

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WEBCOMIC "HINGGA USAI USIA"

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Abstract

The high rate of gender inequality in Indonesia indicates suboptimal gender development. Therefore, there is a need for accessible and interesting information on gender equality, primarily through digital creative spaces such as webcomics. Thus, this research aims to uncover the construction of gender equality in the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia," which discusses various aspects of gender equality. By using qualitative methods and Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the findings reveal six constructions of gender equality within the webcomic: consensus, male involvement in childcare, role-sharing, positive masculinity, female involvement in decision-making, and women's participation in the public sphere. However, the role-sharing construction emerges as the dominant aspect portrayed in the webcomic, which narrates the lives of married couples.

Keyword: Gender Equality, Web Comics, Semiotic

Abstrak

Tingginya angka ketimpangan gender di Indonesia menunjukkan pembangunan gender yang belum optimal, sehingga perlu adanya informasi mengenai kesetaraan gender yang menarik dan bisa diakses semua kalangan dengan mudah. Salah satunya melalui ruang kreatif digital yaitu bentuk web komik. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap konstruksi kesetaraan gender dalam web komik "Hingga Usai Usia" yang membahas aspek-aspek kesetaraan gender. Dengan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes, hasil kajian menunjukkan enam konstruksi kesetaraan gender yang ada di web komik tersebut, yaitu; konsensual, keterlibatan laki-laki dalam pengasuhan anak, berbagi peran, maskulinitas positif, keterlibatan perempuan dalam pengambilan keputusan, dan partisipasi perempuan di ranah publik. Namun, konstruksi berbagi peran merupakan aspek yang dominan digambarkan karena web komik ini menceritakan kehidupan pasangan suami istri.

Kata Kunci: Kesetaraan Gender, Web Komik, Semiotika

Introduction

Talking about gender in Indonesia cannot be separated from the case of gender inequality in the country. According to the 2021 Statistics Office Center (BPS) data, Indonesia's gender inequality ranked 121 out of 162 East Asian and Pacific countries in 2019. Indonesia's gender inequality index (GII) reached 0.480, while the average gender inequality index (GII) for East Asia and Pacific countries in 2019 was 0.324.¹

This indicates that gender inequality in Indonesia is still high, and efforts are still needed to achieve gender equality in the country. Gender inequality in Indonesia often causes problems for women. Women frequently experience gender injustice and discrimination. Gender injustice experienced by women usually includes violence against women, marginalization, stereotypes, double burden, and subordination.²

According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*), the number of cases of violence against women reached 299,991 cases in 2020. 8,234 cases occurred in the private sphere, while 1,731 cases occurred in the public sphere. Domestic violence and violence in personal relationships accounted for 79% (6,480 cases). Of these, there were 3,221 cases of violence against wives, 1,309 cases of intimate partner violence, and 954 cases of violence against girls. This includes violence perpetrated by ex-husbands ex-boyfriends, and violence against domestic workers.³

Furthermore, based data from the Service and Referral Unit of *Komnas Perempuan*, 2,134 cases are gender-based, and 255 cases are non-gender-based. It shows that women often experience gender-based violence. Sadly, even in the private sphere, which should be a safe place for women, the perpetrators of violence against women are usually people close to them. Women are, therefore, vulnerable to violence, including get injustice and discrimination in both the private and public spheres

The injustice experienced by women occurs in various sectors, such as the cultural, economic, domestic, and political sectors.⁴ The injustice in these different sectors is due to the practice of patriarchy, which is deeply rooted and has become a culture not only in society but also in state culture. It denies women access to public spaces and discriminates against them. Injustice against women will continue if no effort is made to eliminate it; women will continue to experience gender injustice. It is, therefore, necessary to change social perceptions so that gender injustice does not persist in society. One way to change societal perceptions and inculcate values of gender equality is through comic media.

Comic media today is not only for entertainment but also has evolved into a means of conveying other messages, such as educational media, advertising media, promotional media, and other forms of media that present a new face in delivering information.⁵ Currently, comics are undergoing developments, one of which is in the distribution

¹ Badan Pusat Statistik, *Kajian Perhitungan Indeks Ketimpangan Gender 2021* (Jakarta: BPS RI, 2021).

² Yayasan BaKTI, *Perempuan, Masyarakat Patriarki & Kesetaraan Gender*, ed. Lusia Palulungan, M. Ghufan H. Kordi K, and Muhammad Taufan Ramli (Makassar: Yayasan Bursa Pengetahuan Kawasan Timur Indonesia (BaKTI), 2020).

³ Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan, *Perempuan Dalam Himpitan Pandemi: Lonjakan*

Kekerasan Perempuan, Kekerasan Siber, Perkawinan Anak, Dan Keterbatasan Penanganan Di Tengah Covid-19 (Jakarta, 2021).

⁴ Desvira Jufanny and Lasmary R M Girsang, "Toxic Masculinity Dalam Sistem Patriarki (Analisis Wacana Kritis Van Dijk Dalam Film ' Posesif ')," *Jurnal Semiotika* 14, no. 1 (2020): 8–23.

⁵ Nick Soedarso, "Komik: Karya Sastra Bergambar," *Humaniora* 6, no. 9 (2015): 496–506.

