



Honor Culture and Body Politics in *Mimpi Gadis*

Pasir: An Existentialist Feminist Reading

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-03-24 Revised: 2026 03-31 Accepted: 2026 06-01 Keywords: Body Politics; Existentialist Feminism; Honor Culture; Gender Injustice; Madurese Women DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.9986 Corresponding Author: Rina Khuzaimah Basri rinakhuzaimah.s22024@student.unm.ac.id Master's Program in Language Education, Makassar State University, South Sulawesi	<i>This study examines gender injustice in the short story collection <i>Mimpi Gadis Pasir</i> through Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective, especially the concept of the Other. Using a qualitative approach and textual analysis, this study explores how honor culture (<i>bhâghus</i>) shapes the representation of women in the text. The findings show that gender injustice is constructed through four interconnected dimensions: body politics, moral stigmatization, structural subordination, and violence. These dimensions work together in positioning women as the Other, whose identities are defined by social norms and male authority. Among these dimensions, control over women's bodies, especially in relation to reproduction and morality, emerges as the main mechanism sustaining patriarchal dominance. Unlike previous studies that mainly view honor culture as a form of social control, this study argues that, in literary representation, honor culture also functions as a symbolic structure that shapes women's existential condition. These findings indicate that <i>Mimpi Gadis Pasir</i> not only portrays gender injustice, but also offers a critical reflection on patriarchal cultural structures.</i>

1. Introduction

Gender inequality against women remains a structural issue in both private and public spheres. In Indonesia, the annual report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women reported more than 330,000 cases of gender-based violence in the past year (Komnas Perempuan, 2024). These data indicate that patriarchal power relations continue to operate systematically in social life. Gender

inequality appears not only in the form of physical or legal violence, but also through sociocultural mechanisms that regulate women's bodies, morality, and freedom in everyday life. In many communities, women's bodies are understood not merely as biological entities, but also as symbols of honor and family dignity.

To understand how such inequality is produced and maintained, this study employs an existentialist feminist perspective. Simone de Beauvoir argues that women are constructed as *the Other*, meaning that they are positioned as secondary in relation to men as the normative subject (Beauvoir, 1949/2011). Within this framework, *immanence* refers to a condition in which women are confined to fixed and subordinate roles, thereby limiting their self-actualization. In contrast, *transcendence* refers to the possibility of going beyond such limitations and becoming free subjects. From this perspective, gender injustice is not only social, but also existential.

Within this framework, body politics becomes an important way of understanding how power operates over women. Women's bodies are often subjected to moral control based on cultural values. Body politics refers to the ways women's bodies are regulated and given meaning through cultural values, moral expectations, and social institutions. International studies have shown that body politics functions as a regulatory arena legitimized by cultural norms, religion, and social institutions (Abu-Lughod, 2011; Lomazzi, 2023). In honor-based societies, women's behavior is judged not only at the individual level, but also in relation to the reputation of the family and the community (Vignoles et al., 2024; Uskul et al., 2024). This suggests that women's subordination is institutionalized within a broader and more complex social value system.

While these studies explain how women's bodies are regulated in social life, similar dynamics also need to be examined in literary representation. In the field of Indonesian literary feminism, various studies have explored the marginalization, stereotyping, subordination, and resistance of women through literary criticism (Endraswara, 2014; Fakihi, 2013). However, most of these studies remain descriptive in nature and have not yet systematically linked such issues to local cultural value systems that shape women's lived social experiences.

One local cultural context in which these mechanisms become especially visible is Madurese society. In this context, *bhâghus* may be understood as a local value associated with honor, propriety, and family dignity (Wiyata, 2020; Rozaki, 2004). This value has direct implications for the control of women's bodies and behavior. Within this system, women are positioned as symbolic representations of family dignity, so their space for *transcendence* is limited by social and cultural authority. Thus, the concept of *immanence* in existentialist feminism takes on a more specific cultural form within Madurese honor culture.

Based on this context, the research gap can be stated more clearly. Previous studies have mainly focused on gender injustice in descriptive terms, such as marginalization, stigma, subordination, and violence. Other studies on honor

culture have generally treated it as a form of social control in everyday life. However, these studies have not explicitly integrated Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism with local honor culture in the analysis of literary texts. This study addresses that gap by bringing together the concepts of *the Other*, *immanence*, and *transcendence* with the Madurese cultural value of *bhâghus*.

This gap becomes especially important when examining contemporary literary works such as *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* by Aurelya Dinda Pratiwi. The text provides rich narrative material for analyzing gender relations within the complexities of honor culture. This work also allows an analysis of how women are constructed as *the Other* and how their space for *transcendence* is constrained by communal value structures.

