structural forces that characters must navigate, resist, or reproduce in order to survive within their social world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a descriptive method. The research was conducted from November 2025 to January 2026 in Makassar through a close reading of the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* by Dahlia Rasyad. The primary data in this study consists of words, phrases, and sentences from the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* by Dahlia Rasyad. The data source for this study is the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* by Dahlia Rasyad, published in 2019 (third edition) by *Terusan Tua*, comprising 378 pages. Data collection was conducted through two systematic stages: (1) intensive reading of the novel five times in full, with each reading focused on a different analytical dimension (narrative structure, character behavior, dialogue, explicit gender norms, and role transformation) followed by analysis to interpret the meaning of each data unit; (2) coding and documenting important data obtained from the reading, using a data card system in which each excerpt was labeled according to role type (expressive or instrumental), character name, page number, and a brief analytical note. Data were selected based on the criterion of relevance: only passages that explicitly or implicitly depict gender role behavior, gender norm negotiation, or role transformation were retained for analysis. Data validity in this study was assessed using a credibility test that employed triangulation, that is, verifying the data using various sources, methods, or theories as comparative tools to ensure that the data obtained were accurate and comprehensive (Moeleong, 2010). Data analysis was conducted through (1) data reduction, in which the collected data were selected by highlighting significant aspects related to gender roles, such as men as breadwinners and women as cooks or caregivers. (2) Data presentation, in which the data in this study were presented in narrative form based on aspects of gender roles. (3) Conclusions and data verification were conducted through triangulation of sources from the novel and theory based on a structural-functional perspective to ensure the validity of the interpretation (Sugiyono, 2013).

The researcher also links the data to structural-functional theory, ensuring that the interpretation of the data is not mechanical but rather based on a deep reflection on the novel. The structural-functional approach (Parsons, 1949; Parsons & Bales, 1995) is used to analyze the construction of expressive and instrumental roles in Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*. The choice of Talcott Parsons' theory in this study is based on several fundamental considerations. First, Parsons' structural-functional theory explicitly distinguishes between expressive and instrumental roles as two complementary poles of social function within the family system, making it highly relevant for analyzing the construction of gender roles in literary texts. Second, this theoretical framework allows researchers to examine how the characters in the novel fulfill their social functions as part of a larger system, rather than merely as individuals acting autonomously. Third, Parsons' theory has been widely used in the study of literary sociology and gender research, giving it a strong epistemological foundation and making it academically sound. In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection by conducting in-depth readings, note-taking, and analysis of the novel's text

to understand how gender roles are constructed. In addition, the researcher utilized auxiliary tools such as data sheets and data collection indicators as analytical guidelines to facilitate and clarify the data collection and processing process.

DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the constructed gender roles in Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* using Parsons's (1949) and Parsons & Bales (1995) structural functional theory, which states that gender roles include expressive and instrumental roles. The characters in this novel show how these roles are manifested while also experiencing conflict and transformation in life.

Expressive Roles in the Novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*

Analysis of the expressive role in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* by Dahlia Rasyad. The expressive role is oriented towards maintaining internal, emotional, and integrative relationships within the family (Parsons & Bales, 1995). Women are considered responsible for emotional cohesion, child socialization, and psychological stability within the family unit. The novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* depicts expressive roles dominated by female characters, namely Sauya, Mayasa, Hayanun, Nenek, Masinah, and Jean. They are very different in how they respond to and live out the gender roles shaped by society. Each character shows differences in how women negotiate social demands, traditions, and their personal desires.

Household Chores (Cooking, Tidying Up, and Washing)

Domestic affairs refer to the management and execution of household tasks that ensure the daily needs of family members are met, and the home functions properly as a comfortable living space. Sauya, the main character in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*, reflects the struggle of women who carry out domestic roles such as taking care of the household without complaint. The following excerpt shows Sauya carrying out her domestic role:

Data 1

"Mau tak mau, Sauya kecil harus membersihkan rumah itu. Mematok kaki-kaki penopang tatakan abu tungku yang sudah renggang nan miring, membuat perapian di dua tungku yang mendingin di atas abu tak berbara. Ia mencoba menyangi ikan seperti yang pernah ia lihat dari ibunya. Ia juga belajar menumbuk bumbu masakan dengan lesung batu. Ia juga mencoba membelah nangka, menguasai parang dengan mengumpulkan kekuatan di ulunya. Barulah setelah cukup ahli menghidupkan tungku, mengatasi batuk-batuk akibat asap, lihai mengupas bawang, dan matanya tak begitu pedih lagi menghembus bara api dengan sulang, ia mampu memasak Nenek beberapa masakan berat." (Rasyad, 2019)

