



## **GENDER RELATIONS THROUGH BINARY OPPOSITION IN SERAT CANDRARINI AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION EQUALITY**

**Evi Iryani<sup>1</sup>, Maman Suryaman<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Applied Linguistic, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: [eviiryani.2023@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:eviiryani.2023@student.uny.ac.id)

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### **Abstract**

Gender equality education in literature learning is becoming increasingly significant due to the growing awareness. Gender equality education in literature learning has become increasingly important due to the growing awareness of gender stereotypes and biases within educational settings. This article examines how *Serat Candrarini*, as a classical Javanese literary text, represents gender relations through patterns of binary opposition and explores its implications for gender-equitable education. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method using content analysis and a feminist deconstruction approach. The findings indicate that gender relations in the text are constructed through oppositions such as active–passive, high–low, and rational–emotional, positioning women in a subordinate role. However, the text also reveals small spaces that allow for critical readings of patriarchal values. These findings underscore the importance of reflective literature learning that fosters shifts in perspectives toward gender equality. Integrating gender perspectives into the curriculum and teaching methods is an essential step in cultivating awareness of educational equality. Further research is recommended to explore other traditional texts and to develop practical, gender-based literacy learning modules.

**Keywords:** *gender equality; Serat Candrarini; binary opposition; deconstruction; literary education*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gender equality education constitutes one of the central issues in contemporary educational discourse (Cojocarui et al., 2023). This concept refers to cultivating the understanding that men and women have equal opportunities to share power and influence, enjoy the same access to education, and develop personal ambitions, interests, and talents (Akmatalieva, 2022; Gahan & Nayak, 2024). The implementation of gender equality principles in education benefits individuals and enhances both educational quality and societal advancement (Godara, 2024; Karim

et al., 2024; Nur et al., 2024). The internalization of gender equality values through pedagogy has also been shown to strengthen students' character and encourage equal participation (Hasra et al., 2021; Sukesu et al., 2022; Tenedero et al., 2024; Widiyanti et al., 2023). Furthermore, gender equality education fosters critical thinking and helps prevent conflict (Farvid, 2017; Hansi & Senevirathne, 2024; Onditi & Odera, 2021; Wallensteen, 2021).

Conversely, gender inequality in education results in lower academic achievement, limited student participation, and the internalization of

biased social roles (Farvid, 2017; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2019; Sekgobela et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). In this context, literature plays a strategic role due to its ability to shape cultural imagination and social values, including gender roles (Mhana, 2020; Sreevarsha, 2023). Therefore, attention to equitable gender relations becomes increasingly significant as awareness grows regarding the impact of stereotypes and gender bias within educational institutions, particularly in literary texts that possess the power to mold cultural consciousness (Kalogirou et al., 2020).

Gender relations in literary texts are often framed through binary oppositions such as male/active and female/passive, which construct normative understandings of gender roles (Blangsinga et al., 2021). Unfortunately, in educational contexts, classical texts are often read without a critical approach to gender bias, thereby reinforcing unequal representations of social roles (Kalogirou et al., 2020). Hence, feminist and gender-based approaches in literary pedagogy are essential to promote critical readings of female representation and to deconstruct traditional, gendered roles (Sardi, 2024).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of critical literacy in addressing gender stereotypes in literary texts. Kalogirou demonstrate that literature can serve as an effective medium for fostering students' critical awareness of gender stereotypes, particularly through examining binary oppositional structures in texts (Kalogirou et al., 2020). Whitford underscores the importance of *critical literacy* in helping students identify and question gender stereotypes in school literature (Whitford, 2024). Similarly, Egurrola and García show that the critical literacy model enables students to critique gender-stereotyped

advertisements and construct counterarguments through analytical reasoning (Egurrola & García, 2023).

