

Female Habitus and Symbolic Violence in Intan Andaru's *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*: A Bourdieusian Perspective

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Abstract

Gender inequality in cultural narratives often operates not through physical violence, but rather through subtle, socially legitimized symbolic mechanisms. This article aims to analyze how women's habitus and symbolic violence are represented in the novel *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* (*The Woman in the Red Scarf*) by Intan Andaru. Departing from Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, particularly the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence, this study uses a qualitative method with a literary text analysis approach. The results show that the female characters in the novel experience internalization of patriarchal domination through a process of social habituation that makes inequality accepted as normal. Symbolic violence works through language, cultural symbols, and social practices that normalize submission and encourage the unconscious participation of female subjects in structures of domination. These findings emphasize that literature not only reflects social reality but also functions as an arena for the reproduction of symbolic power relations. The contribution of this research lies in enriching the study of Indonesian literature within the discourse of global cultural sociology, while also offering an alternative reading of gender issues that goes beyond moralistic approaches and normative feminism.

Keywords: Bourdieu; Cultural Narratives; Female Habitus; Indonesian Literature; Symbolic domination

1. Introduction

Literature functions not only as an aesthetic product, but also as a cultural medium that represents, negotiates, and reproduces social structures and power relations operating within society. Through the narratives, characters, and conflicts they construct, literary texts play an active role in shaping readers' perspectives on social reality, including the legitimacy of values, norms, and hierarchies of power. In this context, gender relations are one of the most consistent and problematic structures represented in literary works, especially in societies still governed by patriarchal value systems.

Gender relations in literature are often depicted not through visible physical violence, but rather through symbolic mechanisms that operate subtly and repeatedly. Women are often placed in subordinate positions through depictions of social roles, moral burdens, cultural stigmas, and collective expectations attached to their bodies and identities. Literary narratives, therefore, become an important space for exploring how gender inequality is normalized and accepted as "normal" within [1], [2]

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework makes a significant contribution to understanding literature as an arena (field) in which symbolic power operates. Bourdieu explains that symbolic power operates through the mechanism of

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misrecognition, namely the condition where relations of domination are not recognized as a form of power, but are instead accepted as a natural order or cultural truth [3]. In literary texts, this symbolic power is manifested through the choice of language, narrative structure, and the positions of the characters, which indirectly determine who has the right to speak, who is silenced, and which experiences are considered valid.

In the context of gender relations, Bourdieu asserts that masculine domination is not only maintained through formal social institutions, but also through symbolic practices embedded in everyday customs and systems of cultural representation [4]. Literature, as part of symbolic production, plays a role in reinforcing or challenging this domination. When women are portrayed as objects of stigma, moral victims, or subjects who must bear a collective burden, literary texts have the potential to reproduce the symbolic violence that shapes women's habitus—that is, the mental and social dispositions that make subordination an accepted part of life [5].

A number of feminist and sociological studies have shown that symbolic violence against women in cultural narratives often operates through mechanisms of tacit consent, internalization of norms, and unequal demands for emotional resilience [1], [2] but also unconsciously involved in reproducing them. Therefore, literary analysis that focuses on symbolic power relations is crucial for uncovering layers of domination that are not always visible on the surface of the text.

Furthermore, recent studies confirm that literary works that address issues of stigma, trauma, and social violence—especially those rooted in local cultural contexts—have strong global relevance. Through the representation of individual experiences, literature can demonstrate the connection between personal suffering and social structures, collective memory, and the [6], [7] mirror of reality, but also a critical field for uncovering how gender relations and symbolic power continue to operate and are passed down across generations.

In the contemporary Indonesian literary landscape, works addressing gender issues increasingly occupy a strategic position as a medium for social and cultural critique. However, not all texts present gender issues as structural issues connected to history, power, and symbolic practices within society. *Perempuan Bersampur Merah (The Woman in the Red Scarf)* works by Intan Andaru [8] occupies an important position because this novel does not merely represent the experiences of women as victims, but rather places women's bodies and identities in a vortex of power relations, social stigma, and symbolic violence that are deeply rooted in certain cultural and historical contexts.

Thematically, this novel is intertwined with gender discourse in Indonesian literature, which questions the position of women within patriarchal cultural structures. Several studies have shown that the female characters in this novel—particularly Sari—are conceptualized as subjects experiencing multiple layers of oppression: as women, as members of a local community, and [9]–[12] not stop at individual psychological representation, but moves towards a critique of the social structures that enable violence against women.