Since childhood, Sauya had to do various household chores such as cleaning the house, cooking, making a fire, cleaning fish, pounding spices, cutting jackfruit, and peeling onions. This excerpt strongly illustrates the process of forced domestication experienced by girls in poor families. Listiani et al. (2025) found that women in poor rural areas, particularly in Kendalrejo Village, Pemalang Regency, Central Java, face multiple burdens from productive and reproductive work, with domestic responsibilities beginning in childhood. Similarly, Hasmawati et al. (2020) found that gender inequality in Indonesian novels shows that the marginalization of women begins in childhood through excessive domestic workloads. This shows how gender roles are imposed from an early age, not because of choice or gentle education, but because of urgent demands for survival. Sauya's experience proves how the

patriarchal system normalizes the exploitation of girls by imposing domestic responsibilities that exceed their age capacity.

Providing Emotional Support (Nurturing and Caring)

Women, especially mothers, play a key role as emotional managers and creators of warmth within the family. In this novel, the mother character, Hayanun, is portrayed as a very strict, demanding mother with extreme parenting methods. She is forced to adopt masculine traits in order to survive poverty and a harsh patriarchal system. She raises her children harshly because she knows that life will not allow them the luxury of being weak. However, behind her harshness, her maternal instincts are sometimes torn apart when she sees the heavy work that her delicate daughter Sauya has to do.

Data 2

“Nun senang, meski batin keibuannya kadang tersayat melihat pekerjaan berat yang sudah dilakoni anak sehalus dirinya, terlebih saat ia jatuh sakit karena kalah melawan hawa dingin musim yang tinggi di saat anak-anak lain mendekam hangat dalam buai peluk Ibu dan kelambu.” (Rasyad, 2019)

This data describes in a complex and touching way the inner conflict felt by Nun as a mother, who is caught between the practical need to survive and the natural urge as a mother to protect and love her child. On the one hand, she feels relieved that her child is helping her financially, but on the other hand, her feelings as a mother are uncomfortable because her child has to work hard when children should be protected and cared for gently. This is a manifestation of maternal guilt, or a mother experiencing tension between what must be done to survive and what is believed to be a mother's duty (Gerçek, 2025). In addition, this quote represents the *approach-avoidance* conflict, which is a conflict that arises when a mother wants to protect her child, but the situation forces her to relinquish responsibility (Prikusuma & Pamungkas, 2024). This shows that even though economic conditions forced a change in behavior, the values regarding the role of mothers as protectors and caregivers remained strong in Nun's heart.

Service to Husband

The expressive role places women as responsible for family harmony and childcare. This role is manifested by wives through the giving of affection, moral support, and efforts to create a comfortable and peaceful home atmosphere. In this novel, the character Hayanun, as a wife, is a very obedient figure who has suppressed her own feelings and desires in order to meet the standards of an “ideal” wife according to patriarchy and religion. For Nun, being a submissive wife is noble and rewarding. It is this way of thinking that gives her the strength to endure her torturous marriage.

Data 3

“Anak Masiah itu pun terpaksa menyerupa, lambat laun menjadi serupa dengan perempuan-perempuan dusun lainnya. Mereka berlomba berusaha menghidangkan makanan lezat, mengatur dan menata liang kubur mereka sendiri agar bisa dipastikan nyaman menuju akhirat nanti. Mencucikan kancut-kancut berbau sperma para suami dengan rasa jijik yang mereka bunuh karena iming-iming pahala ridho Allah.” (Rasyad, 2019)

The data mentions Anak Masiah (Hayanun) as a wife who served her husband without complaint, accepting injustices such as polygamy without objection, even suppressing her disgust in order to receive rewards from God. This represents what Kandiyoti (1988) refers to

as the 'patriarchal bargain,' a patriarchal trade-off in which women accept subordination in exchange for protection or spiritual reward. Fatihrahma et al. (2025), in their study of patriarchal culture in the Sasak Lombok tradition, show that women are often placed as objects who must submit to the decisions of men and society, with religion being used as a means of legitimization. Research conducted by Sukiati & Mohd Nor (2023) on Javanese and North Sumatran women shows that women in polygamous marriages justify the practice based on religious or cultural beliefs and try to accept the situation by ignoring family dynamics. This quote is a sharp criticism of the patriarchal system that uses religion as a means of justification. She fulfills her assigned role, with spiritual rewards as consolation.

