

Gender Roles and Representation in A Multilingual Children's Book: An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories

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ABSTRACT

All children should be able to see themselves reflected in the books they read. However, in some children's books, male and female characters are not always equally represented. When these characters are included, it is important to see how they are portrayed. This study aims to examine gender representation in *An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories* published by The Agency for Language Development and Cultivation, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2022, by focusing on revealing two aspects. The first involves comparing the ratio of male and female protagonists, as well as other characters, using the quantitative method. The second focuses on examining the portrayal of gender roles among the protagonist characters using the qualitative method. The findings show that male protagonists outnumber female protagonists by a ratio of 7:3. However, although only three out of ten stories have three female protagonists, they are represented as having progressive gender roles: adventurous and empowered. In addition, certain stories appear to reinforce traditional gender roles. Yet, they also portray the cultural values of "Gotong Royong" which promote cooperation within family: men and women have their own responsibilities to support their communities.

Keywords: *children's literature, gender representation, gender role, feminist criticism, Indonesian Children's Stories, female protagonist.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender representation is one of the crucial issues in children's literature. The inclusion of genders in children's literature is important as it represents the diversity of the real world (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). In addition, presenting various genders also helps

children develop a more inclusive and empathic understanding of gender identities. Gender portrayals in children's literature are an essential societal concern, as they reproduce and legitimize gender structures (McCabe et al., 2011).

However, despite having about equal numbers of males and females in the real world's population,

women are underrepresented in a multitude of disciplines, including fiction which ideally should represent real life. According to Lindahl-Wise (2023), male overrepresentation is particularly prevalent in media and cultural goods.

Moreover, in many children's books, the representation of men and women has reflected traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Boys are usually portrayed as active, adventurous, and forceful, sometimes taking on leadership roles or embarking on risky missions. Girls, on the other hand, are frequently represented as passive, focused on domestic activities, and merely supporting male characters. Tsao (2008) argues that men are commonly described as active and dominant, whereas women hardly show their identities and "very frequently are represented as meek and mild".

A recent effort in children's literature, however, has attempted to challenge such stereotypes by offering more diverse and complex portrayals of male and female characters. Many modern children's book authors, for example, try to combat traditional gender roles by showing modern gender role representation. Critics, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of ensuring that children of all genders can see themselves reflected in the stories they read.

This research seeks to study gender representation in a newly published children's book by the Indonesian government institution, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2022. The book is originally entitled *Antologi Cerita Anak Indonesia* in Indonesian language. Yet, the book was translated into several international languages, including English, under the title *An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories*.

An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories consists of ten short stories from ten provinces in Indonesia. In the English edition, the stories were presented not only in English but also in Bahasa Indonesia and local languages. The stories were transliterated into six Indonesian local languages, corresponding to the setting of the story.

The book represents various cultures, ethnicities, and races from eight different islands in Indonesia. As mentioned by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, this children's book was

presented to the representative of the G20 member countries during the G20 summit in Bali "as part of [a] mission to promote the Indonesian language and culture to the world" (Riscitadewi et al., 2022, p. iv). Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that translating the book into six international languages of the United Nations is part of cultural diplomacy (Riscitadewi et al., 2022, p. v). Therefore, the book should also present various genders and gender roles that represent the people of Indonesia.

According to Hintz & Tribunella (2019), children's literature that represents "different races, ethnics, or cultures" should be read critically as it possibly involves complex issues. Stereotypes, latent biases, and oversimplifications in children's literature can complicate depictions of diversity. Adults can help children deconstruct these depictions through critical reading. This strategy can improve understanding of different cultures and identities and raise awareness of social issues and power dynamics that may be hidden in the narratives.

This study, however, aims to examine gender representation in An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories by focusing on revealing two aspects. The first involves comparing the ratio of male and female protagonists and other characters using the quantitative method. The second focuses on critically examining the gender roles portrayal of the protagonist characters using the qualitative method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of gender representation in children's literature has been extensively studied by the researchers. Ullah et al. (2014) examined how genders are represented in children's textbooks from both developed and developing countries. Employing discourse analysis approach, they revealed that gender stereotypes exist in school textbooks. In addition, males outnumbering females in the textbooks vividly prove gender bias.