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of comics, and one development in the distribution of comics is the existence of webcomics. Webcomics are comics that are distributed through the internet.⁶ The different comic genres available in webcomics are increasingly attracting readers' interest. Webcomics have now been adapted for smartphone users.

One of the most popular webcomic applications in Indonesian society is LINE Webtoon. According to marketers, the active users of LINE Webtoon in Indonesia reach 2 million users daily.⁷ LINE Webtoon, or simply Webtoon, is a digital comic platform produced by LINE Corporation in collaboration with NAVER Corporation from South Korea.⁸ Through the Webtoon application, users can read comics of different genres, ranging from drama, comedy, kingdom, fantasy, thriller, and more. One of the comics available on the Webtoon platform is the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia."

The comic "Hingga Usai Usia" was created by several Indonesian comic artists, Sisca Angreani and Kurnia Harta Winata. This comic has a large fan base, as evidenced by the number of readers reaching 14.2 million with a rating of 9.78.⁹ This comic first aired in 2018 and has yet to finish. There have been 121 episodes so far. This romantic genre comic follows the ups and downs of a married couple as they navigate through married life.

The exciting aspect of the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia" is that in several episodes, the husband and wife share roles, both in the public and domestic spheres, respecting each other and placing the husband and wife on an equal footing. Some scenes in the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia" show the husband involved in domestic tasks such as cleaning the house and taking care of the children and women's involvement in decision-making and participation in the public sphere. The issues raised in the comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia" are at odds with the deeply rooted patriarchal culture in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, society still perceives the roles of men and women in a patriarchal culture. In contrast, in a patriarchal culture, men are positioned as the center of power, and women are only subordinate and tasked with domestic duties.¹⁰ According to a survey conducted by the International NGO Forum on Indonesia (INFID), 91.4% of respondents agreed that women's primary duties include taking care of the household, husband, and children and obeying her husband's orders. Regarding women's responsibilities in the home, such as cooking, washing, and other domestic chores, 55% agreed, with the majority being married respondents.¹¹ This suggests that many people still adhere to a patriarchal culture.

The reason for conducting this research is that studies on gender equality in webcomics are still rare, and comic media is a medium with many enthusiasts in Indonesia. Comic media is one of the choices as a channel to inculcate gender equality values because the number of

⁶ Toni Dwi Kuswantoro and Anggayu Lintang Pertiwi, "Pengenalan Budaya Visual Nusantara Melalui Web Komik," *Seminar Nasional Seni dan Desain: "Reinvensi Budaya Visual Nusantara" Jurusan Seni Rupa dan Jurusan Desain Universitas Negeri Surabaya* (2019): 451–458.

⁷ Clara Ermaningtiastuti, "Mengintip Popularitas Webtoon Ynag Terus Tumbuh," *Marketeers*.

⁸ Annisa Fitriana Lestari, "Line Webtoon Sebagai Industri Komik Digital," *Source: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 6, no. 2020 (2018): 134–148.

⁹ Webtoon, "Webtoon."

¹⁰ Khrista Jaya Wardhani, Bing Bedjo Tanudjaja, and Baskoro Suryo Banindro, "Studi Representasi Dan Konstruksi Gender Dalam Tokoh Komik Bergaya Manga My Premium Girl'," *Jurnal DKV Andiwarna* 1, no. 2 (2013): 1–18.

¹¹ Tim Peneliti International NGO Forum on Indonesia Development, *Laporan Studi Kuantitatif Barometer Kesetaraan Gender* (Jakarta, 2020).

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comic readers in Indonesia is the second highest in the world, with an average of 3.11 comic books, meaning one person can read three comic books.¹² *Hingga Usai Usia*, a comic book, was chosen as the subject of this research because of its large fan base and the gender equality issues raised by comic book artists.

The object of this research is six episodes of the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia." The selection of these six episodes is based on several indicators, namely, the explicit representation of interactions between men and women in the panel so that the identification of signs of gender equality from the interactions of the characters is easier to understand; the relevance of the story to the theme analyzed; the scenes depicted that relate to aspects of gender equality, such as the fulfillment of men's and women's rights as human beings, including the fulfillment of sexual rights and the expression of their emotions, the equal treatment of men and women in decision-making, the participation of women in the public sphere, and the involvement of men and women in both public and domestic work. These criteria are intended to limit the discussion in the research to remain focused on the gender equality constructed in the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia."

To analyze gender equality in the research object, the author uses Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, the same as several previous studies. Therefore, the discussion, themes, focus, objects, and research methods distinguish this research from the last, while the similarities lie in the theory.

Roland Barthes's semiotic theory analyzes how symbols and signs in the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia" form representations of gender. Barthes' semiotics is chosen because it is relevant to the research

context; Barthes has made significant contributions to cultural criticism, including in the context of gender inequality in the webcomic. Barthes also emphasizes the importance of signs in understanding culture and visual language. Therefore, this research will identify the symbols, images, and narratives used by the author in the comic to construct ideas about gender equality. This includes an analysis of the comic's characters, plot, and images that represent gender roles and interactions between the characters.

