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Masculinity under pressure: A feminist comparative reading of Navis's "Jodoh" and Sani's "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz"

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Abstract: *Studies of gender representation in Indonesian literature have so far been dominated by textual analyses of works by female authors or of women as objects of representation, so the construction of the masculine subject in the canonical works of male authors has not been widely explored. This study %ills that gap by examining how masculinity is discursively constructed in two short stories by authors of the 1950s generation: *Jodoh* by AA Navis and *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* by Asrul Sani. Using a feminist comparative reading approach, this textual-comparative study applies Mills's feminist stylistic framework—including lexical choice, transitivity, focalization, and reader positioning—as its primary analytical tools. The results of the analysis show that both texts represent masculinity under pressure, yet through different social mechanisms. Navis constructs masculinity within the collective framework of Minangkabau tradition, while Asrul Sani portrays masculinity as individual alienation and an identity crisis amid the turmoil of post-independence Indonesia. Comparatively, both authors indirectly destabilize hegemonic masculinity and reveal the fragility of male subjectivity within the social imagination of mid-20th-century Indonesia. These %indings shed light on the gender ideology embedded in the 1950s literary canon while demonstrating how feminist comparative reading can function as a critical literacy strategy in language and literature education. This study contributes theoretically by expanding the application of feminist stylistics to texts by male authors; historically and literarily by reconstructing the gender ideology of a generation of canonical writers; and methodologically by offering a model of feminist comparative reading that can be replicated in Indonesian literary studies.*

Keywords: *hegemonic masculinity, feminist stylistics, 1950s Indonesian literature, gender construction*

INTRODUCTION

Gender representation in Indonesian literature has become an increasingly prominent field of study (Ulya, Mila, & Hartono, 2025; Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024). Most research has focused on the construction of femininity—that is, how women are depicted, positioned, or marginalized in narrative texts (Ilmi et al., 2026). Studies of gender representation in Indonesian literature have so far been dominated by analyses of texts by female authors or of women as objects of representation, so the construction of th e masculine subject in the canonical works of male authors has not been extensively explored. The construction of masculine subjectivity, particularly in the works of male authors who have entered the canon, has relatively escaped critical attention (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This study fills that gap by examining how masculinity is discursively constructed in two short stories by authors of the 1950s

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generation.

Literary texts do not merely reflect social reality. They actively produce gender ideologies through language choices, the narrator's perspective, and the positioning of characters (Mills, 1995; Page, 2003). Reading masculinity through a feminist lens is a critical act that unpacks the ideological workings of texts that have long been treated as if they were gender-neutral (Mills, 1995).

Writers of the 1950s generation occupy a strategic historical position within the landscape of Indonesian literature (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024). They wrote within the context of a postcolonial transition, caught between the pressures of colonial-era modernity, the demands of nationalist ideology, and the resilience of local traditional values (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024). The two most prominent figures of this generation are AA Navis and Asrul Sani. They left behind short stories that remain teaching materials for literature courses at various educational levels (Ulya et al., 2025). Navis's short *story Jodoh* (1975) and Asrul Sani's *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* (1972) offer a highly productive lens for feminist comparative studies (Lozano de la Pola, 2014). Both feature male protagonists caught between personal desires and social pressures. However, fundamental differences emerge through narrative strategies and cultural contexts (Page, 2003; Butler, 1990).

