



Gender Construction in Original Netflix Film: A Representation Study

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Abstract

Although the movement for gender equality has been present in many communities, gender is still a vulnerable issue due to the many phenomena of inequality in a global society. This study aims to explain the construction of gender represented in global films produced by Netflix in 2021-2022. The films are *Kingdom: Ashin of The North* (South Korea), *Don't Look Up* (USA), *I am All Girls* (South Africa), *A World Without* (Indonesia), *Santinelle* (French), and *The Weekend Away* (USA). By using Stuart Hall's representation theory, all these films are investigated to reveal the global gender construction. The representation theory utilizes language as the main medium in interpreting the meaning contained in films. There are three steps of representation in analyzing data, namely decoding, encoding, and myth analysis. Decoding and encoding are the steps for finding meaning through denotation and connotation as represented in the film, while myth is the broad meaning related to the cultural meaning. The results show that from the decoding and encoding steps, Original Netflix films have almost the same pattern. It depicts a narrative of women's resilience in the face of oppression and injustice, highlighting the intersections of racial and social class discrimination. The film challenges traditional gender roles, affirms the fluidity of gender performativity, and works to dismantle entrenched patriarchal structures within society. The finding indicates that certain films may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes or offer superficial representations, particularly concerning traditional masculinity and male characters. The myth of patriarchy is still perpetuated even though there are many problems of injustice and oppression, especially for women. This myth is also reinforced and practiced by the female characters in the film. This is due to the tug-of-war relationship between voicing equality and commercial interests.

Keywords

Film and Language; Gender Construction; Representation; Original Netflix Film



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Конструирование гендера в оригинальных фильмах Netflix: исследование репрезентации

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Аннотация

Несмотря на активное движение за равноправие, вопросы, связанные с гендером, остаются актуальными из-за множества проявлений социальной несправедливости. Цель исследования – анализ того, как гендер представлен в глобальных фильмах Netflix, выпущенных в 2021–2022 годах. В выборку вошли: «Королевство: Ашин из Севера» (Южная Корея), «Не смотрите наверх» (США), «Я – все девушки» (Южная Африка), «Мир без мужчин» (Индонезия), «Сантинель» (Франция) и «Уикенд вдали» (США). Исследование основано на теории репрезентации Стюарта Холла, которая рассматривает язык как ключевой инструмент для интерпретации культурных смыслов. Анализ проводится в три этапа: декодирование, кодирование и мифологический разбор. Декодирование и кодирование позволяют определить значения через анализ денотаций и коннотаций, представленных в фильмах. Мифологический подход помогает выявить более глубокие культурные контексты. Результаты показывают, что оригинальные фильмы Netflix демонстрируют схожие паттерны: изображают борьбу женщин с угнетением и несправедливостью, освещают дискриминацию по расовым и социальным признакам, утверждают перформативность гендера и ставят под сомнение патриархальные нормы. Тем не менее, некоторые картины непреднамеренно укрепляют стереотипы или предлагают поверхностные интерпретации, особенно в отношении традиционных представлений о мужественности. Патриархальные установки сохраняют своё влияние, несмотря на обсуждаемые в фильмах проблемы неравенства и угнетения. Более того, героини часто воспроизводят эти установки, что связано с противоречием между стремлением к равенству и коммерческими интересами.

Ключевые слова

фильмы и язык; конструирование гендера; репрезентация; оригинальные фильмы Netflix



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Introduction

Despite widespread efforts to advocate for gender equality in various communities, gender remains a sensitive and pressing issue, largely due to the persistence of inequalities in societies around the world. For example, these are issues of the Taliban prohibiting women from being actively involved in the public sphere or education, Poland recently prohibiting abortion, Hungary prohibiting non-heterosexual forms from being displayed in public, and rape and sexual abuse by religious figures taking place in Indonesia. Even in America itself, there are still many phenomena of gender inequality such as the emergence of the #metoo movement and Black Lives Matter which was then followed by various global activists such as in South Korea and recently in Japan. These facts show that the principles of gender equality on the one hand are strengthened and agreed upon by various elements of society with many voices and resistance to gender injustice, especially from activists and feminists, but on the other hand, gender is still the main axis that produces various type of violence.

The term gender itself first appeared intended to describe the social role of sex (Habelstam, 2014). Gender is a term formulated for the differences between sex (male and female) and social roles (masculinity and femininity) and to denote the discontinuity that often occurs between sex and roles. Therefore, the study of gender is always associated with identities constructed by culture. Caro, et al. (2003) define gender as an attribute of economic, political, social, and cultural activities as well as various opportunities that can be obtained by women and men. Gender is a social definition of being a woman or being a man based on culture, and its nature can change or be dynamic. Gender is a socio-cultural expression of certain roles, associated with certain groups or individuals which refers to sex and sexuality, and it is a dynamic construction.