However, critical readings of classical Javanese texts such as *Serat Candrarini*, which contain embedded gender constructions, remain limited from a gender perspective. However, this text not only reflects the patriarchal value systems of the past but also sustains their influence in contemporary social and educational practices. Several studies suggest that *Serat Candrarini* contains potential narratives of gender equality. Hartini (2011) for example, argues that women in the text are depicted as nurturing figures who respond constructively to advice and engage in reciprocal relationships with their husbands. Pikatan (2012) further reveals that the text teaches women's roles as household managers and family educators, emphasizing awareness and fidelity as forms of social ideality.

These tendencies indicate that *Serat Candrarini* is not only relevant as a source of traditional moral values but also significant for re-examination through a more critical gender analytical framework. Although previous studies have addressed moral values and women's roles within *Serat Candrarini*, most remain focused on normative and ethical aspects, without deeply unpacking how gender relations are constructed through linguistic structures and binary oppositions. In other words, few studies have examined the ideological construction behind the representation of women in this text through a deconstructive approach, which allows the identification of fractures within the patriarchal Javanese meaning system.

Moreover, most previous studies have been limited to textual analysis and have not connected their findings to pedagogical implications for

gender equality education. In fact, the critical literacy approach requires a linkage between textual literacy and transformative educational praxis (Hunaepi et al., 2024). This gap indicates the need for studies that not only deconstruct gender structures in classical texts but also articulate how such analyses can be applied pedagogically to foster gender awareness in classroom settings.

Based on this gap, the present study offers two main innovations. First, it integrates deconstruction and qualitative content analysis to systematically reveal the representation of gender relations in *Serat Candrarini* through binary oppositions. Second, it connects textual analysis results with a critical literacy pedagogical approach, thereby generating a conceptual model for how classical Javanese texts can be utilized to cultivate gender equality awareness in education. This aligns with the educational curriculum's call for teaching materials that reflect gender-equitable representation. Thus, this study contributes to the expansion of feminist literary studies in the Indonesian context while providing both theoretical and practical foundations for culturally grounded gender equality education.

## METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design with a content analysis approach. Krippendorff (2019) explains that content analysis does not merely examine “what is written,” but also explores the social and ideological contexts of representation, allowing for the contextualization of meaning. Therefore, this approach is particularly suitable for dissecting the binary oppositional structures found in *Serat Candrarini* and for examining the implications of

these values within the context of gender equality education.

The primary data source of this study is the *Serat Candrarini* manuscript, both in its transliterated and translated forms. The manuscript was obtained from the digital collection of the Reksapustaka Library at Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta. The data analyzed consists of narrative and textual elements in *Serat Candrarini* that explicitly or implicitly contain binary oppositions related to gender relations. In addition, symbols and metaphors appearing in the text are also analyzed as markers of gender discourse within Javanese culture.

The primary research instrument in this study is the researcher, who serves as a human instrument in the processes of data collection, coding, and interpretation (Creswell, 2017). To ensure consistency and reliability, a coding sheet was employed containing textual units, categories of binary oppositions, and interpretive notes.

During data analysis, the researcher first identified units of analysis; words, phrases, sentences, or narratives, containing gender representations, and subsequently categorized them into binary oppositions. The next step involved coding the data based on categories such as *rational vs. emotional*, *active vs. passive*, *public vs. domestic*, and others. Each coded datum was then analyzed using descriptive–interpretive techniques to reveal how power relations between men and women are formed, constructed, or contested within the narrative. Furthermore, Derridean deconstruction was applied to uncover potential reversals of meaning or tensions within these binary oppositions.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness, the study employed peer debriefing and member checking on the coding results, as well as

theoretical triangulation by referring to concepts of feminist deconstruction and content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019).

The findings from this analysis were then reflected within the framework of gender equality education. The researcher evaluated how the narrative structures of *Serat Candrarini* could be utilized critically to foster gender awareness in the teaching of literature and local cultural values. By connecting the analytical results to educational contexts, this study is applied in nature. In other words, the outcomes of the content analysis do not end at the textual level but extend into pedagogical praxis, demonstrating how literary works such as *Serat Candrarini* can serve as reflective tools in promoting gender equality education, particularly within Javanese language and literature instruction or other culture-based local subjects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of *Serat Candrarini* reveals that the text represents gender relations through a complex and multilayered structure of binary oppositions. Oppositions such as *active/passive*, *noble/lowly*, and *rational/emotional* consistently emerge in the characterization of its figures, particularly in constructing the image of the ideal Javanese woman. Through content analysis of each *gatra* (line within each stanza), it was found that gender representations in the text are not merely textual but also embed ideological values that reflect the patriarchal system of the past.