A number of previous studies have shown that honor culture functions as a mechanism of social control over women (Lomazzi, 2023; Grip & Dynevall, 2023). However, these studies tend to treat the phenomenon mainly as an empirical social practice and do not examine its symbolic representation in literary texts. Unlike previous research, this study positions honor culture as a symbolic structure that operates within the existential construction of women.

Given this gap, this study addresses the following question: How is gender injustice against Madurese women represented in the short story collection *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* by Aurelya Dinda Pratiwi? This study aims to analyze the representation of gender injustice through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism and to relate that analysis to Madurese honor culture. This study contributes by contextualizing existentialist feminism within the local value system of *bhâghus* and by expanding the application of existentialist theory in Indonesian feminist literary studies. Its novelty lies in interpreting honor culture as an ideological mechanism that controls women's bodies, shapes moral stigma, reinforces subordination, and legitimizes violence.

2. Method

This study is based on a descriptive-interpretive qualitative design using a text analysis approach within the framework of feminist literary criticism. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to interpret representations of gender injustice in literary texts rather than to test quantitative hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study is grounded in the assumption that literary texts function as sites where social meanings and power relations are constructed and represented.

The analysis used Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/2011) existentialist feminist framework, particularly the concepts of *the Other*, *immanence*, and *transcendence*. These concepts were used as interpretive tools to examine how women are positioned within patriarchal and honor-based relations. This framework was used alongside the concept of honor culture, especially the value of *bhâghus* in Madurese society (Wiyata, 2020; Rozaki, 2004), to explain how local cultural values shape the

representation of gender injustice in the text.

The data source was the short story collection *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* by Aurelya Dinda Pratiwi (Pratiwi, 2024). All short stories in the collection were used as the research corpus. The units of analysis consisted of narrative excerpts, dialogues, and event descriptions representing gender injustice against Madurese women, particularly in relation to body politics, honor-based stigmatization, subordination, and violence.

Data were collected through close reading, involving repeated, intensive, and critical reading of the text to identify passages relevant to the research focus (Endraswara, 2014). In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument responsible for selecting, coding, categorizing, and interpreting the data.

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, relevant excerpts were selected through repeated close reading. Second, each excerpt was coded according to the dominant form of gender injustice represented in the text. Third, the coded data were grouped into broader analytical categories. Fourth, the grouped data were interpreted using Beauvoir's concepts of *the Other*, *immanence*, and *transcendence* in relation to Madurese honor culture.

The coding process was carried out manually. Excerpts related to reproductive control, bodily regulation, or forced reproductive expectations were coded as body politics. Excerpts containing moral labeling, shame, or honor-based judgment were coded as stigmatization. Passages showing restrictions on women's autonomy, access to resources, or decision-making were coded as subordination. Excerpts describing physical harm, threats, humiliation, intimidation, or emotional abuse were coded as violence. When one excerpt reflected more than one issue, it was classified under the most dominant category to maintain analytical clarity.

The coded data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Selected quotations were reduced to those most relevant to the research focus, then organized into analytical categories to identify recurring patterns, and finally interpreted to explain how the text represents women's existential position within patriarchal and honor-based structures.

To strengthen validity, this study applied theoretical triangulation, reflexivity, and an audit trail. Theoretical triangulation was used by relating textual evidence to Beauvoir's existentialist feminism and to the cultural framework of Madurese honor values. Reflexivity was maintained by continuously reflecting on the researcher's interpretive position, theoretical assumptions, and possible bias throughout the reading, coding, and interpretation process. An audit trail was also maintained through notes on coding decisions, category development, and interpretive reasoning to support analytical transparency.

This study is limited to a single literary work and one primary theoretical framework. Therefore, its findings are contextual and are not intended for broad

generalization. Nevertheless, this approach allows an in-depth exploration of gender injustice in literary representation and offers a conceptual contribution to feminist literary studies rooted in local culture.

3. Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings on the representation of gender injustice against Madurese women in the short story collection *Mimpi Gadis Pasir*. Based on close reading, the data were classified into four main categories: body politics and reproductive control, honor-based moral stigmatization, social and economic subordination, and physical and psychological violence. Taken together, these findings show that gender injustice in the text operates through interconnected mechanisms that regulate women's bodies, social roles, and voices.

3.1 The Politics of the Body and Reproductive Control

The first category shows that women's bodies, especially in relation to reproduction, are represented not as autonomous entities but as objects of patriarchal control.

Data 1

"As a man, he felt he had only succeeded in establishing a household once he had a child..."

(p. 16, The Collapse of Prayer and Sin in Buju' Tamoni)

This excerpt shows that male success is linked to the presence of offspring. Reproduction is represented as a marker of masculine achievement, while the woman's body becomes the medium through which that achievement is affirmed.

Data 2

"Would it be better if I asked my wife to have an abortion before her belly gets any bigger? I'll ask for your help to..."