Analysis of gender equality in the webcomic "Hingga Usai Usia"

The comic "Hingga Usai Usia" is one of the comics available on Webtoon Canvas Indonesia. It is created by the Indonesian comic artist couple Sisca Angreani and Kurnia Harta Winata. The comic was first published on 11 January 2018, with the first episode titled "Let's Get Married!" So far, 121 episodes have been published on Webtoon Canvas. This comic by Sisca Angreani and Kurnia Harta Winata has been read by 14.2 million readers, with a subscription count of 144,444. This strip-style comic has a rating of 9.97.

A strip comic is a short comic strip or a comic strip that can be read in one go. It usually consists of only 2 to 4 panels per strip. This romantic genre comic follows the ups and downs of a married couple as they navigate through married life. The story depicts new aspects of the couple's life after marriage, jealousy between partners, division of household chores, and the sweetness and bitterness of married life. The stories in this comic are based on the personal experiences of the comic artists but are slightly exaggerated to make them more appealing.

¹² Aldy Aldya Putra and Faizal Irfandi, "Implementasi Quick Respon (QR) Code Pada Aplikasi Pratinjau Konten Komik Cetak," *Jurnal Siliwangi* 4, no. 2 (2018): 104–111.

Consent or agreement on sexual activity

Picture 1 Episode 90 "Consent or agreement before sexual activity"



The image shows a conversation between a man and a woman when they are about to engage in sexual activity. The husband's character shows warmth towards his wife, such as looking directly into her eyes with wide open eyes and touching her arm. Behaviors such as making direct eye contact, touching hands or arms, and widening eyes are considered behaviors that demonstrate warmth.¹³

In addition, the wife's character shows a happy expression when embraced by her husband. This is indicated by the upward curve of the mouth, which means happiness.¹⁴ In addition, the wife's flushed cheeks indicate that she blushes when her husband embraces her, which happens because the beloved spouse is

close. Someone's flushed cheeks occur because the beloved spouse is near.¹⁵

The husband seeks his wife's consent before engaging in sexual activity. Sexual activity may include hugging, touching, kissing, or intimate relations. Consent must be given by both parties every time sexual activity is to take place because once consent is given, it does not mean that the partner will always agree. In Figure 1, the distance between the man and the woman is very close. This closeness indicates an intimate distance between them ranging from 0-15 cm or 0-6 inches.¹⁶

The intimate distance between husband and wife indicates an emotional bond and mutual trust. Intimate distance means that individuals communicating emotionally are close and in very personal situations. Individuals engaged in intimate distance interactions are a sign of growing trust between them. Furthermore, the touches made by the wife and husband can be interpreted as signs of mutual affection, as physical touch or contact can indicate friendship or affection between the individuals involved.¹⁷

There is an assumption in society that women must obey their husbands, including when the husband requests the woman to engage in sexual activity. Suppose a woman refuses to engage in sexual activity with her husband. In that case, this often results in marital or domestic rape, and it is not uncommon for marital rape cases to end in the death of the wife. According to the National Commission on Violence Against

¹³ Stewart L Tubss and Sylvia Moss, *Human Communication Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*, Keenam. (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rodaskarya, 2012).

¹⁴ Tubss and Moss, *Human Communication Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*.

¹⁵ Joe Navarro and Marvin Karlins, *Cara Cepat Membaca Bahasa Tubuh*, Kedua. (Jakarta Selatan: Change, 2014).

¹⁶ Bang Aswi, *Membaca Bahasa Tubuh Nyata Dan Tidak Bisa Dibohongi* (Yogyakarta: Romawi Pustaka, 2017).

¹⁷ Daryanto and Mulyo Rahardjo, *Teori Komunikasi* (Yogyakarta: Gava Media, 2016).

Women, the number of marital rape cases reached 591 in 2022.¹⁸

According to Mariana Amiruddin, deputy chair of the National Commission on Violence against Women, the incidence of marital rape in Indonesia is influenced by culture and marriage laws. Under Indonesian marriage law, the husband is seen as the breadwinner, while the wife is seen as someone who must be willing to serve the husband, including in sexual activities.¹⁹ In addition, the lack of trust in marital rape cases occurs because many people still believe that sexual activity after marriage is legitimate, even if one party does not want it.

For example, in episode 90 of the comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia," there is an element of gender equality, namely consent before sexual activity. The cartoonist constructs consent before sexual activity through the husband's dialogue, asking for his wife's consent to engage in sexual activity. The element of gender equality of roles in episode 90 is shown in the husband's dialogue, "Are you in the mood?" and in the dialogue, "Can I just hug you then?". Through these dialogues, the cartoonist emphasizes that there must be mutual consent before sexual activity can take place.

Sexual rights, as articulated by WHO, state that everyone has equal rights and that everyone must respect the sexual rights of others. Consensual sexual activity, or sexual consent, has several principles: 1. Freely given, sexual activity takes place out of one's desire; 2. Reversible, sexual activity can be changed or even canceled; 3. Informed, sexual activity can only take place if the conditions are agreed upon beforehand; 4. Enthusiastic, each party involved

in the activity only does what they want to do, not what is expected by their partner; 5. Specific consent for one type of sexual activity cannot be applied to another sexual activity.²⁰

Episode 90 presents two principles of sexual consent. Firstly, the principle of "freely given" is where both man and woman engage in the activity voluntarily, without coercion from either party. Secondly, the principle of 'enthusiasm' is where both the man and the woman only engage in what they want to do, which, in this case, is hugging. Thirdly, the principle of "specific" indicates an agreement to engage in sexual activity for a specific type of sexual activity, namely hugging. The presence of these three principles of sexual consent in this episode demonstrates gender equality, as the sexual rights of both men and women are considered and fulfilled equally.²¹

Sharing Roles in Child Care

Picture 2 Episode 92 "Child Rearing"



¹⁸ Vika Azkiya Dihni, "Perkosaan Dominasi Kasus Kekerasan Seksual Terhadap Perempuan Sepanjang 2021," *Databooks*.