The gender relations identified in the text are further classified into several subcategories, including hierarchical relations (RH), moral–social relations (RMS), spiritual relations (RS), cooperative relations (RK), and gender role negotiation relations (RNPG). All data obtained

from these findings are presented separately in the accompanying dataset: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.29064185>.

The dataset not only serves as a supplementary research component but also functions as a pedagogical resource that teachers can directly utilize. Each entry in the dataset contains the *gatra* (line), transliteration, translation, binary opposition, type of gender relation, coding label, and analytical explanation. Teachers can employ these components to design critical literacy activities in the classroom. For instance, teachers may select several *gatra* illustrating moral–social relations as discussion materials on the construction of women’s roles in Javanese culture, or they may invite students to analyze and rewrite the text from a gender equality perspective.

Thus, the dataset serves a dual function: (1) as evidence of academic traceability ensuring research transparency, and (2) as an open educational resource (OER) that supports the implementation of text-based gender equality education grounded in local culture.

Subsequently, the data were synthesized into categorical groupings, summarized in the following table of gender relations.

**Table 1.** Gender Relations

Relational Aspect	Frequency
RH	21
RMS	122
RS	8
RK	12
RNPG	2

Table 1 presents the accumulated results of each type of gender relation that emerged after the text was analyzed and coded. The table indicates that moral–social relations (RMS) are the most dominant in *Serat Candrarini*, with a total of

122 instances, followed by hierarchical relations (RH) with 21 cases, cooperative relations (RK) with 12 instances, spiritual relations (RS) with eight cases, and the least frequent, gender role negotiation relations (RNPG), with only two cases.

The predominance of moral-social relations suggests that the portrayal of women in the text is strongly influenced by cultural and ethical norms that emphasize obedience, gentleness, and fidelity as ideal standards. Meanwhile, the relatively high number of hierarchical relations reinforces the depiction of a patriarchal social structure that positions women in a subordinate role to men. The minimal occurrence of gender role negotiation relations indicates that symbolic resistance or negotiation of gender roles is minimal within the text. This finding underscores the importance of critical reading and analysis of *Serat Candrarini* within the framework of gender equality education, to challenge and reinterpret the traditional gender constructs embedded in classical Javanese literature.

### **Hierarchical Relations**

In gender studies, hierarchical relations refer to the dominance of men within family or societal structures, where women are often perceived as socially and economically inferior (Connell, 2020; Faizah, 2018). This structure not only reflects past social inequalities but also carries ideological implications that perpetuate the patriarchal system (Beauvoir, 2011). In literary contexts such as *Serat Candrarini*, this relational pattern is manifested through characterizations that position men as decision-makers, protectors, and bearers of moral authority. At the same time, women are depicted as subordinate, obedient, and passive subjects.

The hierarchical relations in *Serat Candrarini* consistently display the symbolic dominance of men as centers of authority, while women are positioned as subordinates within social, domestic, and spiritual domains. In the *Sinom* song, the narrative opens with the king's command to compose teachings for women:

*Kang agnya gita srinata / mangun wasitaning estri // Ujar ugêring pawèstri*

(“The king commands the composition of teachings for women — words of advice and guidance for them.”) (RH-1–RH-3)

This passage emphasizes that discourse concerning women—including moral rules and ideals—is entirely controlled by male figures. The king, as a representation of male authority, becomes the regulator of narrative and value, while women serve only as directed objects. Such passivity indicates that conceptions of womanhood do not arise from women's own experiences but are constructed and imposed externally through male authority.

