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The Resistance Of The Female Protagonist Against Patriarchal Power And Marginalization In The Short Story Lebah By Tetin Sobariah

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Abstract

The short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah is a short story that raises the issue of feminism. This study aims to describe the resistance of the female protagonist against patriarchal power and the marginalization she experiences in the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah. The data source used in this study is the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah, which was published in the Cerpen Digital section of Kompas.id. The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Research data was collected through feminist analysis. The results show that the forms of patriarchal power found in Tetin Sobariah's short story Lebah include patriarchal power in cultural structures, sexuality, and violence packaged in gossip, bullying, the stigma of "Anak Haram or Illegitimate Children," and the stigma of "Wanita Gatal or Promiscuous Women." The female protagonist in the short story also experiences marginalization in the form of limited social life and marginalization in the field of education in the form of termination of access to education for a pregnant student and termination of access to education due to bullying. The resistance shown by the female protagonist in the short story is existential resistance, which includes the decision not to have an abortion, the decision to start socializing with the community, and self-defense accompanied by evidence.

Keywords: ***female protagonist resistance, feminism, feminist literature, gender discrimination, patriarchal power***

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INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal culture still dominates society's thinking today and can be seen in everyday life (Sunny & Sreenivasulu, 2024); (Sugiarti, 2021); (Wayan & Nyoman, 2020). Patriarchal culture is characterized by male domination over women in various aspects of life (Tong, 2009). Women in patriarchal cultures experience many injustices that impact their lives. In societies that adhere to patriarchal culture, women are only allowed to be in the domestic sphere, while men have the power to control the public sphere (Dhileep & Baisel, 2024). This shows the limitations of women's roles and the freedom of men's roles in patriarchal societies (Khelghat-Doost & Sibly, 2020).

Women in patriarchal societies are considered to be “the Other”. The position of women in patriarchal societies is the internalization of patriarchal values that place them within a framework of domesticity, morality, and propriety controlled by men (Beauvoir, 2025). Patriarchal power uses a system of paternal or male authority that controls all aspects of life, including control over family members, wealth, natural resources, and decision-making (Bhasin, 1996); (Gruber & Szołtysek, 2016).

Walby (2014) categorizes patriarchy into private patriarchy and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy relates to the oppression experienced by women in the domestic sphere, while public patriarchy relates to the oppression experienced by women in broader spheres, both in the public sphere and the state. The power of patriarchy encompasses work structures, domestic production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state.

The existence of patriarchal power causes women to experience marginalization. This marginalization can take the form of control over women's productive capacity or labor, reproduction, sexuality, movement, property, and other resources. This can be found in institutions that may be patriarchal in nature, such as the family, religion, legal systems, economic systems and institutions, political systems and institutions, and educational systems and institutions (Bhasin, 1996).

In patriarchal cultures, women are often placed in a position of weakness (Karthiga et al., 2025); (Azhari et al., 2021); (Alda, 2021); dan (Alzoubi et al., 2025). Women are often blamed (Tawaqal et al., 2020). Not only that, women are also often positioned as objects of pleasure for men (Adzkiya et al., 2022). This patriarchal culture creates inequality between men and women in terms of the rights they should have. Men tend to have more power in patriarchal societies, while women tend to be marginalized (Johnson, 2014). Male domination over women often leads to intimidation and gender discrimination (Dinanti & Tjahjani Joesana, 2021); (Odell, 2023). Women find it difficult to achieve freedom and prosperity (Rahma, 2023), (Dewinta & Naurah, 2022).

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The feminist movement emerged as a response to the oppression of women by men (Sandy, 2019); (Hanifah & Hafiz Kurniawan, 2023). Feminism creates a comprehensive understanding of gender justice (Feng & Talif, 2021). In the field of literature, feminist literary criticism has emerged to expose inequality between men and women and demand justice for women both as writers and as characters in literary works (Muyassaroh, 2021); (Wiyatmi, 2012).