Atqi (2022) in research entitled "The Representation of Gender Bias in Children's Literature Kingdom Tale Collections (Feminist Literary Criticism Review)". This study highlights

the ongoing issue of gender bias in children's literature. Using feminist literary criticism, the research examines how female characters are depicted as weak, domestic, and reliant on physical beauty, while male characters are portrayed as strong, independent, and intellectual. The findings reveal that traditional gender norms persist, with women being confined to domestic roles and shown as having timid dispositions. The study underscores the need to address these biases to promote gender equality in children's literature.

Recently, a quantitative study by Lindahl-Wise (2023) examined the Carnegie Medal Winners from 1936 to 2020. Carnegie Medal is a yearly literary award based in the United Kingdom that recognizes excellent children's or young adult books. This research focused on the representation of female characters, especially heroines and mother protagonists. In her research, Lindahl-Wise (2023) compared the ratio between male and female protagonist characters during that period of time. Moreover, she also examined the presence of the mother in the chosen stories.

Meanwhile, only one study has examined the "Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories" (2022). Amaradinta et al. (2023) employed a descriptive qualitative method to analyze cultural terms, translation techniques, and the quality of translation in the children's storybook "Antologi Cerita Anak Indonesia." Using theories from Molina and Albir (2002) for translation techniques and Nababan & Nuraeni (2012) for quality assessment, the study identifies 132 cultural terms classified into five categories based on Newmark's theory. The study found that pure borrowing is the most common technique used, both in single and double translation variants. Overall, the translation is deemed accurate and acceptable, with a quality score of 2.65, reflecting a high level of accuracy (2.87) and moderate acceptability (2.33).

This research, however, studies the "Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories" from a literary lens by examining the comparative ratio of female and male protagonist characters as well as seeing the way in which those characters are portrayed in the stories. In addition, this study applied feminist criticism to examine how female characters are portrayed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The feminist movement, which originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arose in response to structural inequality and oppression of women in a variety of fields, including politics, education, and work. The first wave was largely focused on establishing women's legal rights, particularly the ability to vote. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement broadened its focus to encompass concerns such as reproductive rights, employment equality, and the breakdown of conventional gender roles (Katz, 2021). Nowadays, feminism embraces intersectionality and challenges the universalization of the female experience by emphasizing women's individual difficulties across races, classes, and sexual orientations.

As the feminist movement evolved, its influence began to permeate various cultural and intellectual domains, including literature. Feminist literary criticism emerged as a critical approach that interrogates how literature perpetuates or challenges patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes (Lazar, 2007). Pioneered by scholars such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, this branch of literary criticism examines the representation of women in literature, the marginalization of female authors, and the ways in which narratives reflect and shape societal attitudes toward gender.

Meanwhile, fiction writers have used their narratives to challenge patriarchal structures, giving voice to women's experiences and exploring the complexities of gender relations. One example is Victorian author, George Bernard Shaw, who used to present strong and independent female characters in his works (Ahmad, 2018). Over time, feminist literary criticism has expanded to address a wide range of issues, including the exploration of female identity, the depiction of women's bodies, and the subversion of traditional gender roles in literature.

Feminist critique investigates gender representation in literature by examining how texts portray and promote gender norms and stereotypes. This critical method investigates how women and men are depicted in literature, and if these depictions

challenge or reinforce existing gender norms. Feminist critics frequently analyze how female characters are marginalized and question their roles.

Furthermore, Lois Tyson specifically discusses how traditional gender roles have oppressed women rather than men. She argues that “Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive.” (Tyson, 2023, p. 85)

The traditional roles in Indonesia, on the other hand, come from religion, family, and society norms. Women are often expected to take care of home duties such as raising children and running the household, while men are expected to be the main breadwinners (Reeves, 1987).

Such established roles are reinforced by religion. Many Indonesian Muslims believe Islamic teachings mandate gender roles (Sakai & Fauzia, 2016). This concept assigns women to family care and nurturing and males to money provision and communal leadership.

Another cultural impact is gotong royong (mutual collaboration), stressing group responsibility (Kuntjara, 1997). This concept encourages family unity and typically supports gender roles that men and women should carry out to benefit their society. Although gotong royong stresses togetherness, it usually does not question accepted gender norms, thereby perhaps supporting the view that women's job stays in the house (Rosyani et al., 2019).