The subordination of women in the domestic sphere also appears in *gatra* 8 and 9 of *pupuh* 3 (*pupuh* means one stanza in every *tembang*), and *gatra* 9 of *pupuh* 6:

*Marma sagunging pawèstri / marsudia widadaning palakrama // Sêtyèng priya datan lènggana sakarsa //*  
(“Therefore, all women must strive to preserve their marriage. // Faithful to the husband, without any other desire.”) (RH-4–RH-5)

These excerpts assign women the sole responsibility for maintaining marital harmony, while men remain free from emotional or social accountability within the relationship (Sukumaran et al., 2024). Moreover, the text idealizes women who renounce personal desire in favor of total loyalty to their husbands. This is not merely a reflection of patriarchal culture but a reproduction

of its values, subtly embedded within the aesthetic and symbolic narrative.

The hierarchical narrative is further reflected in the servitude roles attached to women:

*Ngladosi mring kakung* (“serving her husband”) (RH-15)

*Pinapangkat dènnya nglêgani* (“held in high regard for serving her husband”) (RH-8)

These data reveal that women are portrayed as active servants of their husbands, with the most honored woman being the one who serves her husband most diligently. A woman’s value is thus measured by her availability and devotion to fulfilling male needs, reinforcing her position as a servant rather than an equal partner. This form of service is not only practical but also symbolic, legitimizing women’s position within the patriarchal hierarchy.

The construction of hierarchical relations is also evident in how female identity is defined according to position within polygamous marriage structures:

*Garwa kang pamêkasipun* (“his youngest wife”) (RH-16)

*Garwanira Sang Parta sumêndhi* (“the fourth wife of Sang Parta”) (RH-12)

*Panêngah Dèwi Hulupi* (“the middle wife, Dewi Hulupi”) (RH-9)

These excerpts demonstrate that women are introduced not by personal name or character traits but by their sequential order in the polygamous system. This reflects not only women’s subordination to their husbands but also horizontal subordination among co-wives. Such a system erases women’s individual identities, replacing them with status markers within the male-dominated household hierarchy.

Furthermore, in *gatra* 2 of *Kinanthi*, the following line reinforces the asymmetrical communication structure:

*Kalamun dèn andikani* (“when given advice”) (RH-19)

Here, the power structure is reaffirmed through one-way communication, where women function only as recipients of instruction from men. Moral authority thus resides exclusively with men, while women are denied the agency to speak or shape discourse. They exist only to listen and obey. This representation underscores that gender relations in *Serat Candrarini* operate not only on a social level but also on an epistemological level, determining who has the right to speak and who must remain silent.

Such representations are crucial to critique within the context of gender equality education, to prevent their unconscious reproduction in literary pedagogy. Instead, they should be utilized as reflective material for deconstructing unequal value systems and promoting critical awareness of gender ideologies in Javanese classical literature.

### Moral and Social Relations

In gender studies, moral relations refer to the ways individuals and societies construct norms, accountability, and moral identities within gendered social structures. Zaroni and Decoster (2017) link moral relations to the concept of “gendered moral selves”, referring to how individuals particularly in academic or institutional contexts develop distinct moral identities shaped by social expectations of men and women. Consequently, gender-based moral and social relations can be seen as “complex praxis relations” (Haug, 2005) that generate differentiated social roles for men and women and normalize inequality through historical and cultural processes.

Within this framework, traditional literary texts such as *Serat Candrarini* exhibit a strong dominance of moral and social relations in shaping narratives of the “ideal woman”. Values such as loyalty to one’s husband (regardless of his actions), emotional restraint, beauty and gentleness, and passivity in communication collectively form a symbolic construction of female morality. These values function not only as standards of virtue but also as mechanisms of control over women’s bodies, emotions, and social roles within both domestic and public spaces.