(p. 20, The Collapse of Prayer and Sin in Buju' Tamoni)

This excerpt indicates that reproductive decisions are placed under male control. Although the woman is directly affected by the decision, authority over her pregnancy is represented as belonging to others.

Data 3

"Because I always gave birth to girls... he slit my belly with a dagger..."

(p. 41, The Viral Womb)

This passage shows extreme violence against a pregnant woman's body. The female body is represented as vulnerable to punishment when it fails to meet patriarchal expectations, especially those related to childbirth and gender preference.

Data 4

“Rustam forced Arum to have an abortion...”

(p. 58, *God’s Path for Rustam*)

This quotation reflects coercive control over women’s reproductive choices. Reproduction is represented not as a personal matter, but as a domain governed by male authority.

These findings show that reproductive control is a central mechanism of gender injustice in *Mimpi Gadis Pasir*. Women’s bodies are repeatedly represented as objects regulated by male interests, family expectations, and patriarchal authority.

3.2 Moral Stigmatization and the Culture of Honor

The second category shows that women are controlled not only through the body, but also through moral judgment linked to family and community honor.

Data 5

“What will the family and neighbors say? Tang bine la atengka!”

(p. 19, *The Collapse of Prayer and Sin in Buju’ Tamoni*)

This excerpt shows social surveillance directed at women. A woman’s conduct is represented as something constantly monitored through the anticipated judgment of others.

Data 6

“Your family really has no shame... Who will carry on taking care of your rice fields and cattle if not your own descendants?”

(p. 24, *Mimpi Gadis Pasir*)

This quotation reflects moral labeling that extends beyond the individual woman to the family. The woman’s condition becomes a source of collective shame, showing how female identity is tied to social expectations of honor.

Data 7

“Rustam shouted, ‘Adulterers must leave this village!’...”

(p. 62, *God’s Path for Rustam*)

This passage reveals social sanctions in the form of expulsion. Women who are judged to violate moral norms are represented as threats to community order and are therefore excluded.

Data 8

“Women move from being pure to being impure...”

(p. 63, God’s Path for Rustam)

This excerpt shows that women’s bodies are moralized through categories of purity and impurity. Biological conditions are not treated neutrally, but are turned into markers of moral value.

These findings indicate that honor culture functions as a disciplinary force in the text. Women are judged not only as individuals, but also as bearers of collective dignity, making moral stigmatization a key mechanism of control.

3.3 Social and Economic Subordination

The third category shows that women’s inequality is also represented through restricted access to property, decision-making, and public authority.

Data 9

“Then, why did your husband leave you and go off on his own to become a digger?... ‘More accurately, I was driven out. I was forced to leave without taking anything with me.’”

(p. 4, The Digger Woman)

This quotation shows women’s loss of economic rights. The woman is expelled without property or resources, suggesting an unequal position within structures of ownership and material access.

Data 10

“Mosque funds that aren’t distributed... financial reports are handled by men, but the burden of social work falls on women...”

(pp. 10–12, The Female Miner)

This excerpt shows male dominance in public and institutional affairs. Men manage formal authority, while women bear social responsibilities without equal decision-making power.

Data 11

“Ustaz Suli believes women need a husband as a protector...”

(p. 6, The Female Miner)

This quotation reflects an ideology of dependency. Women are represented as naturally needing male protection, which normalizes their subordinate position.

These findings show that subordination in the text is not only symbolic but also structural. Women are limited in access to resources, public roles, and social authority, reinforcing their dependence on patriarchal structures.

3.4 Physical and Psychological Violence

The fourth category shows that women are also controlled through direct violence, victim blaming, and the delegitimization of their voices.

Data 12

“Sometimes, he would deliberately scold and slap his wife’s cheeks until they turned red”

(p. 16, *The Collapse of Prayer and Sin in Buju’ Tamoni*)

This excerpt shows domestic violence as a form of direct control over women’s bodies. Violence is represented as part of the power relation within the household.

Data 13

“The police said, ‘You deliberately defamed your husband...’”

(pp. 44–45, *The Viral Womb*)

This quotation reflects victim blaming. Rather than recognizing the woman’s suffering, institutional authority turns her into the source of the problem.

Data 14

“Were you influenced by others to share your story on social media...?”

(pp. 45–46, *The Viral Womb*)

This excerpt shows the delegitimization of women’s rationality and voice. A woman’s account is treated with suspicion, as if she cannot speak from her own experience.

These findings suggest that violence in *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* works not only through physical assault, but also through psychological pressure and institutional invalidation. Violence therefore becomes another important mechanism through which women are controlled.

4. Discussion

The findings show that gender injustice in *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* operates through interconnected rather than isolated forms. Body politics, moral stigmatization, structural subordination, and violence reinforce one another in constructing women as secondary beings within patriarchal and honor-based relations. In this sense, the text does not merely portray individual suffering, but reveals a broader ideological structure that regulates women’s bodies, identities, and possibilities for agency.