In children's literature, feminist criticism also studies gender representation by analyzing how female and male characters are portrayed. Furthermore, it may also examine how these portrayals shape young readers' understanding of gender roles (Lee & Chin, 2019). Critics focus on whether characters conform to or challenge traditional gender norms, such as the depiction of girls as passive or nurturing and boys as active or assertive. This analysis often involves scrutinizing the language, illustrations, and narratives to identify patterns that reinforce stereotypes or offer more progressive, egalitarian representations.

Feminist critics might examine how often female characters are depicted as protagonists or leaders, versus how frequently they are shown in

supportive or secondary roles (Lindahl-Wise, 2023). They may also question whether male characters are allowed to express emotions traditionally deemed "feminine." By evaluating these elements, feminist criticism aims to uncover the implicit messages about gender that children's literature communicates to its readers.

Moreover, feminist criticism in children's literature also considers the impact of intersectionality, recognizing that gender representation is often influenced by other aspects of identity, such as race, class, and ability. Critics may analyze how characters from marginalized groups are portrayed, whether they are given agency and complexity, or if they are relegated to stereotypical roles. By doing so, feminist criticism not only critiques the ways in which children's literature can reinforce gendered expectations but also advocates for stories that promote inclusivity and empower all children, regardless of their gender or background.

METHODS

Examining gender representation in children's literature using both quantitative and qualitative methods can offer a more complete picture of the problem. Quantitative approaches enable scholars to systematically quantify and examine the number, roles, and attributes of male and female characters in a variety of literature. Meanwhile, qualitative approaches provide more complex insights into how gender roles are produced and communicated via narrative structures, language, and illustration.

This research applied quantitative methods to compare the number of male and female protagonist characters represented in all ten stories included in *An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories*. In addition, quantitative analysis was used to show the distribution frequency of males and females as non-protagonist characters.

Meanwhile, qualitative analysis was carried out to deeply examine how gender-related issues are represented in the stories through the text or the narrative structure. Nonetheless, only stories with female protagonists were examined qualitatively in order to see the way in which they were represented.

It is noteworthy to examine the female protagonist since the qualitative analysis focused on the characterization of the female protagonist, their activities, and the narrative structure that may reinforce patriarchal binary oppositions (Blangsinga et al., 2021). A story with male protagonist, *The Riddle in the Recipe*, was selected as it portrays progressive gender roles from male perspective, whereas, *The Awe-inspiring Mappalecce Bola*, portrays traditional gender roles.

The researchers focused on the stories' structure through careful or close reading. Close reading is critical and has become the principal approach in most literary studies (Smith, 2016). One way to read children's books critically is by reading them from both children's perspectives and adult's perspectives. In other word words, Nodelman (2008) called it "reading as an adult versus reading as a child".

Furthermore, in presenting the result and discussion, the descriptive analysis method was applied. This technique and theory can manage the relationship between language and the novel; it has "some very notable implications for the study of fiction" (Fowler, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories presents multilingual and multicultural stories that reflect the social and cultural diversity in Indonesia. This research examines gender representation by ratio and how gender identities and roles are portrayed across various cultural settings. This aspect of children's literature is essential for promoting inclusive and equitable viewpoints from a young reader.

Comparative Ratio of Male and Female Characters

It is noteworthy to see the comparative ratio between male and female protagonists since it provides insight into the gender balance and representation in *An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories*, a story collection that should represent the diversity of children in Indonesia. According to Lindahl-Wise

(2023), feminist critics can analyze the frequency with which female characters are depicted as protagonists or leaders versus the frequency they are presented as other or supportive characters.

