This study focuses on children’s popular fairy tales which are indicated to carry gender issues in the elements of story building. This study aims to: (1) identify gender issues that are subtly aired through popular children’s fairy tales; and (2) know the role of parents in dealing with gender issues. This study applied a qualitative method using three popular children’s tales as a source of data, namely Putri Salju dan Tujuh Kurcaci, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, and Keong Mas. The results of the study indicate that several gender issues are subtly exhaled concerning gender bias which is not yet suitable for consumption by childhood. Therefore, the function of parents as guides and filters of children’s reading sources is very important so that they can make fairy tales as a means of character education and ignore the elements of the story that are not by their character education and character formation.

Abstract

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Kata Kunci

Gender Issues, Popular Children’s Fairy Tales
Background

In the midst of the current media literacy, fairy tales, both oral and written, are conventionally still widely used by parents and teachers from generation to generation as a means of educating children. They believe that the values conveyed are a positive aspect of constructing children's character. Unfortunately, people do not realize that what is considered positive actually contains elements that are not profitable. In the consumption of children's stories in the form of popular fairy tales, on the one hand, many things are considered appropriate as role models, on the other hand, they actually contain negative aspects.

For example, the depiction of characters in children's stories, a bad person is often stereotyped as an old witch, a crooked-nosed woman who dresses in black and carries a broomstick to fly. Sometimes, evil characters are symbolized by big, black, big-eyed people or other forms outside the normality (Foucault, 1978). Undarsmo (2012) explained that such stereotypes are a legacy of past discrimination that has been preserved until now. Witchcraft is a legacy of "hatred" towards European medieval women who were considered witches. Meanwhile, big black wide-eyed people are a form of discriminatory perspective against the "other" which is symbolized by these physical characteristics.

Continuous transfer of stories to children will construct their future mindset. Early childhood is a developmental stage that allows them to absorb information without adequate filters so as to record all aspects of what they see and hear. The opinion is one of the filters that parents must do to avoid ideological content that contradicts the principles of developing children's character. Many popular children's fairy tales are gender-oriented. Gender is defined as a social relation between different sexual orientations, explaining the relationships between men and women (Undarsmoro, 2012).

Three popular children's fairy tales that address gender issues are Putri Salju dan Tujuh Kurcaci (Snow White and the Seven Dwarves), Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, and Keong Mas. The Fairy Tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is a story written by The Brother Grimm in 1812 in a collection of their first edition entitled Grimms' Fairy Tales. This fairy tale has been popular throughout the world and is no stranger to Indonesian society. The work that tells the story of a stepmother who is always jealous of her daughter's beauty is often adapted to other forms of work such as: repeatedly being extracted into films with various versions from time to time, children's cartoons, theater performances, radio stories, and even illustrated stories. The spread of this fairy tale with various genres is an indicator of the popularity of the work.

The second work, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, is also very popular in Indonesia. This popular Indonesian Malay tale originating from Riau tells the story of two beautiful girls, half-siblings who have very different temperaments and a stepmother who is unfair and favoritism. Not inferior to the first story, this work has also been widely adapted into other media, so that it has become one of the most famous stories in this country.
The third story, Keong Mas, is a fairly well-known fairy tale among Indonesian children. This story from East Java tells the story of a beautiful princess who is cursed by an evil witch to become a snail. Not inferior to the two works above, the story of Keong Mas has also been adapted in various media and sticks to the hearts of readers.

Gender issues are gently breathed out through the three popular children's fairy tales above. The three stories identify women as the main characters, show social relations and explain the relationships between genders.

Gender is by definition seen as a characteristic that is related to the differentiation between masculinity and femininity based on the context which includes biological sex, gender-based social structures (such as gender roles) and / or gender identity (Udry, 1994; Haig, 2004; and Undarsmoro, et al., 2012). In other words, gender becomes a social relation between different sexual orientations, explaining the relationships between men and women.