Uniqueness *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* lies in its ability to connect the personal experiences of female characters with the socio-cultural context of Banyuwangi, particularly the Using/Osing community. This novel depicts how local value systems, collective memory, and cultural practices are intertwined with social stigma, particularly in the context of violence against [6], [13], [14] symbolic media through which society projects its fears, anxieties, and moral conflicts.

The novel's position becomes even more significant when read alongside anthropological and sociological studies of [15]–[22] accused of possessing supernatural powers cannot be understood as merely irrational acts, but rather as part of a social mechanism legitimized through cultural discourse, the media, and local authorities. It is in this context that *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* gaining cross-disciplinary relevance, as the novel represents these dynamics through the perspective of women trapped in a network of symbolic and social power.

Reason for selection *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* the selection of this novel as the object of study in this article was not solely based on its novelty or the scarcity of previous research. Rather, this novel was chosen because of the dense relationship between the literary text, the local cultural context, and the symbolic power structures at work within it. A number of previous studies have examined this novel from various perspectives, such as literary psychology, literary sociology, cultural values, [10], [23]–[26] systematically linking them to the concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic violence within Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework.

Using Bourdieu's perspective, this article positions *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* as a text that shows how symbolic domination works through the internalization of cultural values and social norms in female characters. The violence experienced by Sari is not only physical or psychological, but also symbolic—violence that is legitimized by language, [1], [3], [4] structures.

Furthermore, the choice of this subject is also driven by the global relevance of the issues raised in the novel. The phenomenon of stigma, rumors, and moral panic-based violence against certain groups or individuals is not merely a local issue, but rather [2], [7] novel is intertwined with the memory of collective violence which is also recorded in the historical-political study of the Banyuwangi case [27]. Thus, *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* can be read as a local representation of global problems, bridging Indonesian literature with international discourses on gender, power, and symbolic violence.

A number of previous studies have studied *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* from various approaches, ranging from literary psychology, literary sociology, literary anthropology, to studies of cultural values and education. These studies provide important initial contributions to understanding the complexity of female characters, inner conflict, social trauma, and the [10]–[12], [23], [24] structures has not been analyzed in depth.

In studies that position this novel as a reflection of social or cultural values, women are generally positioned as victims of injustice or subjects who must "rise" through moral and psychological resilience. This approach, while important, tends to lead to normative feminism that emphasizes fortitude, resilience, or positive values, without dismantling the structural mechanisms that allow violence against women to continue and be accepted as part of the [10], [12] experienced by female characters is more often read as an individual problem or personal tragedy, rather than as a product of collectively legitimized symbolic power relations.

On the other hand, studies that place *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* in the socio-cultural context of Banyuwangi and the Using community has enriched understanding of the cultural background of the novel, including traditions, value systems, and the social dynamics of the [13], [14], [28]–[30] studies generally separate cultural analysis from gender relations analysis, so that women's position in the symbolic structure of local society has not been fully understood as part of the arena of power that operates through language, stigma, and social practices.

Meanwhile, anthropological and sociological research on Banyuwangi—particularly those discussing the issues of rumors, black magic, communal violence, and moral panic—shows that social violence cannot be separated from the mechanisms of symbolic legitimacy that operate within the community [15]–[18], [31]–[33]. However, these studies focus more on empirical social dynamics and rarely utilize literary texts as the primary field of analysis. Consequently, literature's potential as a symbolic space for reflection on practices of power and social violence has not been optimally utilized in interdisciplinary studies.

This research gap is the main foundation of this study. This article starts from the assumption that violence against women in *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* cannot be adequately understood through a thematic, psychological, or moralistic approach alone. A structural reading is required that connects the experiences of female characters to the mechanisms of symbolic power that operate through culture, language, and collective memory. To this end, Pierre Bourdieu's theory—particularly the concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic violence—[3]–[5], [34].

In contrast to normative feminist approaches that emphasize individual consciousness or resistance, the Bourdieusian perspective allows for a reading that highlights how patriarchal domination is internalized within female characters as habitus—that is, dispositions that shape how they think, feel, and act, even when these dispositions are detrimental to themselves [5]. In this framework, symbolic violence is understood as a form of domination that is not always conscious, [1]–[3]

The main contribution of this study lies in its attempt to bridge literary studies, gender studies, and cultural sociology through a structural reading of *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*. By positioning this novel as a symbolic arena where women's habitus is formed and contested, this article not only enriches the study of contemporary Indonesian literature, but also contributes to the international discourse on symbolic violence, social stigma, and gender [7], [35]–[37]. Thus, the novelty of this research does not lie solely in the object of study, but rather in the way of reading and interpreting literary texts as part of a symbolic power structure that operates across levels—individual, cultural, and social.