In another aspect, gender is defined as a characteristic possessed by a person due to iteration and “performativity” (Sears, 1996). Judith Butler explains that performativity is the institutionalization of actions resulting from the repetition of an action (Butler, 1988). Gender can be rewritten by emphasizing its facticity, prioritizing its construction rather than its existence. Therefore, gender is understood as a dynamic identity, not something that it is but what it does. Gender is physical, that is, action or sequence of actions. Gender is also said to be a ‘citation’ practice in which gender is not only reaffirmed but also cites the norms of masculinity and femininity that present the authority of gender and its meaning; gender is repetition and copy of imitation (Butler, 1988; 1993). A man or woman who does gender, not only confirms their identity but also engages in the practice of calling for conventions that refer to heterosexual laws. Gender is not something that is bound by the essential qualities of sex biologically, but it is an action that grows, strengthens, and is strengthened by norms in society. Gender and sex are not two different things, they exist together because of social construction. Gender is



a variety of actions that then give birth to the idea of gender and without these actions, the concept of gender will never exist (Butler, 1990). Therefore, the definition of gender emphasizes that gender is a social construction that categorizes humans into differences; gender is not a constant thing but it is a continuous process to define sociocultural identity as an interpretation and expression of groups or individuals. Gender is also a discursive category such as social class or race, which are influenced by human life experiences in interacting with the environment, the world of work, family, and other environments.

The film industry often uses popular issues such as gender as the theme of the story so that film becomes a cultural product that is dominant and much liked by the wider community. Therefore, the role of film in society, according to Simonton (2004) is as of a picture of cultural behavior related to gender roles, norms, attitudes, and expectations of society. A film can be regarded as a fantasy world created as a cultural reflection, including a reflection of gender ideology in society. Therefore, films become material objects that are worthy of being used as a source of study considering that films are not merely the result of fiction, but also a reflection of reality (Adi, 2011). This makes sense considering that film is an instrument that at least reflects the cultural conditions of society and is always actively related to changes in the social, political, and cultural context in which the film is produced so that the film can be successful in the market. Therefore, researching films makes it possible to explain the relationship between media and culture. According to Sobchack (1980), media and culture are two things that are significantly related and cannot be separated from each other. The film is one of the main documents in interpreting history and culture.

The interactional relation between film and gender context is always complex and full of conflict. Therefore, this study chose film as a medium to portray gender discourse that is happening globally in this digital era platform because the film is an ideal medium that can be used as a window to understanding how gender continues to change in this contemporary culture. Hunter (1991) states that institutions such as film and television actively define reality, shape the times, and give meaning to the history we witness and experience as ordinary citizens. Films reflect people's daily lives and also provide other alternatives for people to fulfill their daily needs. In addition, films become a source of communal information about human behavior that can be accepted or rejected. In line with Hunter's opinion, Feasley (2008), stated that studying films can present and emphasize the background of the social construction that accompanies it. Bainbridge (2005) states that from a contemporary perspective, film currently provides a gap to open a new counter-hegemonic space that has the potential to form a fluid and less defensive masculinity. It is different from the 70s or 90s era. Therefore, film potentially constructs new perspective on gender along with the development of human culture today and it is crucial to study contemporary film. Mazierska & Năripea (2014) emphasize that, despite being set in different sociopolitical situations and



modes of expression, films depict problematic gender relations and identities, which seem to call into question heteropatrial norms and represent inequality.

Netflix as a worldwide film market is a strategic platform to examine the various gender issues in the world. This is because Netflix is a digital platform that provides content without geographic boundaries. Netflix builds a multicultural ecosystem by popularizing and even producing films from various countries, not only American films but films from across countries. Netflix is a meeting place for the convergence of world cultures so the pattern of interaction, according to Ritzer (1998) has a context-less character, namely a pattern of intercultural communication that appears anywhere and anytime regardless of time and place. Through the films produced by Netflix, the global community can easily interact with each other, learn from each other, and influence each other.

Research on gender in films has been widely studied. It rose sharply at the end of this decade, and most studies linking film with Freudian or Lacanian theory then experienced the development of perspective toward feminist theory and queer theory (Butters, 2014). Research conducted by Yates (2007), Cohan and Hark (1993), Lehman (1993, (2001), Connell (2009), Greven (2009), Rehling (2009), Grant (2007), Kord and Krimmer (2011), Alberti (2013), and Shary (2013), Gherovici (2017), Giannini & Minervini, (2017), McDonald (2018), Puspitawati (2019), Heise et al., (2019), Carleton (2021), with various approaches and methods in exploring film and gender can provide a socio-cultural understanding of gender construction amid the dynamics and development of human culture.

A comprehensive literature review on the representation of gender in Original Netflix content highlights several significant themes and findings. Netflix's model of content production and distribution has allowed for a diverse array of narratives and character types, which has led to more nuanced portrayals of gender compared to traditional broadcasting. Scholars have noted that this platform provides increased visibility for underrepresented genders and more complex portrayals of female characters, offering them greater agency than typically seen in prior media formats.

One key aspect identified in the literature is the intersectionality of gender with other identities, including race, sexuality, and class. Studies have often cited shows like "Orange is the New Black" and "Sex Education" as examples of Netflix Originals that successfully explore these intersections, thereby offering a broader commentary on societal norms and challenges. These series are recognized for their diverse casts and storylines, which reflect a commitment to representing the multifaceted nature of identity and gender (Jenner, 2016).

Moreover, the impact of gender representation on audience perceptions and societal attitudes has been a growing area of interest. Research indicates that positive and diverse gender portrayals in media can influence viewers' understanding of gender roles, potentially fostering more progressive views on gender equality. However, critiques persist regarding the portrayal of gender in some Netflix Originals.



nals. Certain series may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes or offer superficial representations, particularly concerning traditional masculinity and male characters. This tension between progressive storytelling and the need for commercial appeal remains a complex issue (Adhikari, et al., 2015; Alborno & García Leiva, 2022).