The Instrumental Role in the Novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar*

The instrumental role is oriented toward achieving external, rational, economic goals and focuses on the public sphere (Parsons & Bales, 1995). The novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* constructs the instrumental roles played by male characters, namely Malik Jabar, Kyai Syakir, Kyai Qadir, Gamal, Lamtoro, Sobari, George, and Charles, who illustrate the various ways in which men carry out their roles.

Earning a Living

Earning a living through work or productive activities outside the home is an instrumental function that focuses on meeting the economic needs of the family. This role is usually carried out by the husband or head of the family, who is considered to have the ability and obligation to work outside the home in order to meet the material needs of the family.

Data 4

"Di kota asing itu Lamtoro bekerja sebagai arsitek muda. Meski ia memang tak seperti lelaki kebanyakan yang menghabiskan waktu tanpa beban pikiran, pesta, mabuk-mabukkan, bersenang-senang di klub malam, belanja, menghabiskan waktu tanpa sesuatu yang berguna." (Rasyad, 2019)

Lamtoro, as a young architect in a foreign city, plays an instrumental role by focusing on the outside world, namely, earning a living through his professional work. He does not spend time on consumptive or unproductive activities, such as parties or aimless shopping, but chooses to work and fulfill his economic responsibilities. This reflects a very good example of playing an instrumental role. He adapts to the external environment and fulfills the material needs of his family, while also demonstrating leadership and responsibility in maintaining family stability. Badrunnisa & Haryanti (2025), in their research on masculinity in Indonesian pesantren novels, show that the representation of masculinity in contemporary Indonesian literature has begun to diversify, is no longer monolithic, and opens space for a more humanistic masculinity. In the context of today's society, the figure of Lamtoro is relevant in addressing the challenges of hustle culture (overwork) and digital capitalism in Indonesia, which often separate professionalism from morality (Athifah Chairunnisah & Lilawati Kurnia, 2023; Bellini & Lomazzi, 2024).

Leadership and Decision Making

Leadership and decision-making refer to the role of a man (father) who is able to make rational decisions, manage resources, and ensure that key tasks are carried out efficiently. In this novel, the character Malik Jabar appears as a father or leader for the community who focuses on building the character and future of children. Malik Jabar uses love to guide the children's life goals. He shows himself to be a firm, gentle, and very humane leader. This noble

attitude shows that he is a representation of a man with a leadership spirit that prioritizes kindness and justice.

Data 5

“Kalau sudah begitu, Malik Jabar hanya bisa meminta dengan santun untuk sedikit tertib. Tatapan lembut penuh kebakakan dan sentuhan tangannya yang menempelkan bau wangi di kepala anak-anak itu membuat keributan yang kanak-kanak tadi seketika reda... dengan penuh kasih sayang, Malik Jabar memandang satu per satu wajah polos mereka dan menanyakan apa yang mereka cita-citakan.” (Rasyad, 2019)

The data describes Malik Jabar as a fatherly figure and leader in his community. Just as a father must manage and protect his family, Malik Jabar acts as a father figure to the community, even though the children are not his own. He demonstrates his decision-making by guiding the children and asking them about their aspirations. It is as if he gives them space to speak, but his goal is only to appear as a fair guardian. A study conducted by Abdulai et al. (2025) found that ethical leadership consists of important elements such as humility, fairness, responsibility, respect for others, independence, accountability, and transparency.

Authority in the Social Environment

This authority focuses on achieving common goals, maintaining order, and managing relationships between groups and the external environment. In this novel, Kyai Syakir is portrayed as a highly respected senior religious figure. He plays a crucial role in Beti Village. He is the only person who has the authority to decide moral issues and interpret the truth, so his words are always listened to because they are considered to come from a deep understanding of sacred texts.