2. Theoretical framework

Within Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, habitus is a key concept for understanding the dialectical relationship between social structures and individual practices. Habitus is defined as a system of durable and transferable dispositions formed through the internalization of specific social and historical conditions [5]. These dispositions do not operate mechanically, but rather shape tendencies to think, feel, and act that seem natural to the subject experiencing them. Thus, habitus serves as a conceptual bridge between objective structures and subjective experience.

Habitus does not emerge spontaneously, but is formed through repeated and structured social experiences. Family, education, cultural traditions, language, and everyday social practices are the primary means of internalizing the values and norms that shape an individual's habitus [34], [38] carries traces of past power relations into present practices, so that social structures tend to be reproduced without the need for direct coercion. This is what makes social domination often long-lasting and seemingly stable.

In the context of gender relations, habitus plays a crucial role in shaping women's subjectivity. Patriarchal domination operates not only through formal rules or physical violence, but also through the formation of dispositions that lead women to accept certain social constraints as [4], [39] cultural contexts, is shaped through the internalization of values of obedience, sacrifice, emotional resilience, and the moral burdens attached to their bodies and social roles. These dispositions then influence how women interpret themselves, their experiences, and their position in society.

Several studies have shown that habitus plays a crucial role in explaining why gender inequality can persist even in the absence of explicit external pressure. Women are often complicit in the reproduction of domination through the symbolic acceptance of norms that [1], [2] inequality is not only understood as a problem of external structures, but also as a problem of internal dispositions formed through long-term social experiences.

The relevance of the concept of habitus in literary studies lies in its ability to read characters and narratives as products of internalized social structures. Literary characters not only act based on personal choices or individual psychological conflicts, but also represent social dispositions shaped by specific cultural and historical environments. By using the concept of habitus, literary analysis can move beyond thematic or moralistic readings to a more structural understanding of how female characters are constructed and positioned within [35], [40].

In the context of literature that addresses women's experiences in patriarchal societies, habitus allows for the exploration of how social values, stigmas, and expectations are internalized within female characters, thus shaping their responses to violence, injustice, and trauma. Responses that appear passive, accepting, or ambiguous do not necessarily indicate individual weakness, but can instead be read as manifestations of habitus shaped by oppressive social structures [4], [5].

Thus, the concept of habitus becomes an important theoretical foundation in this study because it allows for an understanding of the relationship between women's subjective experiences and broader social structures. Habitus provides a framework for understanding how women in literary texts are not only victims of symbolic violence, but also subjects shaped by the internalization of domination. Through this approach, the analysis of *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* can reveal how women's subjectivity is constructed, negotiated, and limited in a cultural arena that is full of symbolic power relations.

The concept of symbolic violence is one of Pierre Bourdieu's most important contributions to understanding how social domination works in subtle, invisible ways, and often without the awareness of the dominated. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as a form of power exercised through symbols, language, meaning, and representation, so that relations of domination are accepted as natural, legitimate, and normal [3]. Unlike physical violence, symbolic violence does not require direct coercion because it works through mechanisms of consent and misrecognition.

The primary mechanism of symbolic violence lies in the subject's inability to recognize domination as a form of violence. When the norms, values, and social categories produced by the dominant group are accepted as universal truths, domination is no longer perceived as a power relation, but rather as the social order that "should" be [3], [34], [41], [42]. In this condition, the dominated subject actually participates in reproducing this power, whether through language, social practices, or ways of interpreting themselves and the world around them.

Symbolic violence works effectively because it is embedded in an individual's cognitive and affective structures, namely through habitus. Habitus causes individuals to respond to the social world according to internalized structures, even when those structures are detrimental [5]. In other words, symbolic violence does not exist in isolation, but rather operates through dispositions that shape how people think, feel, and act. This is why symbolic violence often occurs without open resistance, as it has become part of how subjects understand social reality.

In gender relations, symbolic violence plays a central role in maintaining patriarchal domination. Bourdieu [4] emphasizes that masculine dominance is reproduced not only through formal social institutions, but also through cultural symbols, everyday language, and representations that frame women as inferior, vulnerable, or problematic. Symbolic violence against women often manifests itself in the form of stigma, moral imposition, and the normalization of suffering as a consequence of their assigned social roles.