Table 1. Comparison of protagonist character based on gender

No	Title	Region	Protagonist
1	<i>The Frankincense Forest</i>	North Sumatra	Male
2	<i>Andin's Journey at Muarajambi</i>	Jambi	Female
3	<i>The King of Stilts</i>	West Java	Male
4	<i>The Riddle in the Recipe</i>	Central Java	Male
5	<i>The Precious Shadow Puppet</i>	Bali	Male
6	<i>Hanyin and the Beautiful Mat</i>	Kalimantan	Female
7	<i>The Awe-inspiring Mappalecce Bola</i>	Sulawesi	Male
8	<i>Lota Rangga's Towering House</i>	Sumba	Male
9	<i>Diving for the Perfect Pearl</i>	Maluku	Male
10	<i>Sintike and the "Sasi" at Kapatcol</i>	Papua	Female

Table 1 above presents the comparative ratio of male and female protagonists in ten stories included in *An Anthology of Children's Stories*. The protagonist refers to the main character of the story. A protagonist in children's literature, according to Barbara Wall, is a character whose journey or development is central to the narrative (Wall & Crevecoeur, 2016).

Overall, it can be seen that the number of male protagonists is larger than female protagonists with a ratio of 7:3. Among ten stories, only three present female as the main character: *Andin's Journey at Muarajambi* from Jambi, *Hanyin and the Beautiful Mat* from Kalimantan, and *Sintike and the "Sasi" at Kapatcol* from Papua.

Besides the main character, examining the gender ratio of other characters is also important. Supporting characters sometimes promote or question the gender norms and prejudices depicted in the story (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). These

characters can have an impact on the overall representation of gender relations in the story.

Table 2 below presents the distribution frequency between males and females as other characters.

Table 2. Distribution Frequency between Male and Female as Other Characters

No	Title	Protagonist	Other Characters			
			Male		Female	
			n	%	n	%
1	<i>The Frankincense Forest</i>	Male	3	100.00	0	0.00
2	<i>Andin's Journey at Muarajambi</i>	Female	1	33.33	2	66.67
3	<i>The King of Stilts</i>	Male	3	75.00	1	25.00
4	<i>The Riddle in the Recipe</i>	Male	2	40.00	3	60.00
5	<i>The Precious Shadow Puppet</i>	Male	5	71.43	2	28.57
6	<i>Hanyin and the Beautiful Mat</i>	Female	2	50.00	2	50.00
7	<i>The Awe-inspiring Mappalecce Bola</i>	Male	1	33.33	2	66.67
8	<i>Lota Rangga's Towering House</i>	Male	2	50.00	2	50.00
9	<i>Diving for the Perfect Pearl</i>	Male	2	66.67	1	33.33
10	<i>Sintike and the "Sasi" at Kapatcol</i>	Female	2	40.00	3	60.00

There are seven stories whose protagonist characters are male. Among them, six stories present female characters as other or supporting characters, although the distribution frequency of male and female as other characters is diverse. However, *The Frankincense Forest* story shows the absence of female characters neither as protagonists nor as other

characters. It shows male-centric narratives—merely present male protagonist and other three males as supporting characters. *The Frankincense Forest* tells the story of a young boy's adventure to the forest accompanied by his grandfather and his two male friends. Thus, the absence of a girl in this story may reinforce stereotypes that leadership, bravery, and adventure are primarily male traits.

Three other stories whose protagonists are female, on the other hand, reflect gender diversity by presenting both male and female as other characters. Presenting both male and female characters in children's books promotes equality and teaches children to understand diverse gender roles (Ulfa et al., 2023).

The diversity of gender representation among all characters guarantees that children as readers perceive a variety of options for their own identities rather than only those portrayed by the protagonist. This larger viewpoint contributes to challenging stereotypes, promoting inclusion, and providing more realistic and diverse representations of gender behaviour and interaction.

However, the issue of gender representation is not merely about the equal number of male and female characters but also about how they are represented. Female characters, for example, may be equal in number, but they are possibly presented as supportive figures and caregivers, dealing with domestic activities. If so, they may reinforce stereotypes of traditional gender roles. Therefore, the further discussion below deeply examines the portrayal of gender roles.

Progressive versus Traditional Gender Roles

An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories portrays various gender roles. Some stories show positive development of gender roles, while some others reveal, even strengthen, gender stereotyping.

Three short stories with female protagonists are interestingly present adventurous and empowered female characters.

Andin's Journey at Muarajambi is a story of a girl named Andin with her mother who went to Muarajambi Temple, one of the largest Buddhist temples in East Asia. After arriving in the temple, Andin rented bicycles to travel alone around the

temple. This is, indeed, a portrayal of an adventurous, independent girl, as traveling solo is uncommon and requires bravery for women, specifically in the Asian context. Asian solo female travellers must “perceive and negotiate the risks of travelling alone”, yet they “gain empowerment and experienced self-transformations” through this activity (Yang et al., 2018).