One of the most powerful representations of such control appears in the narrative of divorce. Javanese women are often burdened with moral responsibility for maintaining marital harmony (Wijanarko, 2018). The excerpts “*Awit jênênging wanodya*” (“because she is called a woman”) (RMS-3) and “*pêgat dènnya palakrami*” (“if her marriage ends in divorce”) (RMS-4) demonstrate that a woman’s social identity is defined by her ability to preserve her marriage. The text suggests that a woman’s existence and worth depend not on personal, intellectual, or professional qualities, but on her success in maintaining marital unity. The failure of a marriage is portrayed not as a private issue but as a moral and social failure on the woman’s part, as seen in the line “*nistha nir kadammanira*” (“a shameful act”) (RMS-5). More drastically, the text employs an ontological metaphor in “*wigar dènira dumadi*” (RMS-6), meaning “failed to become a human being,” which indicates a reduction of women’s humanity to purely domestic parameters.

The image of the ideal woman is also tied to visual and moral aesthetics (Dmitrieva & Safonova, 2019; Li, 2024; Putri, 2021). In “*ing warna ngrêspkên ati*” (“her beauty pleases the

heart”) (RMS-10), physical beauty is described as a moral value capable of “capturing the heart,” implying that aesthetic attraction equates to moral virtue. This is reinforced through the depiction of emotional control and facial expression as moral indicators. The line “*tan rêgu sêmune manis*” (“she does not anger easily; her face remains sweet”) (RMS-18) requires women to appear pleasant and refrain from displaying anger. Such teachings reflect social control over female emotional expression, encouraging internalization of passivity, compliance, and agreeableness. The text implies that anger or other negative emotions are not merely impolite but morally damaging to a woman’s ideal image.

Female morality is further defined through verbal gentleness, as shown in “*amot mêngku aksama*” (“she does not speak hurtfully”) (RMS-20), suggesting that a good woman is one who speaks softly and forgives easily. The phrase “*sanadyan kurang budaya*” (“even if she lacks intelligence or refinement”) (RMS-21) reveals that intellectual ability is not a moral criterion for women; instead, sincerity and social morality are prioritized. The text thus reinforces a narrative in which obedience and compassion outweigh intellect, positioning emotional compliance as the highest feminine virtue.

Another gender stereotype is articulated in “*sarwalus sasolahira*” (RMS-40), which portrays the ideal woman as “soft in all manners.” Here, femininity encompasses speech, gesture, and overall disposition, all of which must conform to cultural expectations of gentleness and submission. Similarly, “*ajrih asih sadaya*” (RMS-71) depicts women who are obedient, loving, and tender as socially worthy of respect. However, such respect derives not from achievement but from conformity to normative gender roles.

The narrative of the morally exemplary woman is most explicitly stated in “*dadya tuladaning èstri*” (“she becomes a role model for women”) (RMS-110). This phrase signifies that a woman who fulfills all domestic and moral norms is not merely considered virtuous but becomes a prescriptive standard for other women (another wife of her husband). Consequently, the text functions not only as individual moral guidance but also as a collective disciplinary discourse that regulates women’s consciousness and behavior. The moral identity of women in *Serat Candrarini* is therefore not personal but institutionalized as a normative and systemic form of social regulation, reinforcing gendered expectations through cultural moralization.

### Spiritual Relations

In *Serat Candrarini*, several excerpts reveal that spiritual relations serve as markers of women’s moral and social status. According to Batool & Saleem (2024), this form of relation is defined as an individual’s holistic connectedness with the self, others, and a transcendent power that generates inner peace, purpose, and psychological well-being. However, in this text, women’s spirituality is portrayed primarily as symbolic and vertical, lacking the horizontal or autonomous dimension of reflective spiritual experience. Their spirituality is not cultivated through personal insight or moral struggle but rather legitimized through inherited or external attributes originating from sacred places, divine lineage, or association with male spiritual figures.

In *Serat Candrarini*, spiritual relations are intertwined with the text’s patriarchal social and symbolic structures that shape the idealized image of women. Female characters are depicted as

noble, faithful, and compassionate, yet remain confined within patriarchal norms that define them as passive and spiritually dependent on male authority. Their moral and spiritual worth derives not from self-cultivation but from genealogical privilege, being born as daughters of kings, sages (*wiku*), or divine beings.