The global reach of Netflix further complicates the representation of gender, as cultural contexts play a significant role in shaping these portrayals. The literature suggests that international Netflix Originals provide unique perspectives on gender that are informed by local societal norms and challenges. For instance, the diversity of content in Netflix Originals in Spain highlights the influence of regional cultural contexts on gender representation (Afilipoaie, et al., 2021). This global diversity contributes to a richer, more varied landscape of gender portrayals in media.

Additionally, Netflix's approach to content distribution, including strategies around dubbing and subtitles, has implications for the representation of gender and cultural identities. As Netflix disrupts traditional dubbing practices by using accents for character differentiation, this further complicates how gender and cultural identities are perceived across different linguistic contexts, (Pilipets, 2019; Hayes, 2021)

Overall, while Netflix has made considerable progress in representing gender more inclusively and diversely, the ongoing critical analysis is essential. Such scrutiny will help to understand the implications of these portrayals and push for continued advancements in gender representation in media. The literature underscores the need for a nuanced approach that considers both the potential and limitations of such portrayals in shaping societal attitudes towards gender.

Method

This research is qualitative because it focuses on exposing the meaning of social phenomena. According to Strauss and Corbin (2014), qualitative research is more interested in understanding human life experiences, revealing meaning and social phenomena, uncovering new concepts, and developing new theories. In the analysis of a film, many aspects must be the concern of researchers such as pictures, actors' movements, gestures, language expressions, colors, lights, settings, and so on. Therefore, to interpret the aspects of the film, this study uses Stuart Hall's representation theory. According to Hall Representations are:

Using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent the world meaningfully, to other people.' You may well ask, 'Is that all?' Well, yes and no. Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, signs, and images which stand for or represent things (Hall, 1997).

Stuart Hall's representation theory provides a powerful framework for understanding how meaning is created and communicated in film. It emphasizes the active role of both the creator (encoding) and the audience (decoding) in this process. Here are the steps in using representation as an approach to film studies.



1. Identifying the system of representation.

Hall (1997) proposed 3 (three) aspect of the system of representation, namely 1) Language, Analyse the dialogue, narration, and text within the film. How words are used to construct meaning, convey emotions, and establish character relationships, 2) Signs and Images, Examine the visual elements, mise-en-scène (setting, props, costumes, lighting, composition), cinematography (camera angles, movement, focus), and editing. How these elements work together to create meaning and convey messages, 3) sound, analyse the use of music, sound effects, and silence. How these auditory elements contribute to the film's atmosphere, emotional impact, and overall meaning.

2. Analyzing the Encoding/Decoding Process:

Encoding is to consider the filmmaker's intentions and the social, cultural, and historical context in which the film was produced. What messages are they trying to convey through the film's representations. Decoding is to analyse how different audiences might interpret the film's representations based on their own social, cultural, and personal experiences. Are there dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings of the film?

3. Exploring the Levels of Meaning:

4. Denotation and Connotation: Analyse the literal and associative meanings of the film's representations. How these meanings contribute to the overall message. Mythical Level is to Connect the film's representations to broader cultural myths and ideologies. How the film reinforces or challenge prevailing social norms and beliefs. Intertextuality: Compare the film's representations with those in other films, particularly those from different cultural contexts. How this comparison illuminates the film's unique meaning and cultural significance.

By systematically applying this framework, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how meaning is constructed and communicated in film, and how these representations reflect and shape our understanding of the world.

For time efficiency, this study uses a purposive sampling model. The purposive sampling model in qualitative research means that researchers select individuals or data sources because the data sources have experience or are directly related to the center of the study so that the data selection process can assist researchers in understanding the phenomena (Cresswell, 2012). Selection or selection of data sources with certain criteria. The criteria used by researchers as justification are to prove that the sample is believed to be representative and worth for the sake of time and cost efficiency (Black, 2010). With this purposive sampling model, the criteria for the films chosen as data sources in this study are a) the films selected are Netflix original films, b) non-series films, and c) films in the International Women's Month category. These collections typically highlight female film-



makers, actresses, and stories centered on women's experiences. The following is a list of films that are the object of study.

Table 1. Object of research

No	Film Origin	Title	Release Year
1	South Korea	Kingdom: Ashin of The North	2021
2	USA	Don't Look Up	2021
3	South Africa	I am All Girls	2021
4	Indonesia	A World Without	2021
5	French	Santinelle	2021
6	USA	The Weekend Away	2022

Finding and Discussion

The finding showed that American and non-American Netflix original films represent different construction of gender. It is greatly influenced by the country in which the film is produced.

Table 2. Gender Issues Based on Roles in Original Netflix

No	Film Origin	Title	Gender Issues Based on Roles				
			Sexual Abused	Race Discrimination	Social Class Discrimination	Family	Affair
1	South Korea	Kingdom: Ashin of The North	√	√	√		√
2	USA	Don't Look Up			√	√	√
3	South Africa	I am All Girls	√	√	√		
4	Indonesia	A World Without				√	√
5	France	Santinelle	√		√	√	
6	USA	The Weekend Away	√			√	√