Data 6

“Kyai Syakir yang dijuluki guru tua sudah membuka sekolah mengaji... Dan jika ada warga datang bersengketa, menanyakan padanya perihal halal haram suatu fenomena, ia akan membuka kacamatanya, menopang batok kepala dengan ujung jari, bergeming seperti pertapa, sampai akhirnya mengeluarkan fatwa.” (Rasyad, 2019)

This data describes Kyai Syakir as a religious authority figure in the community who not only acts as a religious teacher but also as a moral authority who sets the boundaries of acceptable behavior in society. Issuing fatwas is a symbol of the patriarchal religious authority system that is very powerful in regulating community life. Kyai Syakir determines what is halal and haram in a matter, regulates permissible and impermissible behavior, and stipulates how marriages should be conducted. In a highly religious community such as Sauya's village, Kyai's fatwas have almost absolute legal force. Violating them is not only considered a religious sin but also a social offense that can result in a person being shunned or ostracized from the community. This finding is in line with Brenner's (1996) analysis of the role of male clerics in Javanese society, who are not only interpreters of religion but also enforcers of patriarchal gender norms. (Khair & Tarauni, 2025), in their study of patriarchal domination in Islamic literary novels, also found that female characters are not only reduced in their roles but also constructed in such a way that they are unable to express their agency, will, or identity autonomously within gender-biased social and religious structures.

Role Transformation in the Novel Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar

Gender transformation is a fundamental change in the social structure of gender at various levels, namely individual, interactional, and institutional (Risman, 2004), which

includes changes in power relations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), gender roles and norms (England, 2010), and the redistribution of resources and recognition (Kabeer, 2020). Parsons & Bales (1995) emphasize relatively fixed role differentiation based on gender rather than flexible role transformation. However, the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* represents a transformation of roles between characters, such as men taking on expressive roles and some women also taking on instrumental roles or rejecting traditional roles.

Hardworking Women

The hard-working woman in this novel is represented by the character Sauya. She not only plays an expressive role as a woman but also an instrumental role that is usually assigned to men. Her childhood experiences shaped Sauya into a tough and hardworking person, causing her to lose the gentleness that a girl should have. Sauya represents how the work ethic and extreme self-sacrifice of girls are normalized and glorified in a patriarchal society.

Data 7

"Tak seperti itu; sedari fajar ia sudah bangun, pergi ke sawah dan membajak, mengangkut kayu dan jerami, mencari rumput untuk Bully, dan tak pernah menuntut apa-apa dari upahnya." (Rasyad, 2019)

The data shows how hard Sauya's life was. A series of tasks, such as plowing fields and carrying wood and straw, are physically demanding and should be done by adults, especially adult men, according to the traditional division of labor. This is in line with the research by Latifah et al. (2025) that social factors greatly influence the formation of gender identity, and women in traditional societies are often forced to adopt roles that do not match their identity in order to survive. This is similar to women in Pakistan who work hard physically while supporting the family economy, but within a cultural framework that continues to define productive work as belonging to men (Jabeen et al., 2020).

Masculine Women

Masculine women, or women who possess masculine traits, are represented in this novel by the characters Hayanun and Mayasa. Hayanun represents a working woman who is forced to adopt masculine traits in order to survive. She grows up to be a fierce woman who is hard-hearted, ruthless, and unsympathetic. Meanwhile, Mayasa is described as a tomboy, stubborn, and difficult to control. She enjoys cycling, climbing trees, and going to the forest and climbing trees even though she falls many times.

Data 8

"Bentuk tubuhnya seperti lelaki, kekar dengan urat dahi kencang, dan tulang leher yang menyembul seperti batang pohon tua berakar tunjang. Ia sama sekali tak punya sisi bulat layaknya perempuan. Betapa tidak, sejak umurnya belum lagi genap tujuh tahun ia sudah mulai menimba puluhan ember besar-besar untuk dibawa naik ke Garang, berjalan kaki sejauh ratusan kilo menjajakan ketela, memanggul keruntung-keruntung sayur, padi, jerami, dan gabah. Hingga di usianya yang keempat puluhan ini, kurus kering bak papan sekeping dengan betis bak talas bogor, mengangkut balok-balok kayu yang beratnya 70 kg per batang." (Rasyad, 2019)