The initial discussion on gender issues is biology as a determinant of gender roles. It's relatively easy to see that biology has an impact on gender. For example, how much a man may want to experience childbirth, the simple fact is that he cannot. From this fact it is easy to assume that biology is destiny and, therefore, women and men have certain irreversible roles in society, for example women are caretakers of houses and fires due to their reproductive roles and men are protectors and providers due to size and their relatively greater strength. However, before concluding that biology is destiny in terms of gender roles, it should be noted that not only do gender roles differ from culture to culture, but they also change over time in a particular culture. So, gender is not just a socialization of one's role, but also a part of identity and self-concept (Salem, 2011).

The relationship between men and women starts from their roles defined by society based on polarizing sexual stereotypes of masculinity-femininity. In a patriarchal society, women's interests are considered lower than men's. This power relationship takes many forms; starting from the classification of jobs according to sex and empowerment in social organizations, to the norms of femininity that are internalized in life. Patriarchal power rests on social meanings based on gender (Weedons, 1997).

So far there have been many studies related to gender issues and children's literature. In his research, Umami (2018) states that good children's literature has learning values that contain gender sensitive values so that children learn as early as possible to respect each other even though there are different genders who live side by side in society. Hidayah (2019) found that in modern fairy tales there are various mutants of character values from themes, characterizations, settings, plot, mandate, and points of view. Kurniawan & Asman (2019) state that folklore is a means to convey moral messages that function as a medium of entertainment, educational tools, social control, unifying, and environmental preservation.

Most of the studies show positive moral and character values contained in children's fairy tales without paying attention to extrinsic aspects. The binary
opposition above is often not realized as part of the overall discourse of the many scattered childhood stories. This research is based on the argument that children's fairy tales on the one hand contain noble character education values, have entertainment value, and can develop creativity, taste, and initiative. On the other hand, there are indications that there are unfavorable elements that are subtle that parents are not paying close attention to, especially gender issues, which contain less exemplary aspects.

Thus, this study aims to: (1) identify gender issues that are subtly exhaled through popular children's fairy tales; and (2) knowing the role of parents in dealing with gender issues.

Method

This study applies a qualitative method, namely a method that focuses on the quality of a particular activity that investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, and materials (Fraenkel, 2012). Children's fairy tales as a material represent conditions, views, and perspectives that contribute to the emergence of a concept capable of explaining human attitudes (Yin, 2011).

The object materials of this research are three popular children's tales entitled Putri Salju (Snow White and the Seven Dwarves), Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih, and Keong Mas. These three children's fairy tales deserve to be the object of research because they are seen from the level of popularity in the world of children and the indication of the gender issues they represent.

In qualitative research, researchers are a key instrument for managing data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and discourse (Moleong, 2003). Data collection is carried out in several steps. First, the researcher conducts discourse tracing on various texts as information to support the analysis work. Furthermore, identifying all texts, both dialogues and monologues, relating to gender issues. The analysis is continued to the stage of unraveling the text in order to find gender issues that have crept into popular children's fairy tales. In the final stage, the researcher provides a solution about the role of parents with all their understanding to be more careful in telling stories to children so that there is an awareness that mentoring is a major factor in transferring stories to children.

Result

Gender issues found in the three analyzed popular children's tales can be seen in several forms.

Women as Passive Characters and Naughty Characters

In the context of the three analyzed children's literature, it can be seen how female characters occupy certain symbolic spaces related to children's literature. Women are depicted as passive characters.

...Bawang Putih tidak pernah mengeluh nasib buruk yang harus dia hadapi. Dia selalu melayani ibu tiri dan saudara perempuannya dengan gembira (Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, 2019).

... Bawang Putih never complained of the bad luck she had to face. She always serves her stepmother and sister happily (Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, 2019).
Bawang Putih is depicted as a passive character. She accepted whatever was imposed on her. This resignation paved the way for the oppression of her siblings and stepmother. The passive female character is also depicted in the tale of Keong Mas.

"..."Tidak. aku tidak meracuninya. Sungguh! Tuduhan macam apa ini?" Candra Kirana membela diri.

..."Not. I didn't poison him. Really! What kind of accusation is this? " Candra Kirana defended herself. However, Candra Kirana's defense was in vain. Candra Kirana is still accused of wanting to kill King Kertamarta. In return, she was kicked out of work. Candra Kirana is very sad, now she is alone and has no one. She didn't know where to go. She walked along the coast with anxiousness (Muakhir, Keong Mas, 2013).