From the 6 films studied, *Kingdom: Ashin of The North* (South Korea), *The Weekend Away* (America), *I Am All Girls* (South Africa) and *Santinelle* (French) describe how sexual violence occurs, especially those perpetrated by men against women and children. Discrimination based on race is only found in the film *I Am All Girls*, namely the African black race, especially children and adolescents who are sold by the white political elite. In addition, the films *I Am All Girls* and *Santinelle* describe the contestation between classes that usually occurs in society. The most complex relationship depicted in all films is the relationship between husband and



wife or between partners. Infidelity is also depicted in the films *Don't Look Up*, *The Weekend Away*, and the film *A World Without*. These three films depict the issue of infidelity in different ways, especially in the film *A World Without* which relates to the issue of polygamy. This is because the film was produced in Indonesia and polygamy is a gender issue that is being debated for its relationship with religion. In addition, in the film *A World Without*, a powerful man (handsome and rich/owns a company) is still constructed as a woman's ideal man. Although women are depicted as independent figures, this film emphasizes that marriage is a symbol of the ideal life. This issue is also depicted in *Kingdom: Ashin of The North*. This is a classic film with a royal era setting. As usual, this genre often mixes romance with action filled with violence and oppression.

Table 3. Gender Issues Based on Sex in Original Netflix

No	Film Origin	Title	Gender Issues Based on Sex				
			Heterosexual	Transgender ¹	Lesbian ²	Gay ³	Bisexual ⁴
1	South Korea	Kingdom: Ashin of The North	√				
2	USA	Don't Look Up	√				
3	South Africa	I am All Girls	√		√		√
4	Indonesia	A World Without	√				
5	France	Santinelle	√		√	√	

While gender issues are related to sex, only the films *I Am All Girls* and *Santinelle* present issues about lesbians and gays⁵. *I Am All Girls* represents the same-sex relationship between Jody and Ntombi who both work as police officers handling human trafficking syndicates. Although not explicitly represented, the relationship between these two female characters is revealed when Jody and Ntombi confess the same feeling, they love each other.

Data 1.

Ntombi: Jody, turn this car, turn this car around!

Jody: Ntombi, you need to tell me, are you working alone or with somebody else?

- 1 LGBT recognized as an extremist community and banned on the territory of the Russian Federation | ЛГБТ признано экстремистским сообществом и запрещено на территории Российской Федерации
- 2 LGBT recognized as an extremist community and banned on the territory of the Russian Federation | ЛГБТ признано экстремистским сообществом и запрещено на территории Российской Федерации
- 3 LGBT recognized as an extremist community and banned on the territory of the Russian Federation | ЛГБТ признано экстремистским сообществом и запрещено на территории Российской Федерации
- 4 LGBT recognized as an extremist community and banned on the territory of the Russian Federation | ЛГБТ признано экстремистским сообществом и запрещено на территории Российской Федерации
- 5 LGBT recognized as an extremist community and banned on the territory of the Russian Federation | ЛГБТ признано экстремистским сообществом и запрещено на территории Российской Федерации

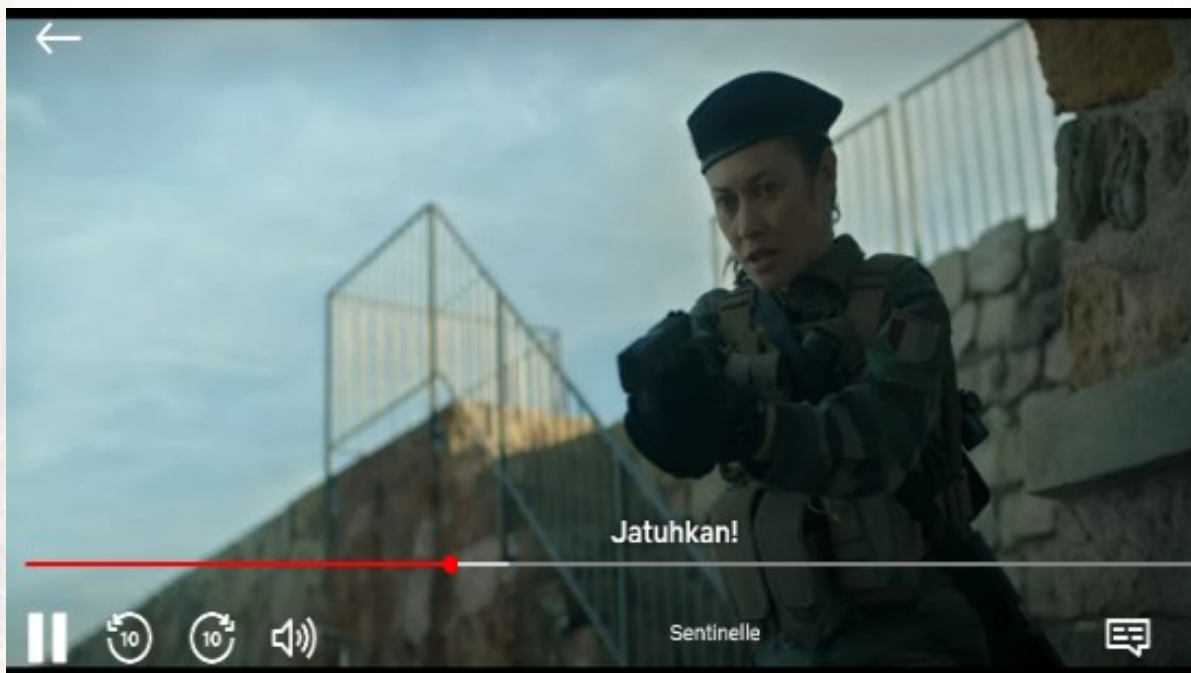


Ntombi: I said stop the car!

Jody: It's fine, look! Talk to me, Ntombi! I love you... (I am All Girls, 2021).