Literary works are representations of social phenomena that exist around them (Derana, 2016). Through language, media, and imaginative elements, literature describes human conditions and social life (Lubis & Kasih, 2025). Patriarchy is often an issue represented in literary works (Wardani et al., 2024) ; (Lestari & Nugroho, 2022). Literary works acknowledge the oppression of women in patriarchal cultures (Ruggiu, 2025). In its position, literary works can be a medium that perpetuates patriarchal culture or a medium that provides resistance to it. The perpetuation of patriarchal culture can take the form of discrimination against women in literary works, the portrayal of women as objects that can be owned by someone, the characteristics of women as weak and oppressed, the portrayal of women as the guilty party, or sexist language. Literary works as a medium that breaks down patriarchal culture are described from the resistance of the characters in them against the culture and power of patriarchy that they experience (Quddus, 2024). Literature can challenge and overthrow patriarchal culture (Hiwarkhedka & Sharma, 2024). Resistance to patriarchy in literary texts can be seen through the actions of the main characters in building their identities and voices amid the gender injustice they experience (Humm, 2003). In this case, literary works become an ideological arena that fights for gender awareness.

Research on patriarchy, marginalization, and resistance of female protagonists in literary works has been conducted extensively. Such research includes: “Intersectionality of Patriarchy and Colonialism: A Postcolonial Ecofeminist Reading of Sahar Khalifeh’s The End of Spring” (Daghamin, 2025); “Defying the Odds: Women’s Journeys of Survival in the Novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”(Karthiga et al., 2025); “Situar el género en el centro de la diferencia colonial. Feminización y racismo en la invasión ibérica de Abya Yala” (Calvo Rivera, 2025); “Defying Norms: A Contrapuntal Reading of Gender Performance in the works of Amy Tan and Anita Nair” (Sunny & Sreenivasulu, 2024); “Gentle Violence Bengali Middle Class Women Living under Patriarchy in Bani Basu’s Novels” (Rokicka, 2025); “The Power of Patriarchy in The Short Story Collection of Perempuan Patah Hati yang Kembali Menemukan Cinta Melalui Mimpi by Eka Kurniawan” (Hilmi et al., 2022); “Kuasa Patriarki dalam Novel Entok Karya Okki Madasari: Kajian Feminisme (The Power of Patriarchy in Entok, a Novel by Okky Madasari: A Feminist Analysis)”(Ima & Qadriani,

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2020); "Marginalisasi terhadap Perempuan dalam Novel Kembang Jepun Karya Remy Sylado (The Marginalization of Women in Kembang Jepun, a Novel by Remy Sylado)" (Baso, 2021); and "Perlawanan Tokoh Perempuan terhadap budaya patriarki dalam Novel Tarian Bumi Karya Oka Rusmini: Kajian Feminisme (Female Resistance against Patriarchal Culture in Tarian Bumi, a Novel by Oka Rusmini: A Feminist Analysis)" (Hardinanto, 2025).

Previous studies have shown that literary works often present patriarchal power, the marginalization of women, and various forms of resistance by female characters. Patriarchy dominates and limits women's freedom of movement, leading to their marginalization. However, female characters can demonstrate gender awareness and resistance to it.

Different from previous studies that analyzed patriarchal power, the marginalization of women, and the resistance of female protagonists separately, this study presents them as a whole to examine Tetin Sobariah's short story Lebah. Tetin Sobariah's short story Lebah presents feminist issues in the form of patriarchal power, the marginalization of women, and resistance against it. The female protagonist in the short story is depicted as a woman who experiences gender inequality caused by the patriarchal power around her. The author presents the shackles of patriarchal power that weaken the position of women in this short story. However, the protagonist also resists the patriarchal power that shackles her. This is represented through the symbol of a bee as an animal that will fight and chase anyone who disturbs it.

Based on this description, this study attempts to describe the resistance of the female protagonist against patriarchal power and marginalization in the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a feminist perspective. The focus of this study is to describe the resistance of the female protagonist against patriarchal power and marginalization in the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah, which covers the forms of patriarchal power, marginalization of women, and the resistance of the female protagonist.

The data source used in this study is the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah, published in section Cerpen Digital Kompas.id. The research instrument was the researcher herself as a human instrument who determined the focus of the research, selected the data sources, collected the data, assessed the quality of the data, interpreted the data, and drew conclusions. The data collection techniques used in this study were reading and note-taking techniques. The collected data were then analyzed using a feminist perspective.

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DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following is the result of research and discussion on the resistance of the female protagonist against patriarchal power and marginalization in the short story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah, which covers the forms of patriarchal power, marginalization of women, and the resistance of the female protagonist.