In *Jodoh*, the text's androcentric logic is established from the very first sentence (Navis, 1975). Unmarried women over the age of twenty-five are labeled as *"individuals who cause distress to the family"*—a lexical choice that reduces women's subjectivity to a social problem (Mills, 1995; Navis, 1975). The protagonist, Badri, is constructed as a rational agent who evaluates potential wives through a matrix of criteria including height, income, ethnicity, and economic productivity (Mills, 1995; Navis, 1975). Women in this text function as objects of selection, not as acting subjects. The entire narrative is voiced through Badri's perspective and calculations, so that the social world in the short story is viewed entirely from the position of the male subject (Page, 2003; Navis, 1975). The conclusion of the story *Jodoh* reinforces the gender ideology at work within the text (Navis, 1975). Lena, who previously worked as *a* teacher with an independent income, *was "advised to quit teaching"* after getting married (Navis, 1975). The narrative positions the end of Lena's career as a natural and happy resolution. Badri's pre-marital idealism—which had once challenged social injustice—is declared to *be "mere utopia"* and replaced by what the text calls *"eternal idealism*," namely, bringing happiness to his wife and children (Navis, 1975). This narrative conclusion is an ideological gesture that places the reader in a position of accepting the patriarchal order as an inevitability (Mills, 1995).

In *My Friend Cordiaz*, the crisis of masculinity operates through a different mechanism (Sani, 1972). The protagonist, C. Darla, constructs his identity on borrowed markers: a foreign name associated with Spanish-Filipino cosmopolitanism, white shoes, and typewritten letters that are immediately burned (Sani, 1972). *The "Cordiaz"* identity is a performative construction that is constantly reproduced because it is never truly achieved (Butler, 1990). The text consistently deconstructs each performance of that identity through subtle yet sharp narrative irony (Page, 2003; Butler, 1990). The collapse of Darla's identity occurs in layers and ends ironically (Sani, 1972). The marriage certificate lists her as *"Chaidir Darla."* His wife

calls him *"Dir, Dir."* The fifty rupiah he sent to fund his identity transformation ended up being spent by his wife on a kebaya (Sani, 1972). The short story concludes not with a resolution, but with an ironic collapse: *"Ah, it's all for naught. How tragic. It seems Darla's dream of being named Cordiaz Darla hasn't even come true yet."* (Sani, 1972). Masculinity here is not reinforced by custom, as in *Jodoh*, but is shattered by a social reality that rejects the reflection of the identity imagined by the character (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 1990).

Read side by side, the two short stories reveal the same ideological condition: masculinity as a position that is constantly under pressure (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In *Jodoh*, this pressure is collective in nature, enforced through Minangkabau customs, the matrilineal system, and social norms (Navis, 1975). In *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz*, the pressure is individual in nature, arising from the inability to find a stable identity amid a postcolonial social reality that rejects the protagonist's self-image (Sani, 1972; Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024). The convergence of these two short stories from different cultural contexts forms the basis for a feminist comparative analysis that goes beyond merely cataloging gender stereotypes. This convergence reveals how narrative language functions in producing and reproducing the gender ideologies of the 1950s (Mills, 1995; Page, 2003).

This study employs Sara Mills's *feminist stylistics* framework as its primary analytical tool (Mills, 1995). Using a feminist comparative reading approach, this textual-comparative study applies the " " framework of feminist stylistics—which encompasses lexical choice, transitivity, focalization, and reader positioning—as it primary analytical tools. This framework provides four operational tools: lexical choice, transitivity, focalization, and reader positioning (Mills, 1995).Applied comparatively, this framework enables a reading that is both textual and ideological, attentive to the microstructure of language while also focused on the macrostructure of gender discourse (Mills, 1995; Page, 2003). To explore the dimensions of masculinity in greater depth, this study also draws on Connell and Messerschmidt's theory of hegemonic masculinity, which conceives of masculinity not as a singular entity but as a configuration of practices that is constantly subject to negotiation and contestation (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on the assumption that literature functions as a passive mirror of social reality. Literary texts also construct, negotiate, and often normalize certain ideologies through linguistic devices (Mills, 1995; Page, 2003). In gender studies, this means that representations of men and women are never neutral, as they are always shaped by power relations embedded within the narrative structure (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, gender analysis in literary texts must consider not only themes but also how the text organizes voices, the positioning of subjects, and how readers are guided in understanding characters (Mills, 1995; Page, 2003).