Candra Kirana is constructed as a weak woman. As the main character, she is not characterized as a person who is capable of thinking to be able to solve problems. Candra Kirana only surrendered to the fate that befell her. Putri Salju is also depicted as a passive character.


... "Whoever is not allowed to enter the house," said the dwarf angrily. "Good daughter, you must obey, you cannot leave the house. Not allowed to enter people into the house. All for your own safety." 

Putri Salju, who repeatedly gets hurt because of her sensitive feelings towards the distress of others (deep emotions) makes it minus the reason that someone in front of her is the incarnation of Queen Elvira who will harm her. This passivity, helplessness, and also Putri Salju's stupidity angered the Dwarves.

Female characters are also depicted as naughty and in need of exemplary character, like Dewi Galuh.

...Dewi Galuh lalu memfitnah Candra Kirana tanpa perasaan. Sewaktu Candra Kirana diminta Ayahanda Kertamarta membuat kopi, kopi yang dibuat Candra Kirana diberi sedikit racun tikus oleh Dewi Galuh. "Kamu apakan ayahanda?" teriak Dewi Galuh ketika tidak lama setelah meminum kopi yang dibuat Candra Kirana – Raja Kertamarta sesak napas, pingsan, dan...
Dewi Galuh then slandered Candra Kirana without feeling. When Candra Kirana was asked by Ayahanda Kertamarta to make coffee, the coffee made by Candra Kirana was given a little rat poison by Dewi Galuh.

"What are you doing with your father?" shouted Dewi Galuh when not long after drinking the coffee made by Candra Kirana - Raja Kertamarta was short of breath, fainted, and her mouth was full of foam (Muakhir, Keong Mas, 2013).

Not just naughty, Dewi Galuh is depicted as a female character who likes to slander her step sister, even getting rid of Candra Kirana, who she doesn't like. Even Dewi Galuh tried to get rid of Candra Kirana out of the palace and asked the witch's grandmother to turn her into a snail.

The naughty woman character is also shown by the character Bawang Merah.

...Bawang Merah is lazy, glamorous, proud, and jealous. Bawang Merah's bad personality was made worse because his mother spoiled him. His mother always gave him everything he wanted. Meanwhile, Bawang Putih did all the housework. Meanwhile, Bawang Merah and her mother only spend time for themselves, because when they need something, they can ask Bawang Putih (Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, 2019).

Bawang Merah is described as a lazy girl, who is always proud of herself. She spends a lot of time just to take care of their personal interests. She never wants to do housework. When she needed something, she told her step-brother, Bwawang Putih to do it. Bad character was also shown by the mother of Bawang Merah who supported her child's naughty actions. In short, it forms her to be worse character.

Queen Elvira is also shown as a woman who is cruel and sadistic.

"Tidaaaaaaak....!" Sang Ratu menjerit marah. “Beraninya pemburu itu menipuku, aku akan membunuhnya dengan tanganku sendiri.”


"Nooooo ...!" The Queen screamed angrily. "How dare the hunter trick me, I will kill him with my own hands."

Queen Elvira ordered her trusted soldiers to arrest the hunter and take him to the
palace to be killed but the hunter had left his home.
The Queen became more and more angry, her hatred towards Snow White grew even more intense. He plans to take revenge (Asmarandana, Snow White, 2016).

Queen Elvira is more cruel and sadistic of woman character among the stories. Because of his hatred for Putri Salju, she had ordered people to throw Putri Salju into the forest and order someone to kill him. After knowing that Putri Salju was still alive, Queen Elvira not only wanted to eliminate Putri Salju's life but also the Hunters she thought had been a traitor. This depiction of a cruel and sadistic woman weakens the position of women as gentle creatures and role models for children.

Based on the explanation above, female characters are imaged as beings who have deep emotions, are weak and unable to solve problems, are naughty, rude, and sadistic so they need exemplary in order to have better ethics. Such objectivity is very detrimental to women. This transfer will eventually form a negative mindset of children towards the image of women.