Table 1. Forms of Patriarchal Power, Marginalization of Woman, and Resistance of Female Protagonists in the Short Story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah

No.	Aspects Studied	Category	Findings
1.	Forms of Patriarchal Power	Culture	gossip
			the stigma of being an 'Anak Haram/Illegitimate Child'
		Sexuality	sexual objectification by men
			the stigma of being a 'Wanita Gatal/ Promiscuous Woman'
		Violence	solicitation for sex
			requests to terminate the pregnancy
2.	Marginalization of Women	Freedom of Movement	restrictions on socializing
		Education	denial of access to schooling due to pregnancy
			denial of access to schooling due to bullying
3.	Resistance Female Protagonists	Existentialism	refusal to terminate the pregnancy
			opening up to socialize with the surrounding community
			presenting evidence of injustice experienced

1. Forms of Patriarchal Power

Patriarchal power encompasses the structures of work, domestic production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state (Walby, 2014). Patriarchal power in Tetin Sobariah's short story Lebah encompasses patriarchal power in cultural structures, sexuality, and violence against

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women. The female protagonist in the short story Lebah who are victims of patriarchal power are Denok and Intan. Denok is the daughter of the character Intan, who experiences injustice in the cultural structure in the form of gossip from the surrounding community that she is an illegitimate child. Meanwhile, Intan is the mother of the character Denok, who experiences injustice in the structure of sexuality and violence, causing her to suffer from social phobia.

The power of patriarchy in the cultural structure is experienced by Denok, as shown in data 1 and 2. Meanwhile, the structure of sexuality and violence is experienced by Intan, as shown in data 3 and 4.

Data 1

"Ibu, apakah benar aku ini anak haram?" tanya Denok polos, kala itu.

("Mom, is it true that I am an illegitimate child?" Denok asked innocently at that time.)

"Intan langsung menebasnya, bahwa tak ada yang namanya anak haram. Intan tahu siapa awal mula yang menyebarkan rumor itu ke telinga anaknya."

("Intan immediately dismissed it, saying that there was no such thing as an illegitimate child. Intan knew who had spread the rumor to her daughter.")

Data 2

"Teh Denok itu anak haram, ya?" tanya Gita, pegawainya.

("Is Denok's child illegitimate?" asked Gita, one of the employees.)

"Katanya sih gitu, ayahnya tak jelas siapa," sahut Risna, pegawai yang lainnya.

("That's what they say. No one knows who the father is," replied Risna, another employee.)

Data 1 and 2 show the power of patriarchy in the cultural structure of gossip. Gossip that stigmatizes Denok as an "Anak Haram/Illegitimate Child" becomes a tool of patriarchal power to judge the morality of women and even their offspring. This stigma views Denok negatively as someone who is lowly, dirty, and immoral, just like her mother.

Data 3

"Kala itu, ia terbuai oleh bujuk rayu Andri yang mengajaknya bercinta."

("At that time, she was seduced by Andri's persuasion to have sex with him.")

Data 3 shows the power of patriarchy in the structure of violence. Andri's seduction of Intan is a form of symbolic violence in which women are dominated by men and portrayed as submissive. This illustrates that women are treated as sexual objects for men, to be used according to men's desires (Beauvoir, 2025).

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Data 4

"Sebulan sebelum Intan meninggal, dia sudah menceritakan semuanya kepada Denok. Intan dihamili oleh teman sekelasnya yang bernama Andri Surandri. Andri tak mau menikahinya karena orang tuanya tak mengizinkannya, sebab Andri masih anak SMA. Andri dan orang tuanya justru menyarankan agar Intan mau menggugurkan kandungannya. Dan orang tuanya justru malah menyebut Intan wanita gatal. Andri pindah sekolah, dan tak ada kabar lagi tentangnya setelah ia memberikan sejumlah uang untuk biaya menggugurkan kandungan."

("A month before Intan died, she had told Denok everything. Intan had been impregnated by her classmate, Andri Surandri. Andri did not want to marry her because his parents did not allow it, as Andri was still in high school. Andri and his parents suggested that Intan have an abortion. And her parents even called Intan "Wanita Gatal or a Promiscuous Woman. Andri transferred schools, and there was no further news about him after he gave some money for the abortion expenses.")