Various feminist studies have shown that symbolic violence against women operates through mechanisms of implicit acceptance and consent. Women are often expected to accept unfair [1], [2] oppressive act, but rather as a social norm that must be endured. Symbolic violence [37] often operates most effectively precisely when the dominated subject lacks the language or conceptual framework to name the injustices he or she experiences.

The relevance of the concept of symbolic violence in literary studies lies in its ability to reveal the hidden dimensions of power within narrative, characterization, and story structure. Literature not only represents symbolic violence but also has the potential to become a medium for its reproduction when the narrative accepts or normalizes certain relations of domination. Thus, a literary analysis based on symbolic violence allows for a more critical [35], [40].

In the context of literary works rooted in local culture, symbolic violence is often legitimized through tradition, ritual language, and collective memory. Cultural values passed down through generations can function as symbolic mechanisms that reinforce social and gender hierarchies, even when these values are perceived as local wisdom or cultural identity [13], [14] cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it operates.

By using the concept of symbolic violence, this study views that violence against women in *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* not only physical or psychological, but also symbolic—violence legitimized by language, social norms, and cultural meaning systems. This violence operates without physical coercion, but is accepted as socially normal by the community and even by the female characters themselves. This approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of how patriarchal domination is reproduced in literary texts through subtle yet effective symbolic mechanisms.

Within Pierre Bourdieu's framework, women's habitus cannot be understood separately from the structures of symbolic domination that shape it. Habitus, as the result of the internalization of social and historical conditions, operates in a reciprocal relationship with symbolic power [3], [5], [43] women that shape how they understand themselves, their social position, and the limits of what actions are considered possible and appropriate.

Symbolic domination of women is effective because it operates through the formation of habitus, which makes gender inequality accepted as socially normal. Patriarchal values are not simply imposed from the outside but are internalized through life experiences, informal [4], [38] obedience, acceptance of stigma, and a tendency to blame themselves for the violence or injustice they experience. These dispositions demonstrate how habitus functions as a medium for the reproduction of symbolic domination.

Several studies have shown that the relationship between habitus and symbolic violence is crucial in shaping women's subjectivity. Symbolic violence not only limits women's mobility externally but also shapes the cognitive and affective structures that govern how women [1], [2] cases, women accept suffering, stigma, or marginalization as a "logical" consequence of their social position, rather than as a form of structural injustice. This situation demonstrates how women's habitus is shaped through subtle yet ongoing power relations.

In strongly patriarchal cultures, as various cross-contextual studies have shown, women's habitus is often intertwined with unbalanced moral and symbolic demands. Women are positioned as guardians of morality, family honor, and social stability, while simultaneously [7], [37] identities become symbolic fields where social power is at stake and negotiated.

The relevance of the concept of female habitus in literary studies lies in its ability to explain the actions, choices, and responses of female characters not merely as expressions of individual will, but as manifestations of social dispositions shaped by patriarchal structures. Female characters in literary texts often display ambiguities between acceptance and resistance, between obedience and anxiety. This ambiguity cannot be adequately understood through a purely moralistic or psychological approach, but rather requires a structural [35], [40].

In this study, women's habitus is understood as the result of the internalization of symbolic power relations operating within a patriarchal cultural arena. This arena encompasses local value systems, language, traditions, and collective memories that shape how communities interpret women and their roles. Through this perspective, the actions of female figures in *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* not read as an individual response detached from context, but rather as a social practice shaped by the symbolic structure in which the character is situated.

Based on this framework, the analysis of the novel's text will focus on three main focuses. First, exploring how patriarchal values and social stigma are internalized within the female characters through narrative, dialogue, and narrative perspective. Second, revealing the mechanisms of symbolic violence that operate through language, cultural symbols, and moral representations in the text, so that domination is accepted as normal. Third, reading the relationship

between the subjective experiences of the female characters and the broader social structure, particularly how habitus shapes the characters' responses to violence, stigma, and social trauma.

Thus, this subsection asserts that women's habitus is an analytical concept that allows for a more in-depth and critical reading of literature. Through the integration of the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence, this study offers an analytical framework that is not only relevant for reading *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, but also contributes to broader literary and gender studies, particularly in understanding how patriarchal domination is reproduced and negotiated in locally based literary texts.

3. Materials and method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literary text analysis method, focusing on an in-depth interpretation of the narrative structure, characters, language, and representation of meaning within the text. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for exploration of the relationship between the characters' subjective experiences and the socio-cultural structures that shape them, particularly in the context of gender relations and symbolic power.