The dialogue above occurs when Jody and Ntombi get involved in a debate after Jody suspects Ntombi is the perpetrator of the serial murders that have been happening all this time. Based on the dialogue above, the sentence *I love you* by Jody emphasizes that Jody has feelings for Ntombi. This remark is explicitly uttered to support the gesture between Jody and Ntombi in the whole story. Finally, before Ntombi dies at the end of the story, Ntombi states that she also loves Jody.

Meanwhile, in the film *Santinelle*, same-sex relationships are seen when Klara (Olga Kurylenko) has sex with a woman she met at a nightclub. *Santinelle* represents the life of a feminist who struggles for justice and freedom from heteronormativity norms. Klara is a female soldier who is trained to live on battlefields and other crimes. A woman who has a masculine character is stronger than her femininity as a woman. She is the protector of her family since her father has gone without news.



Picture 1. Klara Representation in *Santinelle*

Gender Representation in The Kingdom: Ashin of The North and Woman Struggle

Kingdom: Ashin of The North is a South Korean movie that tells the story of a woman's struggle to get justice, especially after her father, who works as a royal spy, goes missing without news. In addition, Ashin (the name of the main character) is struggling to find the perpetrators of the massacre of her family and villagers. Ashin who is a little girl, born and raised among the poor, in her journey often expe-



riences oppression and injustice. The climax is when she works to serve the soldiers of the kingdom and experiences rape. In one of the scenes, there are mother and her daughter waiting and seeing for the pig to be slaughtered and cut into pieces. The mother says to her daughter 'don't look at that, bloods and innards are for the lowborn'. The scene proves that there is a deliberately built distance between social classes in ancient Korean society. Institutions such as the kingdom indeed in many historical records have a dark history of oppression of their people. Power is the only capital for people to dominate others.

Data II.

Ashin: I beg you. Avenge my father. A lowborn weakling like me can't do it. But Joseon can do it. You have the power to punish them.

Joseon Soldier: I'm sorry for your loss, but this is not a matter for Joseon to intervene in.

Ashin: My father was loyal to Joseon all his life. You could at least do the revenge for him now. I will do anything. I will be your loyal spy if you want. Or even work as a butcher if you tell me to. Or even if it is something nastier, I will gladly do anything. (Kingdom: Ashin of the North, 2022).

The dialogue above occurs when Ashin begs the Joseon soldier to punish the people who killed all her family and the villagers where she lives in. The dialogue shows that power is everything to dominate others, control the system, and even construct reality. As a woman, Ashin lives with limitations, has no access, and must work harder to reach her goals. Ashin later became a royal servant, but she was also actively practicing martial arts and archery even though it was done in secret. On her way, although Ashin managed to get revenge, she experienced many problems including being raped by one of the royal soldiers. This representation states that even if a woman (Ashin) achieves her goal in her life, she is still dominated by the system, by social norms about how to be a woman.

Bourdieu (2020), stated that oppression, domination, and other forms of violence are hidden by culture. The problems regarding gender inequality are now common, but their existence is often hidden and actually reinforced by the victims themselves. For example, Ashin gave herself up and was willing to do anything as long as her revenge was avenged. Ashin's actions emphasize that forms of gender inequality occur because of an agreement, not because of coercion.

The Representation of Post-Feminism in *Don't Look Up*

Issues of family, reproductive rights, equality in pay, equality in work, education, and politics are no longer central issues in modern American society today. At least this is seen in the film *Don't look up*. In the context of post-feminism, this film represents how individual freedom is a priority, especially in terms of choosing a path in life.

The film *Don't Look Up* combines the increase of cultural recognition of women and girls as powerful citizens and consumers, offering what may at times seem like a radical movement in terms of dominant gender relations. *Don't Look Up* represents how 'girl power' works in the media culture of this time. This film depicts



the complexity of modern women amid power and technology: a successful housewife, a smart female technologist, a woman leader, and a dominant woman. June is a successful housewife because she succeeded in educating her children and was able to maintain her household even though her husband had an affair. June realized that she had an affair in the past but her husband didn't know so June forgave her husband.

Data III.

June: When we dated in college, I fucked Aaron Tran. (Don't Look Up, 2021).

June speaks as the script above to make sure that what happened to his husband (Dr. Randall), had also happened to her. Finally, June and Dr. Randall forgive each other.

Female smart technologist can be seen in the character Kate Dibiaski. She is Dr. Randall's assistant, an astronomer who discovers the planet-killing comet that is sliding down toward the earth.

A dominant leader woman is represented by Orlean, the President of the United State.

Don't Look Up also shows how 'girl power' works today as a lifestyle. The term 'girl power' refers to the way women choose freely the path of their life. It concerns the importance of being free and independent. Kate Dibiaski, a smart woman who works in technology and science, succeeds in her carrier and falls in love with a slopy man who lives in the street. This scenario seems to highlight that women can do anything, can be better than men, and can have all access in their life but they always need a partner, need a man as the best partner. Pomerantz and Raby (2017) state that 'a smart girl' has become a brand and market, a sexual stereotype, in contemporary culture. It is a necessary asset but it is also a complex lived identity. Furthermore, this film shows that masculinity and femininity are only concepts. Both man and woman can be masculine or feminine, it depends on what performativity they choose. Butler (1990) states that gender only exists if it is performed, sex is just a form, not a substance.