¹⁹ Harvey Darian, "Konsep Marital Rape, Masih Dianggap Antara Ada Dan Tiada," *CNN Indonesia*.

²⁰ Nuristighfari Masri Khaerani, "Kesehatan Seksual Istri Dengan Pengalaman Kekerasan Seksual Sebelum Menikah," *Jurnal Psikologi Integratif* 1, no. 1 (2013): 142–155.

²¹ Rizkia Rahmasari, "Analisa Makna ' Persetujuan ' Dalam Pemandikbud Ristek No . 30 Tahun 2021 Terhadap Fenomena Kekerasan Seksual Di Lingkungan Pendidikan Yang Dianggap Sebagai Upaya Legitimasi Terhadap Perzinaan," *Jurnal Penegakan Hukum Dan Keadilan* 3, no. 1 (2022): 78–89.

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The husband's character questions his neighbor's involvement in child-rearing. The neighbor replies that he is involved in child rearing because he realizes the child results from their love. Therefore, both the husband and the wife should be involved in bringing up the child. The neighbor's words match his actions. In the picture, the neighbor can be seen holding a baby and playing with a doll, indicating his genuine involvement in child-rearing.

Furthermore, the expression on the neighbor's face as he looks after the child is one of happiness, suggesting that there is no coercion when the husband is involved in child-rearing. Moreover, child rearing is not only about children but also about pets. Although pets are not human offspring, the decision to care for them carries the responsibility of caring for them properly.

The existence of children or babies born into this world is due to meeting the sperm of men and the egg of women.²² Therefore, the responsibility of parenthood should be carried out by both men (husbands) and women (wives), as both contribute to the child's existence. Both have equal roles and responsibilities in bringing up their children. In Figure 2, all the characters have happy expressions characterized by upturned mouthlines or smiles. The presence of smiles in a situation in Figure 2 indicates that all the characters display warm or friendly behavior. Indicators of warm or friendly behavior include smiling, making eye contact, and showing a happy face.

In addition, the closeness between the characters indicates a close relationship between them, particularly the distance between the husband and wife and the distance between the baby and his father. The social distance shown in

Figure 3.2 indicates intimate social distance ranging from 0-15 cm or 0-6 inches. Typically, this social distance involves couples, spouses, close friends, parents, children, family members, pets, or specific relationships.²³

In practice, parenting is often associated in society with the role and responsibility of the mother. Mothers usually face greater demands to be involved in child-rearing. This is due to the patriarchal system that still prevails in society. The patriarchal system places men as the head of the family and the economic provider, while women are relegated to the domestic sector.²⁴ As a result, women are responsible for everything.

The biological role of women who have been pregnant and have given birth makes child-rearing tasks seen as women's work. Since the hunter-gatherer era, women's (mothers') role has been to raise children, which is seen as an extension of their biological roles, as women have been pregnant, given birth, and breastfed. Child-rearing tasks would be taboo if performed by men (fathers) because such actions are seen as demeaning and diminishing masculinity.²⁵

This leads to a situation where a man or father is less involved in a child's upbringing. In Indonesia, the father's involvement in both the physical and psychological aspects of a child's life is still shallow. Consistent with the Fatherhood Institute's Fairness in Families Index survey results, Indonesia ranks third in the world as a fatherless country. Fatherlessness is a condition where a father figure is absent from a child's upbringing or where a child has a father,

²² Karinta Ariani Setiaputri, "Proses Terjadinya Kehamilan: Dari Hubungan Intim Hingga Jadi Janin," *Hellosehat.Com*.

²³Tubss and Moss, *Human Communication Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*.

²⁴ Risa Dwi Fajriati and Dewi Kumalasari, "Peran Mindful Parenting Terhadap Keterlibatan Ayah Dalam Pengasuhan," *Jurnal Sains Psikologi* 10, no. 2 (2021): 80–92.

²⁵ Aep Saepuloh, "Pandemi Covid-19 Dan Keseimbangan Beban Pengasuhan Anak Dalam Perspektif Sosiologi Islam," *Jurnal Education and Development* 9, no. 3 (2021): 579–585.

but his presence in the child's upbringing is not maximized.²⁶

A survey conducted by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission in 2015 on the role of fathers in child upbringing found that only about 26.2% of participants (fathers) were involved in child upbringing. In addition, efforts to seek information on childcare and child rearing were only made by 38.9% of participants.²⁷ According to the Commissioner of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), Retno Listyarti, the involvement of both parents is very influential in the process of child development.²⁸ Therefore, the involvement of both fathers and mothers in child rearing is equally essential.