**Domestic Violence and Marginalization**

Violence colors the stories in three popular children's fairy tales. Domestic violence is violence committed by those who have kinship or marital relations even though it is carried out in the public sector (Sugihatuti, 2010). Violence usually leads victims to experience marginalization, which is a process of marginalization due to sex differences that results in poverty (Afandi, 2019). Violence against women leads them to the realm of helplessness and poverty. The domestic violence is shown in the following quotation:

...Meanwhile, Snow White is getting prettier every day. Angry Queen summoned a hunter. "Take Snow White into the forest," he ordered. "Kill him and bring his heart to me." (Asmarandana, Snow White, 2016).

Violence was carried out by Putri Salju's stepmother, someone who was supposed to replace her dead biological mother, who was supposed to protect Putri Salju like her own daughter. This domestic violence led to the marginalization of Putri Salju, namely exile in the Forest. Even during her life in the forest, Queen Elvira continued to commit domestic violence by making several assassination attempts.

This kind of violence also happened to Candra Kirana, which ultimately marginalized her life.

...They completely ignored the condition of Candra Kirana, who was swayed by the
sea waves. The poor daughter could not do anything, except hope that the waves would help bring her back to land (Muakhir, Keong Mas, 2013).

Candra Kirana was slandered and expelled from the palace. Outside the palace, her stepsister, Dewi Galuh, ordered an old witch to change her form into a snail. Life as a snail marginalized her position so that she had to live with a widow in a hut.

The violence perpetrated by Queen Elvira against Putri Salju and Dewi Galuh against Candra Kirana was physical violence that included domestic violence. Attacks against the character's physical and mental psychology were carried out by their closest family members, namely the stepmother and stepsister. Violence committed by women is no less terrible than violence of different genders. Whatever the form of violence, it will harm the sufferer. No human being is willing to endure pain as a result of physical or psychological violence.

Violence results in an experience of marginalization for the victims. Deprivation of life and freedom brought about by the idea of violence against women will plunge women into the impoverishing valley of helplessness. Candra Kirana, Snow White, and Bawang Putih live in economic constraints. Such limitations continue to render them helpless. Not able to meet their needs independently. So that their position is getting weaker and marginal. Therefore, this kind of gender issue is detrimental to the image of women.

Misogyny is women's hatred that is practiced on other women (Flood, et al, 2007). This hatred of women most often focuses on their bodies, objectifying and commodifying them and metonymy building women as body parts (Ackley, 1992; Jeffreys, 2005). The three analyzed works put misogyny as the driving force of the story.


...Since that incident, the Queen hated Snow White, a hatred that she could not contain. She used all the beauty tools, the most expensive and rare powder she had tried, but all of it seemed to no avail. Meanwhile, Snow White is getting prettier every day. Angry Queen summoned a hunter. "Take Snow White into the Forest," he ordered. "Kill him and bring his heart to me." (Asmarandana, Snow White, 2016).

In this part we are no longer talking about the struggle and contestation between men and women in domestic positions. Women themselves oppressed and did oppression toward other women. Women who should strive together to achieve whatever is their struggle, instead foster a sense of jealousy
Jealousy also colored Dewi Galuh's feelings which later became her reason for attacking Candra Kirana. Jealousy made him give up his personality as a member of the Candra Kirana family. The love he should have instilled in Candra Kirana was eroded into an extraordinary sense of hatred. As a result, violence against other women occurred.

Such cases of violence and hatred also occur in the story line of Bawang Merah Bawang Putih.

Bawang Putih is often cruelly forced to clean up domestic work and finish other heavy jobs. Her mother and stepsister didn't do anything. They are just lazing around. Bawang Putih is also always an outlet for their anger and unfair treatment. The domination of the two antagonists is a form of exploitation of the main character who is also classified as the implementation of misogyny in the story.

**Beauty as Social Capital**

Social capital is a person's social assets such as education, intelligence, speech style, clothing, and others that promote social mobility in the stratification of society (Bourdieu, 1990; Barker, 2004). Cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge that gives status and power because people consider it valuable. The
three tales analyzed put beauty as the cultural capital of the main character.

The main characters who are women in children's fairy tales are described as beautiful girls. First, Candra Kirana is described as the following physical description:

...Candra Kirana selain cantik, budi pekertinya baik, perasaannya halus, dan hatinya lembut. Oleh karena itu, dia akan dijadikan pendamping putra mahkota Kerajaan Kahuripan, bernama Raden Inu Kertapati yang bijaksana (Muakhir, Keong Mas, 2013).