*tiga putrining aji* (three were daughters of a king/  
*kang kalih atmajèng wiku* (and the other two were  
daughters of a sage/) (RS-1)

These lines indicate that women’s spiritual value stems from their descent being royal or sacred by birth rather than personal spiritual endeavor. Similar examples appear in “*labêt kadangira Wisnu*” (being related to Vishnu) (RS-3) and “*èngêt trahing dwijawara*” (remembering that she is of priestly descent) (RS-7), in which divine or priestly bloodlines function as the basis for female spirituality.

This idealization is further reinforced through associations with celestial beings, as in “*winongwong widadari*” (raised by celestial nymphs) (RS-2), a symbolic representation of purity and beauty. Likewise, “*lir Hyang Pudhak sinurat*” (like Hyang Pudhak Sinurat) and “*anyunari ingkang sitarêsmi*” (illuminating the moon) (RS-5) employ metaphors that portray women as radiant or sacred entities, yet always as *reflections* of male or divine power rather than as autonomous agents of spirituality.

Even in “*prabawa wijiling tapa*” (possessing authority from ascetic origin) (RS-8) and “*saking patapan wijile/ dan putrinira Sang Wiku*” (born from a hermitage, daughter of a sage) (RS-4), spiritual prestige is granted through inherited sanctity, not through self-achieved asceticism. These depictions reinforce the notion that women’s spirituality in *Serat Candrarini* is derivative rooted in lineage,



place, and affiliation rather than in conscious moral or spiritual agency.

This finding stands in contrast to the view of Insani et al.,(2024) who argue that women's spirituality is inherently relational, manifesting in everyday practices of caregiving, fidelity, and domestic management. Thus, the portrayal of spirituality in *Serat Candrarini* highlights the ideological construction of womanhood as sacred yet subordinated, inviting a critical reinterpretation within the framework of gender equality education.

### Cooperative Relations

In *Serat Candrarini*, cooperation is not constructed upon egalitarian relationships but rather represents women's adaptive strategies within a patriarchal system. Female characters are not given agency to reject polygamy; instead, they are taught to manage emotions and avoid conflict to preserve domestic stability.

This notion is clearly illustrated in the line:

*"Mring maru kadi sudara"* (She treated her co-wives as sisters) (RK-1)

The narrative promotes harmony among women, encouraging them to treat one another affectionately within polygamous households. However, this harmony is framed not as an autonomous relational choice but as compliance with collective moral norms that reinforce patriarchal order.

Similarly, in *"rumêsêp tan walangati"* (living peacefully without jealousy) (RK-2), wives are depicted as serene and free from envy. Yet this inner peace stems not from emotional freedom but from the social expectation that women must maintain domestic harmony despite unequal

conditions. The line *"tandang tanduke rumêngkuh/mring priya myang marunira"* (embracing both her husband and her co-wife) (RK-4) further demonstrates that a virtuous woman can reconcile emotional contradictions to preserve unity in a polygamous setting.

Female mentorship and inter-feminine solidarity also appear in *"winulangên mring marune sami"* (she taught her co-wives good manners) (RK-7), where senior wives are portrayed as moral educators for their co-wives. Similarly, *"Miwah marang para maru"* (and toward her co-wives) (RK-9) and *"rinasuk dipunslondhohi"* (they exchanged jokes and laughter) (RK-10) portray social interaction as affectionate and conflict-free. Women are depicted as socially graceful beings who express criticism subtly and maintain harmony through pleasant communication.

In *"Puwara momong angugung"* (the senior wife affectionately cared for the younger one) (RK-11), older women are characterized as nurturing figures, reinforcing the notion that female cooperation functions as a stabilizing mechanism within the patriarchal household.

The cooperative relationship extends beyond the conjugal sphere to encompass the extended family. The verse *"myang putra cèthi sêdene"* (serving her husband, children, and co-wives) (RK-5) illustrates that women assume multiple domestic roles as caregivers, moral anchors, and emotional regulators. Likewise, in *"gumati mring Dèwi Kunthi"* (she cared deeply for Dewi Kunti) (RK-12), a daughter-in-law is depicted as showing devotion and affection toward her mother-in-law.