Theoretically, this research is based on Pierre Bourdieu's cultural sociology, particularly the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence, which are positioned as the primary analytical tools for reading literary texts as arenas for the production and reproduction of social meaning. Thus, this research does not aim to measure phenomena quantitatively, but rather to understand the mechanisms of symbolic domination that operate through literary narratives contextually and interpretively.

Data sources in this study are divided into primary data and secondary data. Primary data in the form of novels *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* works by Intan Andaru [8], chosen because of the dense relationship between women's narratives, the local cultural context of Banyuwangi, and representations of gender-based symbolic violence. This novel is treated as the primary text and analyzed comprehensively, encompassing the plot, characterization, dialogue, and cultural symbols that appear in the narrative.

Secondary data includes the theoretical works of Pierre Bourdieu and academic literature relevant to gender studies, symbolic violence, the sociology of literature, and studies of Using and Banyuwangi culture. These secondary references were used to strengthen the conceptual framework, enrich the interpretive context, and ensure that the text analysis was conducted theoretically and contextually.

Data collection was conducted through intensive and repeated close reading of the novel. The readings were conducted systematically to identify sections of the text that represent the experiences of female characters, social relations, stigma, and symbolic practices related to power and gender. This process enabled researchers to capture nuances of meaning that are not always explicit but operate through language, symbols, and narrative structure.

The data obtained were then categorized based on key concepts within the Bourdieusian framework, particularly habitus and symbolic violence. This categorization includes, among other things, (1) forms of internalization of patriarchal values in female characters, (2) symbolic mechanisms that normalize stigma and domination, and (3) the relationship between the characters' subjective experiences and the socio-cultural structures that frame them.

The next stage is contextual interpretation, which involves interpreting textual findings by linking them to relevant social, cultural, and historical contexts. In this stage, literary texts are read as symbolic arenas interacting with cultural discourses and power relations outside the text. This approach allows for analysis that goes beyond the text's internal meanings and also considers how the text resonates with broader social realities.

To maintain the validity of the analysis, this study applies theoretical consistency by continuously referring to the key concepts formulated in the theoretical framework. Thus, the resulting interpretations are not speculative, but rather rooted in a clear relationship between the textual data, theoretical concepts, and the socio-cultural context being analyzed.

4. Results

The results of this study are structured in three sections: the construction of women's habitus in the novel, forms of symbolic violence, and the relationship between habitus and symbolic violence. Each section represents a social fact within the literary work. These three sections are presented below.

4.1. Construction of women's habitus

In *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, the construction of women's habitus is not presented as the result of a single traumatic event, but rather as a social process that occurs slowly, repeatedly, and is almost unconsciously by the female subjects themselves. This novel shows how dispositions of obedience, guilt, and acceptance of subordinate positions are formed through seemingly ordinary daily interactions, but are structurally laden with patriarchal values. Thus, the women in this novel are not "forced" to submit, but rather are shaped to accept submission as part of the normality of social life [4], [5].

Family relationships, particularly between the female character and her mother, become the initial space for the internalization of patriarchal values. When the character "Aku" experiences recurring dreams that evoke anxiety and a search for self-meaning, the mother's response tends to negate the reflective dimension of the experience and redirect it toward the logic of obedience and social tranquility [8]. This pattern shows that women's inner expression is not given space to develop as subjective knowledge, but is instead reduced so as not to disrupt the existing social order.

The emotional responses of female characters in the novel have also been read through a literary psychology approach [44], which in this study is understood as a dispositional expression. Within Bourdieu's framework, this practice is a form of symbolic transmission—the transmission of dominant values through trusted and loved authoritative figures. Power operates not through explicit prohibitions, but through the transfer of meaning, which teaches women from an early age that questioning their own inner experiences is unnecessary, even inappropriate.

Women's habitus is also shaped through everyday economic practices that demonstrate unequal power relations. When the main character cannot afford to pay for dance lessons, she accepts domestic labor as a substitute without open resistance or critical assessment of the injustice of this relationship [8]. This acceptance is not accompanied by a feeling of coercion, but is presented as part of the ethics of reciprocity and social propriety.

This is where habitus works effectively: inequality is not recognized as exploitation, but as a "natural" reciprocity. The novel meticulously demonstrates how women's obedience does not emerge as a result of direct pressure, but rather as an internalized disposition that allows women to voluntarily adapt to their subordinate position.

In addition to obedience, the female habitus in this novel is also characterized by the production of inward-directed guilt. In her romantic relationship with Rama, she consistently views herself as socially, educationally, and class-based unequal, thus framing the relationship within a framework of "pity" rather than equal love [8].