This data shows that women in traditional societies are expected to have soft and delicate bodies, without prominent muscles, because they are not expected or allowed to do heavy physical work. However, Nun has a muscular body, showing that her muscles have developed as a result of the hard work she has done continuously for many years. Hayanun's muscular body, with tight forehead veins and neck bones protruding like old tree trunks, is

material evidence of how poverty and economic exploitation can truly damage women's bodies. Butler (2004), in her theory of gender performativity, explains that gender is the result of repeated actions that are then naturalized. However, Hayanun's case shows that women's bodies can change physically as a result of forced hard work, challenging the idealization of a soft and delicate feminine body. This is a tragic irony: in order to survive, poor women must sacrifice the femininity that is the basis of their value in a patriarchal system. Marselina's (2025) research also confirms that the caste system and patriarchy in Balinese society force women to experience various forms of marginalization, subordination, and multiple layers of work that damage their bodies and souls.

Men Performing Domestic Roles

The novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* represents Lamtoro as a figure who transcends traditional constructions of masculinity. Although he plays a public role, namely working, he also enjoys domestic roles such as cooking. Lamtoro is very rational and upholds justice and honesty. He respects women as whole human beings, not as sexual objects or domestic servants.

Data 9

"Lelaki yang kadang menemukan jiwanya seperti perempuan itu sangat senang memasak, merajut wol, membuat kembang kertas, dan mudah terharu." (Rasyad, 2019)

The data shows Lamtoro enjoying activities such as cooking, knitting wool, making paper flowers, and being easily moved. This is in stark contrast to the traditional construction of masculinity, which demands that men suppress their emotions, remain strong, and not show weakness. Overall, this short quote about Lamtoro is a powerful representation of the possibility of a healthier, more complete, and more human masculinity. Kimmel (2011), in his analysis of the transformation of masculinity, asserts that men who dare to express their emotions and perform domestic activities actually demonstrate true strength, not weakness. This reflects the househusband; according to Paredes et al. (2025), who explored househusbands from Cavite, Philippines, being a *househusband* does not diminish one's masculinity. (Badrunnisa & Haryanti, 2025) note that fluid masculinity is beginning to emerge in contemporary Indonesian literature, challenging rigid stereotypes of masculinity and opening up space for men to express their feminine side without losing their identity.

Feminine Men

Men who possess feminine characteristics in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* are represented by the characters Gamal and Lamtoro. Gamal is a representation of a man who is very religious and serious in living a spiritual life. Gamal shows his feminine side through his attitude and the way he interacts with Sauya. He is very gentle in guiding and providing educational support to Sauya and giving her sincere attention. Meanwhile, Lamtoro shows his feminine side through domestic activities such as cooking, knitting wool, and making paper flowers.

Data 10

"Namun kian hari, buku-buku itu sulit disukainya, teringat bagaimana lelaki itu menyayanginya seperti seorang kakak baik hati, lemah lembut, dan selalu mengajaknya bersama-sama mengerjakan tugas sekolah, memberinya semangat, mendukungnya seolah ia satu-satunya sang juara. Gamal memberinya tekanan agar ia peduli dan bertanggung jawab dengan tugas seorang pelajar di saat ia mulai bosan,

memacunya dengan kritikan, mewanti-wanti langkahnya, menasihatnya, menyelesaikan segala permasalahan imannya.” (Rasyad, 2019)

This data describes Gamal as a gentle person who gives encouragement and support and is very caring and responsible. This character is very different from traditional masculinity, which is harsh and dominant. He is a pious and religious man, but shows a gentleness that is usually associated with femininity when interacting with Sauya. Gamal also displays a gentle, masculine side that provides emotional support, reflecting *caring masculinity*. (Moura, 2024) argues that *caring masculinities* include qualities such as empathy, emotional expression, and cooperative relationships, which challenge the dominant forms of patriarchal masculinity. This is a sharp criticism of the rigid dichotomy between masculinity and femininity.

Failure of Instrumental Role

The failure to fulfill an instrumental role in the novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* is portrayed through the character of Masinah's husband. He represents toxic masculinity in its most cruel and morally boundless form. He becomes a symbol of destruction justified by patriarchal privilege. He exploits his status as a man to commit any act of violence without meaningful punishment.