Discussion

The Construction of Gender in Original Netflix Film

a) Coding/decoding Gender on Original Netflix Film

Netflix Original films that are the subject of study generally represent women's struggles to achieve justice. Women are victims of the social system while men as symbols of social systems and institutions are agents or actors. Issues of slavery, sexual violence, and infidelity are the result of men's actions. *Kingdom: Ashin of The North* tells a story of how gender is a big concept that accompanies issues of oppression, power, identity, equality, and also doubt. Gender is a term that refers primarily to the social distinctions made between men and women, between



masculinity and femininity. In this film, the Kingdom symbolizes a patriarchal system that rules the world, as the highest institution that must be served, obeyed, and respected by all levels of society. In these institutions, women and children are the lowest class and their existence is limited so that the barriers between men and women remain firmly rooted, men are special and women are complements. This representation depicts how patriarchy in social reality is the core system that orders the world. Nash (2020) states that patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women. Ashin's character represents women's struggle against these oppressions. Ashin depicts the feminist movement which has always struggled to resist patriarchal norms.

On its part, *Don't Look Up* is a movie that portrays gender contestation in the modern arena, specifically in economic and political arenas. The domination that occurs in human life is the effect of a significant role of capital in determining social class and also the role of gender in society. Bieler and Morton (2021) state that capitalism is structurally indifferent to gender, but there are tensions not least revolving around the question of value, the role of the unpaid worker, and the wider relations between market conditions and power. This power, according to Commane (2020), leads to violence and overexploitation which can be physical, moral, and in the realm of ideas. *Don't Look Up* portrays a leader or president as the holder of the highest power in a country, but her decisions must be through the approval of the owner of the company that funds the presidential nomination. In reality, this kind of work system is found in all social institutions so these forms of injustice and oppression seem to be justified without the slightest resistance even from the victims themselves. Therefore, in this post-feminism era, truth is always constructed. Gender roles are always constructed depending on the interests and economic benefits. Gender no longer recognizes the physical differences between men and women. Gender is an identity that is constructed temporarily, changing, and very vulnerable.

Furthermore, *Don't Look Up* shows that gender based on sex in this modern era is reduced by women's visibility in every aspect of life. The core feature of feminism today emphasizes individualism, choice, and agency. According to Gill (2017), feminism in contemporaneity focuses on woman's body as a site of liberation. Women are culturally recognized as powerful citizens and consumers, which offers something that looks like a radical movement in terms of changing the norms of gender relations that have existed in society. Consider for example relations between June, Dr. Randall, and Brie Evantee (a beautiful, sexy, and famous presenter). Brie has affair with Dr. Randall and at one moment, June knows about this affair. Brie never felt guilty but instead forced Dr. Randall to choose between him or June. Then June joined in forcing Dr. Randall to choose. The scene shows that Brie is the representation of the double-movement of feminism. Brie is a paradox that, according to McRobbie (2004) depicts the dissemination of



discourses about freedom and equality functions as a hegemonic strategy to dilute those very politics, providing the context for the retrenchment of gender and gendered relations.

I Am All Girl and *Santinelle* films are a representation of the struggle of people who have been marginalized and have negative stereotypes – a group that is always considered a group of defects and deviants. The film *I Am All Girl* is a picture of the struggle against racial discrimination and gender identity. This film emphasizes how a black woman struggles to catch human traffickers. In addition, the main character in this film is also described as a lesbian figure.

The two films show how the concept of gender has changed. Traditionally gender is the difference in identity for men and women based on biological facts. Since birth, this gender identity has been determined where possession of the penis is considered a male symbol and the vagina is female. The gender determination impacts the social norms that must be played. Men must be masculine because they have a penis and women have to be feminine for having a vagina. Apart from these two organs, physical characteristics such as muscles, body, voice, and hair on the body also determine one's identity. The concept of gender like this has been deeply rooted in social life. But in this era of globalization, the concept of gender is slowly starting to change and find an alternative form. The rigid gender norms are tried to be changed and become more fluid as in postmodern feminist views which state that the term gender is a dynamic and unstable term. The concept of gender is a plural concept of a social institution. Gender is said to be a concept of a fluid and hybrid identity that separates itself from the male and female binary.

b) Myth as Gender Ideology on Original Netflix

Myth in the context of Stuart Hall's representation is a value system that has become the culture of a society. This means that gender stereotypes that exist in society are social constructions that have become guidelines and basic rules for how to behave. The films that are studied empirically have a strong relationship to the norms and history of gender in society. This history is inseparable from the patriarchal system as the basic norm that regulates the world, organizes the roles between man and woman, and sets the distribution of power between individuals and certain groups. Historically, patriarchy gives space and power more to men than the woman, so men can control themselves and other groups such as women. Man and woman are then defined disproportionately, giving rise to various injustices. These forms of injustice then become the norm and have permeated society so that their existence has never been questioned. Patriarchy has constructively shaped masculinity as the identity of men as the backbone of the family, as opposed to femininity or other marginal groups such as homosexuals¹, (Neibergall & Sánchez, 2020). Therefore, men are a symbol of power, as a sign of success, head of the family, heterosexuality, dominance, and as a model of leadership. The role of

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women in the public sphere is limited so that men can maintain traditions as the backbone of the family. Therefore, strict separation in the public and domestic spheres becomes important in stabilizing male gender identity through the exclusion of women from the public sphere.