4.1 Honor Culture as an Ideological Structure of Othering

The first important implication of these findings is that honor culture functions as an ideological structure of Othering. In the text, women are not judged

primarily as autonomous persons, but as symbolic bearers of family and community dignity. Their value depends on conformity to social norms, public reputation, and collective morality.

This pattern is closely related to Beauvoir's concept of *the Other*. Women are positioned through external definitions rather than through self-determined subjectivity. Their identities are shaped by the expectations of family, neighbors, and community institutions, which means that social recognition is conditional rather than inherent. In this context, *bhâghus* is not merely an ethical value, but a mechanism through which patriarchal authority is naturalized and enforced.

These findings support previous studies showing that honor culture regulates women through moral surveillance and social sanction. However, this study extends those findings by showing that, in literary representation, honor culture also works symbolically and existentially. It shapes not only social behavior, but also the very position from which women are allowed to exist and be recognized.

4.2 The Politics of the Body and the Reduction of Women to Immanence

If honor culture provides the moral framework of control, the next dimension shows how that control becomes material through the body. The findings demonstrate that the female body, especially the womb, is treated as the primary site where patriarchal authority is exercised. Reproduction is repeatedly linked to male success, family continuity, and social legitimacy.

From Beauvoir's perspective, this condition reflects women's confinement to *immanence*. The body is not represented as a site of freedom, but as a space regulated by others. Forced abortion, reproductive coercion, and violence against pregnant women all indicate that women's bodily existence is defined by external interests rather than personal autonomy.

This section is especially significant because it shows that the politics of the body is not only a matter of biological control, but also a symbolic process that reduces women to repetitive and instrumental roles. As a result, women are prevented from defining themselves beyond reproductive expectations. In this study, body politics therefore emerges as the most dominant mechanism through which women are positioned as *the Other*.

4.3 Structural Subordination and the Inhibition of Transcendence

Beyond the body, the text also shows that patriarchal domination is sustained through structural subordination. Women are denied equal access to property, excluded from institutional authority, and represented as dependent on male protection. These conditions make inequality appear normal and socially acceptable.

This dimension is significant because Beauvoir's idea of *transcendence* requires access to freedom, action, and self-determination. Such freedom cannot be separated from material and social conditions. When women are excluded from

property, public decision-making, and authority over their own lives, their possibility for *transcendence* is restricted.

The text therefore presents dependence not as a natural feminine condition, but as a structured outcome of patriarchal relations. Protection becomes a language that disguises domination, while unequal access to resources keeps women in a subordinate position. In this way, the findings show that gender injustice is not confined to symbolic humiliation, but is embedded in broader social and economic arrangements.

4.4 Violence as an Existential Disciplinary Mechanism

The final dimension shows how patriarchal order is maintained through violence. Physical assault, victim blaming, and the questioning of women's rationality all function as disciplinary mechanisms. Violence in the text is not incidental; it is part of the process that ensures women remain compliant with patriarchal and honor-based expectations.

Here Beauvoir's framework helps clarify that violence is not only about bodily harm. It is also about denying women's legitimacy as speaking and knowing subjects. When a woman is not believed, blamed for her own suffering, or treated as incapable of speaking independently, her existential authority is undermined. She is not only injured, but also denied recognition as a subject.

This point deepens the broader argument of the study. Violence becomes the mechanism that stabilizes the entire patriarchal structure. Honor culture provides moral justification, body politics regulates the female body, structural subordination limits women's agency, and violence enforces the system when women resist or fail to conform. Taken together, these four dimensions show that gender injustice in *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* is represented as an interconnected structure of domination that confines women to *immanence* and limits their possibility for *transcendence*.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that gender injustice in *Mimpi Gadis Pasir* is represented not as isolated incidents, but as an interconnected structure shaped by honor culture. Through body politics, moral stigmatization, structural subordination, and violence, the text positions women as *the Other*, whose identities are defined by patriarchal norms and external authority. Among these dimensions, control over women's bodies, especially in relation to reproduction and morality, emerges as the most central mechanism of domination.

Within Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework, these findings show that women in the text are repeatedly confined to *immanence*, while their possibility for *transcendence* is systematically restricted. Honor culture does

not function merely as social control, but also as a symbolic structure that shapes women's existential condition. In this sense, the study extends previous discussions of honor culture by showing how it operates in literary representation as both an ideological and existential mechanism.

This study is limited to a single literary work and one primary theoretical framework, so its findings are contextual rather than broadly generalizable. Nevertheless, the study contributes to Indonesian feminist literary scholarship by contextualizing existentialist feminism within a local cultural framework. Future research may expand the corpus, compare other literary texts, or integrate additional approaches such as intersectional feminism or postcolonial theory to deepen the analysis of gender injustice in culturally specific contexts.

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