Such depictions idealize inter-feminine relationships between co-wives and in-laws as harmonious, obedient, and nurturing, yet still

subordinated to the patriarchal hierarchy that governs the household.

Ultimately, *Serat Candrarini* presents cooperation as an ethical expectation placed on women, positioning them as emotional mediators and guardians of domestic harmony. Women are not only expected to serve their husbands but also to sustain warm, nurturing relations with their co-wives and in-laws a dual role that demands patience, emotional control, and self-sacrifice, all of which reaffirm the text's patriarchal moral framework.

### Negotiation of Gender Roles

The negotiation of gender roles refers to subtle spaces within the text that allow for reinterpretation or shifts away from dominant gender norms. Unlike hierarchical, moral-social, or cooperative relations that reinforce patriarchal order, gender-role negotiation signifies moments of rupture within that structure instances in which female characters exhibit agency, assertiveness, or critical awareness, demonstrating that the idealized image of submissive femininity does not entirely bind them.

In *Serat Candrarini*, although patriarchal values overwhelmingly shape the narrative, traces of negotiation can still be discerned. The line

“*Gandhang kang wicara tanduk*” (She spoke loudly and clearly) (RNPG-1)

Depicts a woman who speaks with confidence, unafraid to express her feelings and opinions. This portrayal stands in stark contrast to the dominant representation of the “ideal woman” as gentle, silent, and sweet. Here, the woman possesses not only a literal voice but also a discursive voice, articulating her perspective within a social sphere typically governed by men. Her outspokenness represents a discursive

negotiation, suggesting that she resists the norm of passive speech and participates actively in social dialogue.

Negotiation is also reflected in the verse:

“*nora keguh rinêngunan/ gopyak gapyuk dèn srowoli*”  
(She gently corrected impropriety through humor and playful teasing) (RNPG-2),

which portrays a woman who can admonish her co-wife or husband's partner tactfully, without generating conflict. The act of correcting or criticizing delivered through humor and subtle irony reveals a strategic use of feminine values such as tenderness and affection to convey disagreement or discomfort indirectly. Although the act does not represent complete liberation, it constitutes a form of resistance within the boundaries of cultural norms, showing how women navigate power relations through communicative dexterity.

Both excerpts demonstrate that, despite the text's heavy patriarchal orientation, *Serat Candrarini* contains small yet meaningful spaces for alternative readings of female representation. Characters who speak openly, express critique, or assert their perspectives participate in the reconfiguration of gendered subjectivity challenging the assumption that women are wholly passive or powerless. These subtle gestures of voice, wit, and interaction reveal that even within a rigid moral framework, women can exercise a degree of agency, opening interpretive possibilities for understanding *Serat Candrarini* as a site of both conformity and resistance.

### Implications for Gender Equality Education

In the context of gender equality education, recognizing and understanding gender relations represented in literary texts becomes crucial. Hidayah et al.,(2019), for example,

employed feminist literary criticism to examine gender inequality in Javanese cultural novels and argued that such texts are practical tools for raising students' awareness of local patriarchal structures. Moreover, gender-sensitive literary instruction can foster social awareness and reduce stereotypes through critical literacy practices (Mhana, 2020). Thus, a critical reading of texts such as *Serat Candrarini* allows students to realize that the values embedded in literary works are neither singular nor absolute. As found by Taufiq, Purbani, and Liliani (2024), local texts can be utilized to cultivate students' critical consciousness of humanistic values. Similarly, Prasetyo (2025) highlights that spiritual teachings in *Naskah Syattariyah Merbabu*, which emphasize self-discipline, control of desire, and purification of thought, can also be integrated into literature learning to develop moral and character awareness. Therefore, *Serat Candrarini* holds potential as a pedagogical medium that encourages reflection, discussion, and reinterpretation of gender roles in everyday life.

### **Instructional Implementation**

The integration of *Serat Candrarini* into gender equality education can be realized through critical literacy and project-based learning approaches, structured in three pedagogical stages:

#### ***Pre-reading Stage (Building Context)***

The teacher presents selected *pupuh* excerpts from *Serat Candrarini* that illustrate hierarchical relations (e.g., *Ngladosi mring kakung* "serving the husband"). Students are then asked to identify the values expressed and determine who holds authority and who demonstrates obedience. This activity activates students' preliminary

awareness of power structures embedded in the text.