However, several things are currently experiencing distortion along with the increasing role of women and the freedom of identity expression. According to Weir (2017), men are faced with a unique problem, namely the tendency to minimize traditional masculinity stereotypes. Along with the increasing visibility and access of women to various fields and professions, patriarchal norms receive resistance, especially from the women's movement. Netflix films then present various stories about women's resistance to the patriarchal system as in these Netflix Original films.

The film *I Am All Girls*, for example, is a film that tells the story of the struggle of two female detectives in the fight against slavery and human trafficking, especially among women and children in South Africa. The film stars Erica Wessels (Jody Snyman) and Hlubi Mboya (Ntombizonke Ayahi), directed by Donovan Marsh. The film is a Netflix original and was produced in South Africa. In the context of gender, this film highlights the role of women in fighting for women's rights, especially the struggle against slavery, rape, sexual harassment, and the crime of pedophilia. Slavery, rape, and sexual harassment are realities that continue to occur even though they are hidden. The film *I Am All Girls* underscores the vulnerability of women and children, who are often the primary victims of abuse, as reflected in its narrative. It also portrays the lesbian relationship between the characters Jody and Ntombi, adding depth to the story while highlighting the intersection of gender and sexuality in the context of oppression. Historically, women and children have borne the brunt of such exploitation, with many enduring sexual violence at the hands of men, including those within their own families. The film sheds light on these harsh realities, emphasizing the pervasive nature of abuse and the urgent need for justice and societal change. In the film *I Am All Girls*, a child is depicted as a victim of abuse at the hands of her grandfather, who is revealed to be a pedophile with a history of involvement in child trafficking and exploitation. The story highlights the vulnerability of women and children, who are often targeted and subjected to enslavement and sexual violence. This is inseparable from their stereotypes in society. Women are physically considered weak; women do not have the power to control other people. This film emphasizes that gender inequality is the result of the unequal distribution of power between men and women. The character of Ntombizonke Ayahi is described as a woman who experienced abuse and slavery at a very young age, causing a very deep traumatic feeling. When she was young, Ntombi did not have the capital to fight or refuse. But as an adult, she fought for revenge against the group involved in the trade and slavery. Realizing that power is the most important instrument in controlling the opponent, Ntombi becomes a policeman and participates in self-defense training. Although in the end Ntombi was shot and



killed, she managed to kill many criminals and succeeded in exposing the crime of human trafficking committed by government officials. Power is most important to have and it is the media for controlling and negotiating political position (Wrong, 2017).

Jody Snyman, Ntombi's partner in the police, is also struggling to dismantle the crime of slavery, which in the end succeeded in completing Ntombi's grudge against the last official who had not been killed by Ntombi. This film emphasizes that women are also able to play an important role in various aspects. This can be seen in the success of Ntombi and Jody in uncovering crimes and arresting criminals while the commander and other male members were only spectators.

Not much different from the representation of the film *I am All Girls*, the film *Santinelle* also emphasizes that patriarchy is a symbol of oppression and injustice. This film tells how the best soldier who has ever been assigned to the battlefield against terrorists is caught in a conflict with a wealthy technology entrepreneur from Russia (Leonard Kadnikov) who has influence and power in the government. Klara seeks justice for her sister who was raped and tortured by Leonard. Distrust of the justice system makes Klara struggle in her own way until finally, she can kill Leonard. Apart from representing women's struggles, this film also legitimizes lesbian and gay people as social norms. Klara is a soldier with a masculine character so she has an interest in fellow women, while Leonard's son (Yvan Kadnikov) has a feminine character and likes men. This then confirms that gender is not a biological construction that is limited by sex. Gender is a social construction produced by actions. The female gender is not a guarantee for someone to be feminine like the stereotype that has been the norm for society, as well as the male gender which is physically led to be masculine.

In line with the two films mentioned above, *The Weekend Away* (America) implicitly also emphasizes that patriarchy is the source of various problems of discrimination and violence. A husband is the source of all the conflicts represented in this film, from infidelity, betrayal, and murder. All the victims in this film are female characters. The struggle of Beth (Leighton Meester) to find the killer of her best friend, Kate (Kristine Wolfe) reveals another side of her husband's affair, Rob (Luke Norris). Beth continued to experience various intimidations and threats while seeking justice, even the police (Pavic/Amar Bukvic) who handled the case also played a role. In the end, this film confirms that women are not weak creatures like the traditional stereotypes presume. Women are strong personalities like Beth, a wife as well as a housewife who has a child, like Jordy and Ntombi who can carry out their duties as detectives which is a profession for men, and also like Klara, a female soldier who goes to war and guards the territory conflict. The reality, globally, shows that the definitions of men and women which have been reduced by social norms have undergone many changes. Women no longer live up to the old stereotypes; housewives, nannies, weak, and so on. Women are now able to play various roles and can construct their identities regardless of the construction of



men or the patriarchal system. The definition of gender is no longer limited to what should be and what should not be within the norm, but rather what is done and what is desired.