Sara Mills offers an important methodological foundation through feminist stylistics (Mills, 1995). Within this framework, analysis is conducted at the lexical, grammatical, and narrative levels to uncover gender biases that operate subtly within

the text (Mills, 1995). Mills emphasizes four key devices: lexical choice, transitivity, focalization/narrative perspective, and reader positioning (Mills, 1995). These four devices are highly relevant for understanding how a text positions characters as subjects or objects, agents or recipients of actions, and how the narrative guides readers to accept a particular perspective as normal (Mills, 1995). This framework is appropriate for this study because both short stories depict constructions of masculinity through dense and ideological narrative language (Mills, 1995).

Ruth E. Page expands the analysis of gender through feminist narratology (Page, 2003). She argues that the relationship between gender and narrative must be understood in an integrative manner, not an essentialist one (Page, 2003). Page rejects the notion that certain narratives automatically represent women or men (Page, 2003). Instead, she asserts that gender emerges as a discursive effect shaped by the framing of perspective, the distribution of voices, and the structure of storytelling (Page, 2003). This perspective is important for this article because *Jodoh* dan *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* is not analyzed to identify rigidly " " feminine or masculine narrative forms, but rather to explore how gender is produced by specific narrative mechanisms (Page, 2003).

Connell and Messerschmidt's theory of hegemonic masculinity provides a conceptual framework for understanding men as gendered subjects who are not monolithic (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is understood as a configuration of practices that gains social legitimacy and supports male domination over women as well as over other forms of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This concept is important because it demonstrates that masculinities are always plural, hierarchical, and situated within shifting power relations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this study, this concept helps interpret Badri in *Jodoh* as a masculine subject confronting tradition and economic rationality, as well as Darla in *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* as a masculine subject who fails to socially consolidate his identity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Navis, 1975; Sani, 1972). This theory serves as a comparative framework to examine whether the two texts represent a stable masculinity or, conversely, destabilize hegemonic masculinity.

An analysis of masculinity can also be deepened through Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990). Butler asserts that gender does not exist as a stable essence, but rather as the result of the repetition of actions, signs, and images that are continuously produced (Butler, 1990). In other words, gender identity is shaped by repeated performances, not by natural characteristics (Butler, 1990). This framework is particularly helpful for analyzing C. Darla, who seeks to solidify *the "Cordiaz"* identity through his name, clothing, language, and cosmopolitan imagination (Butler, 1990; Sani, 1972). However, the text reveals that this performance is continually dismantled by social reality, particularly through the official naming *of "Chaidir Darla"* and domestic relationships that re-anchor her to a local identity (Butler, 1990; Sani, 1972).

The feminist comparative reading approach opens up an important space for the convergence of feminist theory with comparative literature (de la Pola, 2021) . Lozano de la Pola asserts that comparative studies open up an important space for the convergence of feminist theory with comparative literature (de la Pola, 2021) . This

perspective is relevant because this article not only compares two texts but also compares two ways of constructing masculinity that emerge from different social and cultural contexts (de la Pola, 2021) . *Jodoh* highlights the pressures of Minangkabau tradition and matrilineal structures, while *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* illustrates identity crisis within a more fluid postcolonial social space (Defianty et al., 2025; Sani, 2016) . Therefore, a comparison of the two works goes beyond thematic similarities to a comparison of the gender ideologies constructed by the texts (de la Pola, 2021) . This approach allows for an analysis that is both textual and ideological, paying close attention to the microstructure of language while also focusing on the macrostructure of gender discourse.

Studies on masculinity in Indonesian literature indicate that this topic is receiving increasing attention, but the focus remains predominantly on novels and popular media (Ulya et al., 2025) . A bibliometric study by Ulya, Mila, and Hartono reveals a significant increase in research on masculinity in Indonesian literature, particularly in 2023 and 2024 (Ulya et al., 2025). However, the findings also indicate that classic short stories have not yet received much attention (Ulya et al., 2025) . This situation highlights an important analytical gap that needs to be filled, particularly by reading the canonical works of the 1950s generation as ideological documents on gender (Ulya et al., 2025).