In addition, Andin’s conversation with the monk or *Biksu* shows her enthusiasm as a young girl. She was very keen to learn and understand the history of the Muarajambi temple, which made it a place for students from Tibet, China, and India to learn theology, philosophy, medicine, and others.

In line with Andin, Hanyin in *Hanyin and the Beautiful Mat* is also portrayed as an adventurous girl who is keen to explore the forest as can be seen in her conversation with her grandfather.

“Are you afraid of going into the forest?”

“No, of course not, Kakaah. I want to go into the dense forest, just like in the stories about dinosaurs!” (Riscitadewi et al., 2022)

However, unlike Andin who explores the temple alone, Hanyin explores the forest accompanied by her grandfather. Besides that, she travels to the Big House in the centre of the village in order to see the process of making traditional mat accompanied by her grandmother.

Both Andin and Hayyin are portrayed as adventurous girls who are enthusiastic or eager to learn and explore something new. Andin is excited to learn about Muarajambi Temple, while Hayyin is excited to see the process of creating the mat made from the rattan.

In addition to those two stories, the portrayal of an empowered girl can also be seen in the story of *Sintike and the “Sasi” at Kapatcol*. This story is telling about a six-grade child named Sintike and the “Sasi”, the local tradition (Raja Ampat) in managing and preserving the natural resources from both the sea and the land.

Sintike is described as an adventurous girl who is great at diving like other children in her village, Kapatcol, and Raja Ampat in general. It means that traditionally and culturally, diving is not a taboo activity for girls. Thus, this traditional gender role does not cast women as weak like Tyson (2023, p. 85)

has mentioned that women were cast as “emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive.”

In addition, Sintike’s willingness to continue her studies at junior high school outside her village reflects that she is empowered. In a patriarchal society, access to education is such a struggle for women and according to Hidayat (2017) who has examined two novels about Papuan women, “education becomes the way out for Papuan women to get equal degrees with men”. Education, according to Stromquist (2003), is a way to empower females.

Moreover, the empowered female character is not merely portrayed through the character of Sintike as a female protagonist, but also through other female characters and even the female community in general. Sasi is commonly controlled by a group of men. Yet, the story shows a different tradition at Kapatcol Village in which Sasi can also be handled by women’s communities as stated:

“There is a special Sasi area that is managed by a group of women, or mama-mama as they are called here, and Mama Anike is the leader of this group.” (Riscitadewi et al., 2022, p. 329).

This quotation not only shows that women are empowered but also shows that women have the capacity to control and lead a group or community.

Mama Anike is portrayed as a powerful and impactful woman as it is repetitively mentioned in the story about how she leads other people.

“After conducting the ceremony, the mama-mama directs the people to board the boats that will take them to see to harvest sea resources.” (Riscitadewi et al., 2022)

“Mama Anika, who is on the first boat, is leading a prayer before the harvest.” (Riscitadewi et al., 2022, p. 331)

Being impactful and able to lead is definitely an extraordinary portrayal for children’s readers, especially for girl readers, since they can project their selves to be the leader as well in the future.

While many girls in children’s books barely show their identity and are mostly characterized as “meek and mild” (Tsao, 2008), Andin, Hanyin, and Sintike are exceptional. They are represented as adventurous girls. In addition, they are empowered through either formal or informal education by

enthusiastically learning something new. Education empowers them. Being adventurous and empowered is such a progressive gender role.

Besides those female protagonists, another progressive gender role is reflected through the male protagonist. It can be seen in the story of *The Riddle in the Recipe* (the original Indonesian title is *Tekateki dalam resep Bapak*).

The story is about a young boy named Gumilang who prefers not to play with his friends on weekends since he wants to do cooking with his father. "Gumilang likes to spend the weekends cooking with his father (Riscitadewi et al., 2022, p. 109)." Interestingly, they do cook without any help from the mother. Not because the mother is absent in the story, but rather she is there to enjoy the food with family.