In episode 92 of the comic 'Hingga Usai Usia,' there is an element of gender equality where men (husbands) are involved in child-rearing—the comic constructs male involvement in child-rearing through carrying a child and the dialogue. "Ya, all right, we did it together." Through this dialogue, the comic constructs the existence of gender equality, where child-rearing is no longer the sole responsibility of women, but men are also involved in child-rearing.

Male involvement in child-rearing, also known as fatherhood, is defined as the involvement of the father (male) in taking more responsibility for child-rearing and household chores. There are several elements of fatherhood, including intimacy (emotional closeness with the child), provision (enabling a partner to care for the child; determining material standards for

family life), protection (protection from physical harm or negative influences), and endowment (providing time, money, and energy for the child and family; creating positive opportunities for sports, learning, and schooling; teaching character to the child).²⁹

The presence of fathers in child-rearing is essential because the absence of fathers in child-rearing makes children more prone to delinquency, feelings of low self-esteem, withdrawal from social life, vulnerability to drug abuse, susceptibility to criminal and violent acts, mental health problems, the emergence of depression, and academic issues at school.³⁰ Therefore, fathers need to be involved in child-rearing. The involvement of men (fathers) in child rearing indicates gender equality because child rearing is no longer solely the responsibility of women (mothers), but men also play a role. It is only fair for women (mothers) and men (fathers) to share roles and cooperate so that child-rearing is equally shared and not solely on one party.

Sharing Roles in Household Duties

Picture 3 Episode 93 "Sharing Roles"



²⁶ Sri Wijayanti, "Bentuk-Bentuk Fatherhood Di Film Indonesia Era 2000-An," *Jurnal Pikma* 4, no. 1 (2021): 56–71.

²⁷ Davit Setyawan, "Peran Ayah Terkait Pengetahuan Dan Pengetahuan Dalam Keluarga Sangat Kurang," *KPAI*.

²⁸ Hayuning Zaskya Nugrahani, Mini Rose Agoes Salim, and Airin Yustikarini Saleh, "Gambaran Keterlibatan Ayah Dalam Pengasuhan Anak Usia Dini : Baseline Dari Rancangan Program Intervensi Untuk Ayah," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2021): 42–58.

²⁹ Wijayanti, "Bentuk-Bentuk Fatherhood Di Film Indonesia Era 2000-An."

³⁰ Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (Kemen PPPA), "Perkuat Peran Ayah Untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Pengasuhan Anak," *Kemen PPPA*.

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The wife is bored with cleaning the house, as indicated by her expression of boredom. Her half-closed eyes depict this.³¹ Knowing this, her husband offers to clean the house because that's what sharing roles entails. The expression displayed by the husband offering to help with domestic chores is one of happiness and enthusiasm.

The upturned corners of the mouth and sparkling eyes indicate happiness and enthusiasm.³² After the husband offers to do the housework, the wife comments that she will take on the role of the husband, who usually does nothing. The husband, feeling offended, admits it and apologizes while mopping the floor. The expression on the husband's face as he apologizes reflects regret.

Role sharing means that household tasks are divided between the wife and the husband based on mutual agreement. In addition, in the wife's dialogue, "Okay, I'll take your role as usual!", "Being lazy at home" portrays the use of humor allusion, which is humor used to criticize someone³³. Through this dialogue, the wife insinuates her husband, who is lazier than helping with household chores.

Cleaning the house is part of domestic work. Domestic work is closely associated with women's work in Indonesian society. This cannot be separated from the patriarchal culture of the society. Women are expected to do domestic work because it is considered their nature. Women's roles are limited to the domestic sphere, and are only seen as supplementary breadwinners. Men are idealized as the head of the household and the primary breadwinner. These differences create power imbalances between men and women.

From a young age, women are educated and aspire to be obedient wives, responsible for caring for their children, husband, and family. Women are also expected always to be ready to serve their husbands. The role of women is considered in the domestic sphere and only as additional breadwinners. Men aspire to become household leaders and the primary breadwinners. These differences create an imbalance of power relations between men and women.

According to a survey conducted by INFID (International NGO Forum on Indonesia), 84.8% of respondents agree that women's primary role is caring for children and husbands. 70.5% of respondents agree that women's role is to obey their husbands' orders. This indicates that many people still adhere to a patriarchal culture, as domestic responsibilities are still placed on women.³⁴ This indicates that there are still many people who adhere to a patriarchal culture because women still bear domestic tasks.

In the comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia," episode 93, there is an element of gender equality where men (husbands) are involved in domestic work or men (husbands) and women (wives) share roles in doing domestic work. The comic depicts the involvement of men (husbands) through the dialogue of the husband

³¹ Tubss and Moss, *Human Communication Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*.

³² Ehrman Susanto, *Pintar Mengenal Bahasa Wajah Dan Tubuh Orang* (Yogyakarta: Laksana, 2018).

³³ Alifia Hanifah Luthfi, "Analisis Semiotika Kritik Sosial Dalam Balutan Humor Pada Komik Faktap," *Ilmu Komunikasi* 17, no. 1 (2020): 19–40.

³⁴ (Tim Peneliti International NGO Forum on Indonesia Development, 2020)

offering to do domestic work when his wife is bored.