Transnational Gender Stereotype on Netflix Film

a) Globally (un)equal between Men and Women

History proves that gender issues were originally a role conflict between men and women. Globally, men are stereotypes that are more privileged by the patriarchal system than women so men have unrestricted access to all social spheres. Patriarchy has traditionally been defined as a social system in which men control various actions in society through their position as head of the family (Walby, 1989). Patriarchy is the term that gives the name for 'gender inequality' or gender power relations between men and women. In the American context, gender is a problem that has existed since the 17th century, when the patriarchal system had been regulating the roles of men and women. Men and women are different individuals so the form of treatment in society is also different. This has been so deeply entrenched in American society that different roles are a must to accommodate male superiority. This also happened in various parts of the world along with the strengthening of the hegemony and domination of American capitalism and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Along with developments that occur, although still dominant, patriarchy is not the only form that is taken for granted in contemporary era. Patriarchy with its social norms is widely opposed by alternative codes or codes of resistance from women and other marginalized groups today (Shepard, 2006). This occurs in America and other parts of the world including the UK, Italy, France, and other European countries (Castells, 2010; Dialetti, 2011). In Italy, for example, marriage is not an essential thing because women also have the right not to marry and live independently without any ties. The concept of equality was later adopted by American films and non-American films produced by Netflix. These films globally represent that patriarchy symbolized by men and social institutions is the source of the problem of injustice in all treatment. The representation of the films produced by Netflix emphasizes that men and women must share a central element that supports strengthening the relationships that exist, especially in the family. Men should not always be the center or the center in all aspects. Traditional norms such as taking care of children, taking care of the household, educating children are imposed on women, but men must also be agents in domestic roles. Men must also accept the new arena of female identity as a central agent in determining social norms. Moreover, the film industry is deeply intertwined with economic considerations, as financial factors often influence production, distribution, and the themes explored in films. The popular issues that they reinforce and introduce are ways to increase the number of viewers because stories of women's struggles are a source of inspiration and positive examples for women.



b) Globally un(equal) of Race and Social Class

The issue of discrimination based on race and social class inherently connected from gender issues. The unfair treatment that is often experienced by minorities such as black people and lower social classes is a criticism of patriarchy. The anti-racist movement in society started in the 70s, especially in America, almost simultaneously with the feminist movement. In the anti-racial movement, African Americans felt that the feminist movement only fights for the rights of white women and lesbians, while violence and other forms of discrimination against black people were ignored. But in its development, the feminist movement has now become an arena to fight for the rights of black people, too. In the context of the film, black people are a representation of a group of criminals, living below the poverty line, uneducated, and objects of slavery and human trafficking. Historically American films have routinely portrayed African Americans as objects of control, subordination, intimidation, devaluation, and dehumanization. Then criticism and evaluation from society have gained an impact on the representation of Afro-Americans in contemporary films. Afro-Americans are now getting a lot of lead roles, being heroes and educated people. However, the strengthening of the role of African Americans in film representation is often not in line with the fact that discrimination and oppression are still common. Movements such as Black Lives Matter are manifestations of criticism of this treatment. Although the film *I Am All Girls* generally shows discrimination and oppression against black women and children, in one scene it implies that racism still occurs in gender relations, such as white characters who don't emotionally like black couples. This shows that the relationship between races is a norm that is difficult to accept.

c) LGBTQ¹ as Global Gender Norm

Netflix films globally reinforce the existence of groups traditionally rejected by the patriarchal system such as LGBTQ groups (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer). Through films, Netflix tries to voice new norms such as legitimizing nonheterosexual relationships. Carabí & Armengol (2014) state that films advertise fluid masculinity as an alternative to support the idea about inclusive gender. Films prompt how to act between men and women today and also show the existence of non-heteronormativity. Netflix films convey the message that gender is not something that is limited. Each individual can construct their identity according to what they want. Relationships based on gender are also not determined by sex. Someone who has a vagina does not mean she is a woman so the attraction to the same gender is a natural thing because it is the expression and actions of each individual. This gender construction was later also adopted by non-American films such as *I Am All Girls and Santinelle*.

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Conclusions

Netflix has a global reach, offering content from various countries and cultures. This presents an opportunity to analyze how gender is constructed in these different contexts and how accurately these representations reflect the realities of each country. In the positive aspects, Netflix has made efforts to increase the representation of women both in front of and behind the camera. This is reflected in the number of female-led shows and films and the diversity of roles they portray. Many Netflix Originals actively challenge traditional gender stereotypes. For example, shows like “Don’t Look Up”, “I am All Girls” and “Santinelle” present complex female characters who defy expectations and break free from societal norms. All those Netflix Originals successfully capture the nuances of gender dynamics in specific cultures, in America, South Africa, and France. They offer insights into the complexities of gender roles and expectations within the context of the countries.

In another aspect, Netflix is still Western-centric Gaze. Despite efforts to diversify, many Netflix Originals still reflect a Western-centric perspective on gender. This can lead to the misrepresentation of gender dynamics in non-Western cultures. For instance, while there’s progress in representing women, there’s room for improvement in showcasing the intersectionality of gender with other identities like race, class, and sexual orientation. This can lead to a lack of representation for certain groups. Some Netflix Originals, while attempting to be progressive, may inadvertently reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. This can happen through the use of tropes or by focusing on certain narratives that perpetuate existing biases.

The accuracy of gender representation in Netflix Originals varies depending on the specific show and the cultural context it portrays. Some shows offer a nuanced and realistic portrayal of gender dynamics, while others fall short. It’s important to critically evaluate each show and consider how it aligns with the realities of the country or culture it represents.

Netflix has made strides in challenging traditional gender norms and increasing the representation of women in its Originals. However, there’s still work to be done in ensuring that these representations are diverse, nuanced, and do accurately reflect the realities of different cultures. By continuing to push boundaries and challenge stereotypes, Netflix can play a significant role in shaping a more inclusive and equitable media landscape.

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