Such narratives demonstrate how social structures—class, education, and gender—not only operate externally but also become internal psychological boundaries. Women learn to judge themselves through the lens of dominance, so that inequality no longer requires external legitimacy. Habitus serves as a far more effective mechanism of self-control than direct coercion.

Interestingly, this novel also shows how acceptance of a subordinate position is often couched in the language of personal choice and individual healing. The main character's decision to leave Banyuwangi and interpret "sampur merah" as a personal escape from traumatic memories appears to be an autonomous act, but it is actually born from the structural limitations of safe spaces for women within the socio-cultural arena [8].

In other words, what appears to be an individual choice is the result of the internalization of a social structure that offers no alternative but conformity or resignation. This is the most subtle form of habitus at work: domination no longer exists as external pressure, but as an imaginary limit on what is and is not possible for female subjects.

Overall, *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* represents women's habitus as a cultural mechanism that reproduces gender inequality without the need for physical violence or formal regulation. Through family relations, economic practices, inner language, and seemingly personal life choices, women are shaped to accept subordinate positions as part of an unquestioned social order.

These findings confirm that the women's habitus in this novel is not an individual trait or personal weakness, but rather the result of the internalization of patriarchal structures that operate consistently and across domains. Thus, this novel provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding how symbolic domination is reproduced through disposition, not through direct coercion—a crucial foundation for the discussion of symbolic violence in the following subsection.

4.2. Forms of symbolic violence

If the previous subchapter showed how women's habitus is formed through the internalization of patriarchal values, this subchapter shows how this process is maintained and legitimized through symbolic violence. *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, symbolic violence does not exist as a visible repressive act, but rather as a cultural mechanism that normalizes inequality and makes it socially acceptable.

One of the main forms of symbolic violence in this novel is the normalization of inequality in social and gender relations. Inequality is not presented as a structural problem, but rather as a condition of life that "should be so." In everyday interactions, the female characters face situations where their subordinate positions are never openly questioned, even by themselves. This is evident in the way they accept power relations in educational and artistic spaces, including when their work and sacrifice are considered part of the normal learning process [8].

When inequality is no longer labeled as inequality, but instead disguised as ethics, tradition, or the process of maturation, symbolic violence operates effectively. Female subjects do not feel oppressed because structures of domination have become part of social "common sense" (doxa).

The novel also demonstrates how local culture and collective values play a crucial role in legitimizing women's submissiveness. Submission is not enforced through threats or punishment, but rather through narratives of propriety, honor, and gratitude. Female characters are guided to understand that maintaining social harmony is more important than articulating the injustices they experience.

In this context, the traumatic experiences women experience are denied public articulation, but instead are repressed as private matters. The collective trauma surrounding the Banyuwangi community actually reinforces this silencing mechanism, as social fear and suspicion further compel women to remain anonymous [8]. Thus, culture is not only a background, but also a tool of legitimation that softens symbolic domination.

Language plays a central role in the reproduction of symbolic violence in this novel. The choice of words, the tone of conversation, and the metaphors used in social relations create invisible boundaries about what women can and cannot say [42]. Female characters often use self-deprecating language, marking their social distance from others, and placing themselves in a position of constant "lack." [8]. This kind of language is not simply a reflection of psychological conditions, but rather the result of the internalization of unequal social structures. Symbolic violence operates through language because language has a mutually recognized symbolic authority. When women use dominant language to evaluate themselves, domination no longer requires external agents.

Beyond language, the cultural symbols in the novel—including the red sampur itself—serve ambivalently. On the one hand, the red sampur signifies collective trauma and violence; on the other, it also symbolizes the cultural burden women must bear. When the main character chooses to leave Banyuwangi, interpreting the red sampur as something to be relinquished, this decision reflects an individual response to persistent symbolic pressure [8].

However, the removal of this symbol does not necessarily dismantle the structures of domination that gave rise to it. Instead, such social practices demonstrate how women are often forced to bear the burden of change individually, while unequal social structures remain intact. Symbolic violence, then, operates by shifting responsibility from the system to the individual.

Overall, *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* describes symbolic violence as a mechanism that bridges patriarchal structures with women's subjective experiences. Inequality is normalized, submission is culturally legitimized, and dominance is reproduced through language and symbols that are accepted as normal. There is no explicit physical coercion, but precisely because of this, this violence is difficult to recognize and more persistent.