#### ***Reading Stage (Critical Inquiry)***

Teachers facilitate reflective discussions using guiding questions such as: "How is the position of women represented in this excerpt?" "Are these values still relevant today?" "What would happen if the gender roles were reversed?" Students then create a comparative table illustrating male–female representations to identify recurring patterns of inequality. This aligns with Savitz et al., (2024) critical gender pedagogy, which encourages learners to challenge dominant structures through reflective dialogue.

#### ***Post-reading Stage (Transformative Production)***

Students are tasked with composing counter-texts in the form of *geguritan* (poetry), rewritten stories, or short plays that revise and reimagine female roles in more equitable and empowered ways. Teachers assess students' work using a critical reflection rubric that measures: a) ability to identify gender bias in the text; b) creativity in constructing alternative narratives; and c) depth of social and ethical reflection.

This instructional framework has significant potential to develop students' reflective thinking and understanding of social issues such as gender and inequality (Gustine, 2018). Cho & Johnson (2021) also found that critical literacy, combined with open discussion activities, promotes critical thinking and social awareness among students. Consequently, this pedagogical approach not only enhances literary and linguistic competence but also nurtures critical reasoning, social empathy, and awareness of gender justice.

Beyond classroom application, the findings of this study can also inform the development of gender-sensitive local content teaching modules rooted in Javanese culture.

Teachers and curriculum developers may draw upon the dataset excerpts for classroom discussions, reflective quizzes, or text analysis worksheets. Such integration encourages students to engage with local cultural values critically rather than accept them unexamined. This approach creates a dialogic and emancipatory learning environment, consistent with the principles of *Merdeka Belajar*, which emphasize reflective, collaborative, and critical learners.

In conclusion, *Serat Candrarini* functions not merely as a cultural heritage text but also as a transformative learning resource. When taught through a critical lens, it has the power to awaken gender awareness in education and inspire younger generations to reexamine social relations in more just, egalitarian, and humane ways.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of *Serat Candrarini* reveals that gender relations within the text are constructed through binary oppositions such as active/passive, superior/inferior, and rational/emotional. The representation of women is reduced mainly to five relational categories: hierarchical, moral–social, spiritual, cooperative, and gender-role negotiation. Among these, the moral–social relation is the most dominant, followed by hierarchical and cooperative ties, all of which collectively illustrate women's position within the patriarchal value framework of traditional Javanese culture.

The hierarchical relation underscores male dominance as the moral authority and decision-maker. The moral–social relation portrays women as symbols of morality through values such as loyalty and self-restraint. The spiritual relation emphasizes that women's purity is defined genealogically or symbolically, rather than through personal agency. Meanwhile,

cooperative and negotiative relations represent women's efforts to adapt to or subtly resist dominant structures, all while remaining within existing cultural norms.

This study offers pedagogical implications for Javanese literature and local culture-based learning, particularly through the use of critical literacy strategies. Teachers may engage students in identifying patriarchal narrative structures within the text and discussing more equitable representations. Activities such as re-reading, gender role comparison, and creative productions; such as counter *geguritan* (poetry) or short stories, can foster empathy and awareness of gender justice. The findings also provide a foundation for developing local learning modules that integrate critical cultural values.

However, this research is limited to *Serat Candrarini*. Future studies are encouraged to explore other classical Javanese or Nusantara literary texts containing gender representations. Further research employing classroom ethnography or reader-response studies could deepen understanding of how such texts function in educational contexts. Moreover, testing the effectiveness of integrating *Serat Candrarini* into critical literacy-based classrooms remains a promising avenue.

Ultimately, this study not only enriches the discourse on gender literacy in local cultural contexts but also proposes a transformative pedagogical framework positioning *Serat Candrarini* as a bridge toward greater gender awareness, equality, and social justice.

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