Data 11

“Ya, tak ada yang harus dijelaskan dari lelaki itu. Suami Masinah tukang judi, pemarah dan mata duitan, penjilat dan mau senang sendiri. Ia lelaki durga yang pemalas, tak mau bekerja, senang bersenggama dengan siapa pun, wanita. Ia dikenal orang-orang sebagai dajjal yang cabul, suka minum-minuman dan perempuan, main pukul dan menghina orang sembarangan... Ia ajarkan anak lelakinya yang belum juga genap tujuh tahun bermain-mainkan kemaluan di depan janda dan gadis-gadis tua...” (Rasyad, 2019)

This data shows Masinah's husband failing in his role as a man and husband. He refuses to work, is lazy, gambles, and only wants to enjoy himself. All of his toxic behaviors are the most extreme manifestation of the patriarchal system. This represents a form of *toxic masculinity*. Zhao & Roberts (2025) express that toxic masculinity is manifested through coercion and violence against others, which includes externalization, such as violence against women and misogyny, as well as internalization in the form of excessive alcohol consumption, injuries from fighting, and an inability to express emotions.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study confirm and expand on Parsons' structural-functional theory of gender roles. While Parsons argues that the division of expressive and instrumental roles is functional for family stability, this novel shows that this division of roles actually creates structural injustices that disadvantage women. This is in line with the research by Dwi Rahayu Saptiyananta et al. (2023), which shows that social and cultural structures systematically limit women's roles, choices, and capacities through the formation of rigid gender stereotypes. Sauya and Hayanun are not only oppressed as women, but also as poor women who do not have access to education and economic resources. Patriarchal interpretations of religion add another layer of oppression by using doctrines of reward and sin to legitimize their suffering. Savitri & Suyanto (2024) confirm that women in patriarchal traditions not only experience economic marginalization but also the silencing of their voices in decisions that affect their own lives.

In practical terms, the findings of this study have important implications for gender transformation efforts in Indonesia. First, a more egalitarian reinterpretation of religious texts

is needed to counter the use of religion as a tool for oppressing women. Second, affirmative policies are needed to protect girls from excessive economic and domestic exploitation. Third, there needs to be a campaign to promote alternative forms of masculinity that are more inclusive and non-oppressive, as exemplified by Lamtoro and Gamal. Fourth, the legal system must be strengthened to protect women from domestic violence and impose strict sanctions on perpetrators such as Masinah's husband.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Dahlia Rasyad's novel *Perempuan yang Memetik Mawar* functions as a powerful literary critique of the patriarchal system that structures gender inequality in Indonesian society. Through the lens of Parsons' structural functional theory, the novel reveals how the division between expressive and instrumental roles is not a natural or neutral arrangement but a socially constructed mechanism that systematically disadvantages women. Characters such as Sauya and Hayanun bear the weight of multiple, overlapping burdens imposed by poverty, religion, and culture, illustrating that gender oppression is intersectional, not merely ideological. At the same time, the novel's representations of masculine women (Sauya, Hayanun, and Mayasa), domestic men (Lamtoro), and emotionally expressive men (Gamal) signal that gender roles are neither fixed nor universal and that social transformation is not only possible but already occurring, albeit unevenly and often as a product of necessity rather than choice. The novel thus extends beyond entertainment: it is a text that interrogates how 'natural' gender norms are continuously reproduced through family, religion, and culture, and in doing so, contributes meaningfully to the discourse on gender transformation in Indonesia.

The findings of this study carry significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study enriches the application of Parsons' structural functional framework in literary studies, demonstrating that the expressive-instrumental role division, rather than ensuring equilibrium, produces structural injustices that require critical examination. Practically, the results point to at least four areas requiring attention: first, the need for egalitarian reinterpretation of religious texts to counter the legitimization of women's oppression through doctrinal frameworks; second, the urgency of affirmative policies protecting girls from premature economic and domestic exploitation; third, the value of promoting alternative, inclusive forms of masculinity, such as those embodied by Lamtoro and Gamal, as viable social models; and fourth, the importance of strengthening legal protections for women against domestic violence and patriarchal abuse. Future research should extend this analysis to other contemporary Indonesian novels, explore comparative frameworks across Muslim-majority literary traditions, and investigate how readers engage with and are influenced by these gender representations.

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