These findings confirm that symbolic violence in the novel is not merely a backdrop for narrative conflict, but rather a structural foundation that allows gender domination to continue unopposed. Reading the novel through Pierre Bourdieu's framework, symbolic violence appears not as an anomaly, but as a social logic embedded in the everyday practices and consciousness of the female subject herself.

4.3. The relationship between habitus and symbolic violence

This subchapter shows how habitus and symbolic violence do not operate as separate concepts, but rather reinforce each other within a single mechanism of social reproduction. *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* symbolic violence becomes

effective precisely because it has been internalized into the habitus of female characters. As a result, domination no longer appears as external pressure, but as a seemingly natural tendency to act.

Habitus formed through repeated social experiences prevents female characters from perceiving unequal relationships as a form of violence. In various situations, she first assesses herself before questioning the structures that place her in a subordinate position. This finding aligns with Hallatu's study [45] which shows how habitus makes symbolic violence go unnoticed in local cultural contexts. When experiencing unfair treatment or excessive expectations, the response that emerges is not rejection, but rather adaptation [8]. This unconsciousness is not the result of stupidity or personal weakness, but rather the logical consequence of a long-established habitus. Because the structure of domination has been internalized, symbolic violence is not recognized as violence, but rather as a social "rule of the game" that must be lived.

This novel demonstrates that symbolic violence does not require direct coercion to function. Female characters often negotiate the boundaries of injustice by rationalizing it. They understand suffering as part of the learning process, devotion, or a consequence of their own life choices [8]. Under these conditions, resistance becomes difficult to emerge because the subject does not see himself as a victim. Symbolic violence reaches its maximum effectiveness when it does not give rise to open conflict, but is accepted as an unquestionable part of social reality.

One important finding from this reading is the ambivalent position of female characters as subjects who indirectly contribute to the reproduction of structures of domination. This participation is not intentional, but rather through everyday practices that conform to social expectations. By continuing to play the expected roles—silent, obedient, and bearing the emotional burden—female characters contribute to the perpetuation of oppressive power relations. This is evident when the main character prefers to adapt rather than question the symbolic authority around her, even when she is aware of the unequal treatment [8]. In this framework, domination is not maintained by a single actor, but by an implicit consensus formed through collective habitus.

The relationship between habitus and symbolic violence in this novel emphasizes that social domination does not always require explicit consent. Consent, on the other hand, emerges in the form of tacit acceptance of norms that place women in certain positions. Female characters accept the limitations imposed on them as "reasonable," even when these limitations harm them psychologically and socially [8].

This process demonstrates how symbolic violence operates through misrecognition: the subject's inability to recognize domination as domination. Habitus serves as a medium that bridges social structures with individual actions, thus perpetuating the reproduction of inequality.

Although symbolic domination seems established, the novel does not completely eliminate the space for reflection. At certain moments, the female characters demonstrate partial awareness of the oppression they experience. However, this awareness does not develop into structural resistance, but rather manifests itself in individual, personal decisions, such as moving away from oppressive social spaces [8]. This choice emphasizes the limitations of resistance born of long-established habitus. Awareness without structural change only produces individual mobility, not social transformation.

Overall, *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* This paper demonstrates that habitus and symbolic violence form a mutually reinforcing circuit of domination. Habitus allows symbolic violence to be accepted without resistance, while symbolic violence ensures that habitus is continuously reproduced. In this circuit, women are not only objects of domination, but also subjects who—unwittingly—participate in its perpetuation.

This reading confirms that the symbolic violence in the novel is not a momentary event, but rather a social logic that operates latently and systemically. Thus, the relationship between habitus and symbolic violence is key to understanding why patriarchal domination in the narrative appears so stable, despite the absence of explicit physical coercion.

5. Discussion

This section discusses the research findings by linking them to previous studies, both in national and global contexts, to emphasize the theoretical position and academic contribution of this study. Thus, the analysis does not stand alone but is placed within a broader scholarly conversation on gender, literature, and symbolic domination.

The findings of this study show that the habitus of women in *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* formed through a long-term and repeated process of internalizing patriarchal values. This finding aligns with previous studies that highlight how female characters in the novel [10]–[12], [46] approaches that emphasize the suffering or resilience of characters, this study shows that such suffering is rooted in a deeper dispositional structure, namely habitus.

Globally, these findings resonate with Bourdieusian studies that position habitus as the [35], [40] In the context of gender, this research strengthens the argument that women's submission is not simply imposed from the outside, but is formed through the internalization of social structures that make domination seem natural.