The element of gender equality in role-sharing in episode 93 is shown through the denotation in the husband's dialogue, "Let me do it; this is what we call role-sharing." Through this dialogue, the comic emphasizes that in the relationship between husband and wife, it is necessary to share roles in doing domestic work. This ensures that domestic work is not the sole responsibility of women (wives). Role sharing is needed so that men (husbands) and women (wives) are not disadvantaged and neither party carries a heavier burden.

Achieving an ideal relationship between husband and wife can begin with a balanced distribution of rights and responsibilities through positive interactions and a peaceful atmosphere. The balance of rights and duties between husband and wife can be achieved through gender role division. Gender role division is essential for maintaining the balance of the family in fulfilling its functions and achieving family goals. A balanced division of roles can be achieved by understanding partners' functions, positions, and roles in their work and social lives, sharing joys and sorrows, supporting each other, providing access to each other, and sharing roles. Positioning partners as friends, lovers, mothers, or fathers both need love, motivation, input, protection, and attention. It also positions partners as friends to discuss when making decisions.

The division of roles requires a non-rigid attitude to exchange roles to complete household chores or domestic roles or to make a living. If the division of tasks in carrying out family obligations is balanced and by mutual agreement, a harmonious marriage life will be created. Therefore, sharing roles in husband and wife relations is necessary to make a harmonious, just, and equal household life so

that no one party, either husband or wife, feels disadvantaged. Apart from that, sharing roles is a form of gender equality because women and men are positioned as equals in household life, especially in episode 102, an equal distribution of roles in domestic work.

Positive Masculinity

Picture 4 Episode 104: "A man who trusts his friend."



The husband confides in his friend about his problems, but the friend scoffs that men should not discuss their marital issues. However, the husband can no longer bear his troubles alone. Seeing the husband's honesty about his situation, the friend admits he cannot bear his problems alone. The expression the husband uses when expressing his distress is sad. The down-turned corners of the mouth characterize a tragic expression.³⁵

³⁵ Tubss and Moss, *Human Communication Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar*.

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On the other hand, the expression of the husband's friend is initially one of rejection. This is indicated by his hands covering his ears. Covering the ears with both hands suggests that the person wants to reject or block out unwanted sounds.³⁶

In addition, in panels one and two, it can be seen that the husband's friend closed his eyes tightly. This indicated that his friend was trying to block negative information that made him uncomfortable.³⁷ Furthermore, in panels one and two, the husband's friend can be seen closing his eyes tightly, indicating that he is trying to block out negative information that makes him uncomfortable (Navarro and Karlins, 2014). This shows that the husband's friend does not want to hear what the husband says. However, at the end of the conversation, the husband's friend's expression changes to sadness. Drooping corners of the mouth characterize the expression of sadness, tears, and lowered eyebrows.³⁸

Men have feelings and emotions just like any other human being. Men usually feel sadness, tiredness, and the need to confide in a friend. In the case of the husband and his friend in Figure 4, both men show sadness, characterized by lowered eyebrows, down-turned corners of the mouth, and tears. When the husband's friend cries, it is clear that the tears are flowing profusely, indicating overwhelming sadness. This shows that men can also confide and cry. Men can also experience feelings of sadness and fear.

In patriarchal societies, men are seen as rigid and stoic individuals. In patriarchal cultures, men are seen as individuals who do not have emotions and always act based on logic

alone.³⁹ There is a widespread belief that men should have solid and courageous qualities and not show any signs of weakness. Conversely, weakness is a trait associated with women.⁴⁰

Men are expected not to show the emotions they feel, especially feelings of sadness such as crying. Therefore, if a man cries or wants to share his sadness, he may be ridiculed by others as it is seen as unmanly and weak. This is closely linked to toxic masculinity due to the persistence of patriarchal culture in Indonesia.

In the comic strip 'Hingga Usai Usia,' episode 104, men are shown crying and confiding in their friends. This indicates that men are no longer seen as individuals who must appear strong, resilient, and firm, as patriarchal cultural norms dictate. When men cry or show their emotions, they can be ridiculed. However, the comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia," episode 104, shows that men are human beings who have feelings and need friends to share them with. It also shows that men are only strong if they face their problems with others.

The traditional social assumption that women are more emotional than men is wrong. In fact, according to a study conducted by Mindlad, men tend to have a more significant psychological impact or are more emotional than women. However, due to rigid masculinity in society, which dictates that men should not cry and must be strong, men tend to hide their feelings more.

Expressing feelings or emotions positively affects both men and women, such as reducing stress because the body produces endorphins, which can create feelings of comfort

³⁶ Allan and Barbara Pease, *Kitab Bahasa Tubuh*, Kedua. (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2018).

³⁷ Navarro and Karlins, *Cara Cepat Membaca Bahasa Tubuh*.

³⁸ Aswi, *Membaca Bahasa Tubuh Nyata Dan Tidak Bisa Dibohongi*.

³⁹ Beata Anandika, "Analisis Framing Ayah Rumah Tangga Di Majalah Intisari Edisi September 2015," *Jurnal E-Komunikais* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1–11.