... Candra Kirana apart from being beautiful, has good character, soft feelings, and soft heart. Therefore, he will be made a companion to the crown prince of the Kahuripan Kingdom, the wise Raden Inu Kertapati (Muakhir, Keong Mas, 2013).

Then, Putri Salju is also described as a such beautiful girl.


This time the mirror gave another answer. "O, Queen Snow White is the most beautiful woman in the world!" (Asmarandana, Putri Salju, 2016).

Bawang Putih as main character of the story is also described as a beautiful girl.

Di sebuah desa, hiduplah seorang janda dengan dua putrinya yang cantik, Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih (Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, 2018).

In a village, there lived a widow with her two beautiful daughters, Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih (Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, 2018).

The three female characters in the children's fairy tale are described as passive characters. They waited for the prince to come as savior. Their only bargaining value is kindness and ability or good skill to do domestic activities. The beauty they have is really a social capital because in the eyes of society, especially men, beauty is the most valuable thing for a woman, even the scales beat intelligence and other qualities.

Roles of Parents in Children’s Reading Consumption

It is clear that parents must have a big share in the process of transferring the values conveyed by popular children's fairy tales. Before the child consumes and reproduces the values conveyed by the story, parents should take preventive action by dismantling messages that are sometimes dilemma (containing positive and negative values for the child). Thus, parents can direct their children to positive values that can be learned in a story so that indirectly the parents have directed their children to be creative and have the character expected by the education system in our country.

Parents must also guide children's education through the reading of these tales so that they can emulate exemplary values. So that their reading experience can become a phase where they produce positive character values in order to achieve educational goals, namely reading
children's fairy tales as a means of their character education.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that there are several gender issues that are subtly exhaled by three popular children's tales, namely issues that tend to weaken the position of women. Therefore, parents must become filters and also guide the process of reading and reproducing stories to children so that they can emulate exemplary values, as the result, children's stories can act as a means of character education for children properly.

Children's fairy tales are very interesting and have positive values in plain view from the intrinsic side, but at the extrinsic level which is part of the story contains an ideology that blends with the story. This is where the carefulness of parents is needed in order to sort out the values that are appropriate for children to consume as the nation's next generation.

The result of this research is really different form the previous studies conducted by some researchers where they only focused the research on the positive values, especially positive characters in children stories without figure out opposite ideology conveyed by the stories.

Ratih (2019) argued that children literature can transform important values to children because it contains meaningful and highly relevant to the students' development stage. Then, Ganjarjati (2019) also supported Ratih’s research on exploration of positive values of children literature. She said that children stories as beginning stage of character education. In addition, Halfian (2019) also explored character values in traditional fairy tales.

It is true that Putri Salju dan Tujuh Kurcaci, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, and Keong Mas mostly convey good educational values for children; and they can be a beginning stages for character education as the previous researchers said. However, the roles of parents are important to select other kinds of values or ideologies that blend to the stories. Therefore, the novelty of this reseach lies on its different view points of previous studies.

For the last remark, it is important for parents as filter and guide for the children not to take for granted of all children’s stories. They should analyze the children reading materials before convey them to children. Remember that the stories are like two sides of the coin that contain positive and negative values.

Conclusion

It turns out that children's fairy tales, which have been used as a means of character education, parents and teachers are more inclined towards intrinsic understanding so that children's fairy tale learning is only limited to entertainment and the introduction of character values conveyed through intrinsic elements only. Meanwhile, extrinsic elements are not paid enough attention so that parents or teachers are less observant in seeing certain ideologies that are brought out by children's fairy tales.

Gender issues that are subtly implanted in the children's stories which are continuously reproduced by the children will form a certain ideology in the children if not accompanied by parental guidance
and filters. With direction from parents, children can leave issues that they are not fit to consume so that elements that are not in accordance with the value of character education can be ignored.

The ability of parents to direct their children to the valuable knowledge conveyed by children's fairy tales will be their provision in developing a better personality to make truly intelligent and dignified generations of the nation.

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