The research results show that symbolic violence in the novel operates through language, cultural symbols, and social practices that normalize inequality. This finding is consistent with international studies that assert that symbolic violence operates through misrecognition and [1], [2], [37], [47], [48]. In a literary context, this study expands on previous findings that [48], [49] by showing that similar mechanisms are also at work in contemporary Indonesian literature, albeit in a different cultural configuration. Thus, this study contributes to the geographical and cultural expansion of the study of symbolic violence in literature.

Different from previous studies which placed *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* especially in the [6], [9], [50] This study emphasizes the importance of reading novels in the context of Banyuwangi's Using culture. These findings align with anthropological and ethnolinguistic studies that demonstrate the strong role of symbols, rituals, and cultural norms in shaping [13], [20], [51]–[53].

The narrative in this novel is also intertwined with the memory of collective violence in Banyuwangi [27] and intersects with Herriman's findings [19], [20], [22] regarding collective fear, rumors, and culturally based symbolic violence. Using culture is also often positioned within development and tourism discourse, which has the potential to obscure the internal power relations of the community [28].

However, this research goes further by showing how this cultural context interacts with patriarchal structures to produce specific forms of symbolic violence. Recent studies of Using culture demonstrate the transformation of local values in the context of modernity and gender [54]–[57]. The cultural relations and welfare of the Using people are also influenced by complex customary and symbolic structures [58]. The customary legal structure also plays a role in legitimizing the social and symbolic relations of the Using people [59]. Thus, domination is not only understood as a product of universal patriarchy, but as the result of the encounter between gender structures and local cultural configurations.

This discussion emphasizes that the use of the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence allows for a reading of literature that transcends the dichotomy of victim–perpetrator or resistance–oppression. Literature can be understood as an arena in which social structures are reproduced through complex, often unconscious, symbolic mechanisms.

The main theoretical implication of this research is the affirmation that Indonesian literary studies can and should be situated within the discourse of global cultural sociology. By reading literary texts as symbolic fields, this research opens up a dialogue between literary studies, cultural anthropology, and critical sociology, and enriches understanding of how gender domination operates in the Southeast Asian context.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that *Perempuan Bersampur Merah* not merely presenting a narrative of women's suffering within a patriarchal cultural context, but rather sharply mapping how domination operates through subtle, latent, and institutionalized mechanisms. Using Pierre Bourdieu's framework, this study finds that the experiences of the female characters in the novel are shaped by a habitus that has long internalized patriarchal values, so that inequality and symbolic violence are not recognized as forms of oppression, but rather accepted as social normality.

The main findings of this study confirm that symbolic violence in the novel operates through the normalization of submission, cultural legitimacy, and the use of language and symbols that reproduce power relations without physical coercion. Habitus acts as a key medium that bridges social structures with everyday practices, enabling domination to continue even with the unconscious participation of the female subjects themselves. Thus, women in this novel are positioned not only as objects of power, but also as subjects who—through the process of internalization—contribute to the continuity of the structure of domination.

Theoretically, this study makes an important contribution to literary studies and the sociology of culture by demonstrating that the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence are effectively used to interpret literary texts as arenas of social production. Literature, in this framework, not only reflects reality but also functions as a space in which social structures are reproduced, negotiated, and occasionally challenged. A Bourdieusian reading of contemporary Indonesian novels expands the scope of this theory to the realm of Southeast Asian literature, which has so far been relatively underexplored in global discourses on the sociology of culture.

Furthermore, the findings of this study challenge approaches to gender studies that solely position women as passive victims or rely on narratives of normative resistance. By highlighting the subjects' participation in structures of domination, this study proposes a shift in analytical focus from "who oppresses whom" to "how domination is reproduced and accepted." This shift opens up space for a more complex and critical analysis of gender-based power relations.

This research also opens up opportunities for broader, comparative follow-up research. Future studies could explore the representation of habitus and symbolic violence in other Southeast Asian literary works, or compare women's narratives across cultures to understand variations in the mechanisms of symbolic domination in different social contexts. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach connecting literature, cultural anthropology, and collective trauma studies has the potential to enrich our understanding of how historical and cultural experiences shape gender subjectivities in literary texts.

Thus, this article not only offers a new reading of *Perempuan Bersampur Merah*, but also proposes a conceptual direction for literary studies based on the analysis of social structures and symbolic practices. Through this perspective, literature can be read as a crucial field for understanding how power operates subtly—and why it is so difficult to challenge.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest for this article.

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