⁴⁰ Annisa Anindya, "Krisis Maskulinitas Dalam Pembentukan Identitas Gender Pada Aktivitas Komunikasi," *Jurnal Ranah Komunikasi* 2, no. 1 (2018): 24–34.

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and happiness. Releasing emotions through crying can help to eliminate toxins from the body and boost immunity. In addition, expressing emotions helps to increase mental stability and mental strength.⁴¹

In episode 104, the cartoonist constructs gender equality by portraying positive masculinity. Positive masculinity is when men break traditional masculine gender norms. Positive masculinity no longer constructs men according to traditional masculine gender norms; instead, men are given the choice to behave according to their comfort level.⁴²

The cartoonist constructs positive masculinity by showing men confiding and crying. This is in line with the concept of positive masculinity, which sees it as acceptable for men to need someone to talk to or pour their heart out to. Quoting IDN Times, there are five reasons why men need to confide in someone: because confiding is a basic human need, it does not indicate that men are weak, it is to seek solutions from others, to receive support, and to gain different perspectives from the opposite sex.⁴³

The portrayal of positive masculinity in episode 104 represents a form of gender equality. This is because men are shown as individuals who can express their feelings, pour their hearts out, and cry. Thus, men and women are considered equal in being allowed to express their emotions and cry; there is no longer a gap between men and women in expressing their feelings. The idea that only women are allowed to cry or express their emotions and men are not is no longer valid with the presence of positive masculinity. Therefore, the presence of positive

masculinity in episode 104 indicates the existence of gender equality.

Involving women in decision-making

Picture 5 Episode 105 "Involving women in decision-making"



In picture 5, the husband suddenly tells his wife they are moving to his parents' house. This surprises the wife, who wonders why her husband has taken this decision unilaterally when they are a family. The wife's wide-open mouth shows an expression of surprise, raised eyebrows, and wide-eyed look.⁴⁴ The woman, who disagrees with the decision, demands that the decision be discussed together first, following the fourth principle of Pancasila.

In addition, the woman shows an expression of anger during the dialogue: "Let's discuss it together! Let's practice the fourth principle of Pancasila". This indicates that the wife is angry and disagrees with her husband's

⁴¹ Halodoc, "Siapa Lebih Emosional, Pria Atau Wanita," *Halodoc*.

⁴² Erisca Melia Safitri, "Maskulinitas Positif," *Yayasan Pulih*.

⁴³ Peter Eduard, "5 Alasan Cowok Juga Butuh Curhat, Gak Perlu Mau!," *IDN Times*.

⁴⁴ Arif Putra, "Macam-Macam Emosi Yang Membuat Anda Menjadi Manusia Seutuhnya," *SehatQ*.

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decision. The expression of anger is shown by the eyebrows meeting and rising at the outer end; the eyes narrowed but with a sharp gaze.⁴⁵ In addition, the wife's hand gestures of tapping the floor indicate that she wants her husband to sit down to discuss the decision to move.

Decision-making in a household is a matter that should be discussed between husband and wife by the fourth principle of Pancasila. Decision-making is not based on the decision of one party alone but on the agreement of both parties.

In reality, in society, men or husbands are seen as the leaders of the family, so if a husband makes decisions unilaterally, it is seen as justified. Patriarchal culture makes men very dominant and authoritative in decision-making. It positions men as more vital in this area. Ironically, it positions women as the weaker party and continues to construct them as such. The result is an imbalance in relationships and power between men and women.

In episode 105 of the comic "Hingga Usai Usia," gender equality is present in decision-making based on consultation. The element of gender equality in episode 105 is in the dialogue where the wife protests her husband for making decisions unilaterally. The dialogues are "We are a family. Why did you decide on your own?" and "Let's discuss it together! Let's practice the fourth principle of Pancasila". Through these dialogues, the comic emphasizes that decisions in a family are made together.

Husbands and wives in married life have equal rights and positions in running their families. The freedom to speak out, express opinions, and realize oneself in a mutually beneficial relationship is a right and opportunity for both women and men. Furthermore, in the

dialogue "We are a family, why did you decide on your own?" the comic strip emphasizes that the decisions involve all the family members. This is because creating a harmonious family is based on sincerity, acceptance, and agreement, as well as on consultation and understanding.⁴⁶

The practice of the fourth precept of Pancasila itself is deliberation for consensus. The practice of deliberation for consensus in the family is a basis for interacting within the family and a link for social unity. Therefore, making a partner as a discussion partner (deliberation) in the decision-making process is very necessary. In addition, the attitude of mutual respect between husband and wife when making decisions creates harmony in the family and forms a prosperous family.

The presence of gender equality and justice within the family will facilitate cooperation between individuals and reduce the level of misunderstanding and conflict within the family, especially in decision-making.⁴⁷ The concept of the family depicted in the comic strip 'Until the End of Age,' episode 105, reflects a gender-equal family because it uses the principle of togetherness in the decision-making process, ensuring that neither husband nor wife feels burdened as decisions are made through a mechanism of mutual consultation. In addition, women are given the same opportunities as men to participate pretty in decision-making.

⁴⁵ Aswi, *Membaca Bahasa Tubuh Nyata Dan Tidak Bisa Dibohongi*.