Showing that the boy and his father enjoy cooking in the kitchen is another level of gender role. It positively encourages boy readers to confidently do domestic activities like cooking. In addition, the absence of a mother in the kitchen strengthens the modern way of thinking that women must not always be involved in the kitchen. This portrayal definitely shows progressive gender roles against traditional stereotyping. It is in contrast to the traditional feminine gender roles in which according to (Calton et al., 2014) women should be involved in "domesticity, nurturance, and deference to men."

Despite, all those positive movements of gender role portrayal, the depiction of traditional gender roles can be seen in other stories.

The Awe-inspiring Mappalecce Bola, a story from South Sulawesi, shows the traditional value of "gotong royong" or working together. The story depicts the communal work of moving house, or what is usually called *mappalaecce* or *mappalette bola* in Bugis tradition. However, the story also reveals traditional gender roles.

The early part of the story shows Udding as the main character and his family are doing daily activities: Uding and his father are cleaning the fan, typically male activity dealing with repairing and engineering. Meanwhile, the mother and the daughter are preparing the food, typically a domestic activity for women. In addition, it is reflected in the story that only males are involved in

the relocation of the house, while the female community is making traditional cakes and foods.

Showing female characters as passive and domestic, according to Aparisi et al., (2021), can lead to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, which may limit children's aspirations and opportunities. Such portrayal could possibly reinforce the gender role stereotype that only females are responsible for cooking. However, the cultural context in this story is showing "gotong royong" (mutual collaboration), in which according to Kuntjara (1997), this concept encourages family unity and typically supports gender roles that men and women should carry out to participate to their communities. Although gotong royong stresses togetherness, it usually does not question accepted gender norms, thereby perhaps supporting the view that women's job stays in the house (Rosyani et al., 2019).

The setting of the story is in Bugis tribe. Buginese women's status in *Lagaligo* epic was expected to *be mulu jajareng* for their husbands (carrying out household) and *tanrere alebirena aroane pawekke engngi* (maintaining the dignity of their husbands) (Kesuma, 2019).

Showing gender stereotypes in a children's book can influence and create beliefs about what boys and girls can and should do. Such depictions can influence children's self-concepts and goals, causing girls to underestimate their skills in leadership or engineering sector for example and boys to feel abnormal when doing domestic activities.

CONCLUSION

An Anthology of Indonesian Children's Stories consists of ten stories. The quantitative analysis of the comparative ratio of female and male protagonist lead characters shows that only three stories present a female protagonist, while the other seven stories present a male protagonist (ratio 7:3). Six out of seven stories with a male protagonist present female as supporting or other characters, yet another one shows the absence of female characters.

Stories with female protagonists, however, show very feminist characters who are adventurous and empowered. They are not as "meek and mild" as

the traditional female characters. In addition, another story with a male protagonist also portrays positive improvement of male gender roles against the stereotype. Certain stories seem reinforce traditional gender roles, yet, they are actually portrayed the cultural values of “Gotong Royong” that promotes cooperation within family: men and women have their own responsibilities to support their communities.

An Anthology of Indonesian Children’s Stories definitely can influence children’s perspective about gender roles. They can learn about gender and accept multiple identities by reading about strong, multifaceted female protagonists and masculine characters who defy stereotypes (Lestari & Yulindrasari, 2021). These stories help readers, educators, and parents give children role models that break stereotypes, which may affect their real-life self- and other-perceptions.

This anthology can also mainstream more behaviors, ambitions, and identities by featuring stories with non-traditional roles for all genders. This can help youngsters build their identities without gender expectations, making society more egalitarian and inclusive (Abad & Pruden, 2013). Representation in children's literature can help raise a generation that values gender equality and questions social norms. help youngsters build their identities without gender expectations, making society more egalitarian and inclusive.

Subsequent researchers may enhance this work by examining a broader and more diversified array of Indonesian children's narratives, integrating regional and cultural variances to achieve a comprehensive grasp of gender portrayal patterns. Furthermore, qualitative assessments of character attributes, language, and narratives may reveal nuanced biases or progressive components that are not apparent through protagonist counts. Assessments of character attributes, language, and narratives may reveal nuanced biases or progressive components that are not apparent through protagonist counts alone. They can dig deeper into other stories and their cultural contexts.

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