Data 4 shows the power of patriarchy in the structure of sexuality and violence experienced by Intan. This structure of sexuality and violence includes seduction to have sex, requests to have an abortion, and the stigma of being a "Wanita Gatal or Promiscuous woman." Andri's refusal to marry Intan is part of the power of patriarchy, which shows that women's lives are decided by men. Women are not subjects who determine their own lives, but objects of men's decisions. Women are positioned as "The Other" whose existence is controlled by men (Beauvoir, 2025). Meanwhile, Andri's family's request for Intan to abort her pregnancy is part of patriarchal power in the structure of sexuality. In this context, men and patriarchal society feel they have control over women's bodies and the right to reproduce (Walby, 2014). The request to abort the fetus is also part of patriarchal power in the structure of violence. The stigma of "Wanita Gatal or a Promiscuous Woman" directed at the character Intan is part of patriarchal power in the structure of sexuality. The stigma of "Wanita Gatal or a Promiscuous Woman" seems to regulate the body and reproduction and gives a negative stigma to female sexuality that is considered deviant from social rules/norms, while men are not judged for what they do (Walby, 2014).

2. Marginalization of Women

The marginalization of women can take the form of control over women's productive capacity or labor, reproduction, sexuality, movement, property, and other resources. This can be found in institutions that may be patriarchal in nature, such as the family, religion, legal systems,

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economic systems and institutions, political systems and institutions, and educational systems and institutions (Bhasin, 1996). The marginalization of women in the short story Lebah is evident in the marginalization of women's movement and marginalization in the field of education experienced by Denok and Intan. Marginalization in women's movement is shown in data 5 and 6. Marginalization in the field of education is shown in data 7 and 8.

Data 5

"Jangankan acara-acara di kelurahan, sekadar menghadiri acara syukuran tetangganya saja ia tak datang. Sehingga dirinya menjadi sorotan dan dianggap fobia sosial oleh tetangganya karena tak mampu bergaul dengan yang lain. Denok dan ibunya, Intan, hanya keluar kalau ke pasar dan terima orderan menjahit baju. Denok tak tahu kenapa ibunya bersikap demikian. Dirinya merasa tak bisa hidup normal layaknya kebanyakan orang. Hampir dua puluh tahun, dirinya merasa membusuk di rumah."

("Not only did she not attend events in the neighborhood, she didn't even attend her neighbors' celebrations. As a result, she became the subject of gossip and was considered socially phobic by her neighbors because she was unable to socialize with others. Denok and her mother, Intan, only went out to the market and to pick up sewing orders. Denok didn't know why her mother behaved this way. She felt she couldn't live a normal life like most people. For nearly twenty years, she felt like she was rotting away at home.")

Data 6

"Seumur hidupnya, ibunya tak pernah menikah karena trauma. Sementara ayahnya hidup enak, nyaman, bisa sekolah hingga sarjana, dan tak pernah mendapat perundungan seperti yang dialami oleh ibunya."

("Throughout her life, her mother never married because of trauma. Meanwhile, her father lived a comfortable life, was able to attend school until he earned his bachelor's degree, and never experienced bullying like his mother did.")

Data 5 shows the marginalization of women's mobility experienced by Denok in the form of restrictions on socializing with the community imposed by Intan. Meanwhile, data 6 shows the marginalization of women's mobility experienced by Intan due to bullying and gossip circulating in the community, which caused her to develop social phobia. As a form of social control, gossip plays an important role in controlling norms in society (Fajar, 2016); (Hafizah, 2019); (Mangundjaya, 2022). This is exploited by patriarchal societies as a means of regulating the lives of women who are considered to deviate from the prevailing norms.

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Data 7

"Tapi dirinya tak bisa berbuat apa-apa selain anaknya keluar dari sekolah dan memutuskan untuk mengajari anaknya sendiri di rumah. Paling tidak berhitung dan membaca dan keterampilan lainnya, seperti menjahit. Ia tak ingin anaknya mengalami perundungan. Yang salah adalah dirinya hamil di luar nikah, seharusnya anaknya tak kena imbas atas perbuatannya."

("But she could do nothing but take her child out of school and decide to teach her child herself at home. At least arithmetic and reading and other skills, such as sewing. She didn't want her child to be bullied. What was wrong was that she got pregnant out of wedlock, her child shouldn't have to suffer for her actions.")

Data 8

"Masa depan Intan hancur, sebab tak ada satu sekolah pun yang mau menerima siswa dalam keadaan hamil."

(Intan's future was ruined because no school would accept a student who was pregnant.)