⁴⁶ Ahmad Arif Syarif, "Relasi Gender Suami Istri : Studi Pandangan Tokoh Aisyiyah," *Jurnal Sawwa* 13, no. 1 (2018): 85–106.

⁴⁷ Fatmawaty Mallapiang, Azriful, and Rini Jusriani, "Peran Gender Dalam Pengambilan Keputusan Pemilihan Metode Kontrasepsi Di Puskesmas Pattalassang Kabupaten Gowa Tahun 2016," *Jurnal Pusat Studi Gender dan Anak UIN Alauddin Makassar* 4, no. 1 (2020): 289–305.

Wife could earn more than her husband

Picture 6 Episode 106 "Wife earns more than husband"



The wife is pleased because she has received payment. The husband, seeing the amount of his wife's payment on the computer screen, realizes that it is more than his income. On learning this, the wife promises to buy her husband the game he wants. The wife's reaction to her salary shows a happy expression, indicated by sparkling eyes and a wide open mouth, showing her enthusiasm and joy.⁴⁸ The husband shows a similar expression when he is about to buy the game he has been wanting.

Payment here refers to the wage or salary given to someone for doing a job. Payment is only offered when someone completes their work. In Figure 6, we can see that both the husband and wife characters are happy at the end, indicating that although the wife earns more than the husband, this does not cause a rift or conflict in the husband-wife relationship.

Today, women have won the right to pursue careers in the public sphere. According to a survey by INFID, most respondents agree that women are allowed to work (69.5%). However, women still face restrictions and gender inequalities in the public sphere. The participation rate of women in the labor force is only 53.1%, which is significantly lower than that of men, which is 82.4%.⁴⁹

In addition to the low participation rate of women in the labor force, women are also discriminated against when it comes to wages. Women's earnings are 23% lower than men's. On average, men earn Rp 3,840,084 per month, while women earn Rp 2,454,023.⁵⁰ Finally, although women have gained access to the public sphere, they still face discrimination in their participation in public affairs. Discrimination against women in the public sphere manifests itself in their low participation rates and lower salaries compared to men. In the public sphere, even when women hold the same position or have the same level of education as men, they are paid less.

The comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia" in episode 106 shows gender equality reflected in women's participation in the public sphere. The comic depicts women's involvement in the public sphere through the dialogue of the wife, who is happy to receive payment, and the dialogue of the husband, who is surprised that his wife's income is higher than his own. The gender equality element of role sharing in episode 106 is shown through the wife's dialogue, "Hooray! I'm getting paid". In addition, the husband's dialogue, "A lot. More than my income", also indicates this.

⁴⁸ Aswi, *Membaca Bahasa Tubuh Nyata Dan Tidak Bisa Dibohongi*.

⁴⁹ (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021)

⁵⁰ Internasional Labour Organization, *Kesenjangan Upah Berbasis Gender Di Indonesia*.

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Through these dialogues, the comic emphasizes that women can also participate in the public sphere and earn money through their efforts. Therefore, the myth that women are weak creatures is untrue, as women can be independent and empowered. Women's participation in public life is one of women's most critical aspects of empowerment. When women are independent and empowered, they can stand independently and improve their relationships with those around them in decision-making.

Women's active participation in the economy and decision-making can strengthen the economy, enhance national development achievements, and improve the quality of life for women and men, families, and society as a whole. In Indonesia, the percentage of female professionals has increased to 47.46%. The achievement in 2019 saw an increase of 0.44% compared to 2018. Gender equality as professional workers is achieved when the percentage reaches 50%. Although women's participation in the labor force is still below 50 percent, the increasing trend in the rate of women in the labor force indicates a growing recognition of women's professionalism.⁵¹ The active participation of women in the economy and decision-making will strengthen the economy. It will also improve the quality of life for women, families, and society and contribute to national development.

The continuing increase in the proportion of women in the labor force signals a positive trend toward greater participation and autonomy for women in the economic sector. In addition, women's income contributions indicate economic independence, which can lead to more

equitable relationships. The increasing contribution of women's income indicates the growing recognition of the quality of female labor in the labor market.

Women's participation in the public sphere in episode 106 is part of fulfilling women's rights as human beings to participate in economic activities and is also a form of gender equality. It also shows that women are given the same opportunities as men to participate in the public sphere.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study identifies six constructions of gender equality depicted in the comic strip "Hingga Usai Usia." These constructions include consent, men's involvement in childcare, positive masculinity, women's involvement in decision-making, and women's participation in the public sphere. The cartoonist constructs consent by illustrating the presence of agreement before engaging in sexual activity. The artist also portrays male involvement in childcare by depicting husbands carrying their children. The division of household tasks between spouses illustrates role sharing. In addition, positive masculinity is portrayed by normalizing men expressing their emotions and crying. Female participation in decision-making is depicted by showing wives protesting against unilateral decisions made by their husbands. Finally, women's participation in the public sphere is shown by depicting wives earning wages. In these constructions, the idea of role-sharing prevails.

One recommendation for comic artists is to explore and discuss gender equality issues in their work. Dealing with gender equality in comics can be both entertaining and educational. For future research, it is recommended to explore constructions of gender equality from the perspective of Islam.

⁵¹ Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (Kemen PPPA), *Pembangunan Manusia Berbasis Gender* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (Kemen PPPA), 2020).

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