Data 7 shows that Denok experienced marginalization in education because she was expelled from school after her mother found out that Denok was being teased as an illegitimate child. Meanwhile, data 8 shows marginalization in education experienced by Intan due to the lack of schools that accept pregnant female students. Male dominance in education is greater than that of females. Men are never blamed for their deviations from the norm, but women are punished for their deviations, even to the extent of affecting their offspring (Beauvoir, 2025).

3. The Resistance of Female Protagonists

Women's resistance to patriarchal power is an existential process towards freedom, in which women can refuse to be positioned as "the Other" and become subjects who have the freedom to determine the meaning of their lives (Beauvoir, 2025). The resistance of the main female characters to patriarchal power in the short story Lebah is carried out by Denok and Intan. Denok's resistance is shown in data 9 and 10. Meanwhile, Intan's resistance is shown in data 11.

Data 9

"Denok sangat berbeda dengan ibunya. Tak hanya itu, ia mulai disukai oleh lingkungan sekitar, sebab ia membantu mengurangi pengangguran. Ada sekitar 20 orang dipekerjakan di kedai jahitnya."

("Denok is very different from her mother. Not only that, she has become well-liked by the community because she helps reduce unemployment. About 20 people are employed at her

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sewing shop.")

Data 10

"Denok pun memutar pemutar kaset yang berisi rekaman perihal Andri dan keluarganya menyuruh menggugurkan kandungan Intan, dan Intan harus tutup mulut soal kehamilannya kepada siapa pun. Tak hanya Andri yang memaksanya, tapi juga bibinya, Tuti, yang sekaligus tetangganya. Denok juga memperlihatkan foto-foto masa pacaran kedua orangtuanya. Juga hasil tes DNA dirinya, Intan, dan Andri. Cocok, mereka terhubung dalam ikatan darah."

(Denok also played a cassette tape containing a recording of Andri and his family telling Intan to have an abortion, and that Intan must keep her pregnancy a secret from everyone. It wasn't just Andri who forced her, but also her aunt, Tuti, who was also her neighbor. Denok also showed photos of her parents' courtship. She also showed the DNA test results for herself, Intan, and Andri. They matched; they were related by blood.")

Data 11

"Intan mengakui kesalahannya, ia tetap membiarkan janin yang ada di rahimnya tumbuh."

(Intan admitted her mistake, but she still allowed the fetus in her womb to grow.)

Denok's resistance to patriarchal power in the short story Lebah is expressed by opening herself up to socialize with the surrounding community and exposing the injustice she and her mother have experienced. The character Denok asserts that she is the subject of her own life, not merely an object whose morality can be determined based on her origins as someone born outside of marriage. Denok no longer allows her identity to be shaped by society's view of her. In addition, her courage in exposing the injustice she and her mother have experienced is a form of symbolic resistance against patriarchal power, which only shames women and covers up the mistakes made by men. Denok's resistance is likened to a bee that will pursue and fight against patriarchal power for the injustice she and her mother have experienced. What she does is a reversal of power to take back the justice that has been taken away by patriarchal society, which is actualized through conscious and reflective actions (Beauvoir, 2025).

Meanwhile, Intan fought back by keeping Denok, the fetus she was carrying. This shows women's awareness of their power over their own bodies and desires. The female body, which is often controlled by patriarchal society, becomes a means for the character Intan to assert her freedom by not complying with requests to abort her pregnancy. Intan asserts her full rights over her body and her reproductive rights. This is a form of ideological resistance that rejects patriarchal norms and chooses to make decisions based on what she believes in (Beauvoir, 2025).

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CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion regarding the resistance of the female protagonist against patriarchal power and marginalization in the Short Story Lebah by Tetin Sobariah, which covers the forms of patriarchal power, marginalization of women, and the resistance of the female protagonist, it can be concluded that the forms of patriarchal power found in Tetin Sobariah's short story Lebah include patriarchal power in cultural structures, sexuality, and violence packaged in gossip, bullying, the stigma of "Anak Haram (illegitimate children)," and the stigma of "Wanita Gatal (promiscuous women)." The female protagonist in the short story also experiences marginalization in the form of limited social life and marginalization in the field of education in the form of termination of access to education for a pregnant student and termination of access to education due to bullying. The resistance shown by the female protagonist in the short story is existential resistance, which includes the decision not to have an abortion, the decision to start socializing with the community, and self-defense accompanied by evidence.

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