Postcolonial studies reinforce the importance of this historical context (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024). Khaeni and Pamungkas demonstrate that feminism in Indonesian literature cannot be separated from colonial history and its impact on the formation of the modern subject (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024) . Postcolonial literature serves as a meeting ground for social experiences, identities, and gender ideologies (Khaeni & Pamungkas, 2024) . In the context of this study, *Jodoh* and *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* both emerged from the postcolonial transition period but present different forms of masculine pressure (Defianty et al., 2025) . One depicts a negotiation with tradition and family, while the other depicts an identity crisis and a desire to become a different kind of subject (Defianty et al., 2025; Sani, 2016).

Previous research applying feminist stylistics has also shown that Mills's model is quite effective for unraveling gender bias in texts (Ilmi et al., 2026) . Ilmi and colleagues, for example, demonstrated that Mills's framework can be used to analyze gender representations through subtle yet decisive linguistic structures (Ilmi et al., 2026). Findings such as these demonstrate that feminist readings are relevant not only to texts that portray women as victims but also to texts that center men as subjects (Ilmi et al., 2026). Thus, this article shifts the focus of analysis from the representation of women to the construction of masculinity as the center of gender ideology at work in the text (Ilmi et al., 2026).

Based on this literature review, this study takes the position that masculinity in literary texts is plural, performative, and constantly negotiated through language (Mills, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 1990). A comparative reading of

Jodoh and *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* aims to demonstrate how two short stories by male authors of the same generation produce two distinct forms of masculinity under different social pressures (Navis, 1975; Sani, 1972). Sara Mills's feminist stylistic framework, Connell and Messerschmidt's theory of hegemonic masculinity, Butler's

theory of gender performativity , and the *feminist comparative reading* approach provide an analytical framework for addressing the research questions regarding the construction of masculinity, similarities and differences in gender representation, and the gender ideology of the 1950s generation as reflected in both texts (Mills, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 1990; Page, 2003).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-interpretive research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) . The focus of the study lies on literary texts as the primary objects of analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) . The two short stories examined are *Jodoh* by AA Navis and *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz* by Asrul Sani (Defianty et al., 2025; Sani, 2016) . Both were selected purposefully because they present strong, distinct, and relevant constructions of masculinity for a feminist comparative reading. This approach aligns with literary text analysis that emphasizes close reading of linguistic forms, narrative structures, and power relations at work within the text (Mills, 1995) .

The research data consists of textual units containing markers of gender and masculinity (Mills, 1995). These data units include words, phrases, clauses, sentences, dialogues, and narrative passages that reveal the positions of male and female characters. In *Jodoh*, the data were primarily drawn from sections depicting Badri's calculations, his relationships with Lena and Rosni, and the story's conclusion, which affirms the character's shift in life orientation (Defianty et al., 2025) In *Sahabat Saya Cordiaz*, data was drawn from sections depicting the construction of C. Darla's identity, her relationships with Arni and her husband, and the narrative irony in the story's conclusion (Sani, 2016). Data was collected through repeated readings and the recording of quotations relevant to the research question (Mills, 1995)

Data analysis was conducted through *close reading* combined with *feminist stylistics* (Mills, 1995) . Close reading was used to carefully examine linguistic details and narrative structure. Sara Mills's *feminist stylistics* framework was employed to identify four key aspects: lexical choice, transitivity, focalization, and reader positioning. Lexical choice is used to examine the words that shape images of men and women. Transitivity is used to trace who acts, who is the recipient of the action, and how power is distributed. Focalization is used to determine from whose perspective the story unfolds. Reader positioning is used to understand how the text guides readers to accept or reject certain ideologies [Mills, 1995].

The analysis was conducted comparatively (de la Pola, 2021) . First, each short story was analyzed separately to identify patterns in the construction of masculinity (Mills, 1995) . Subsequently, the two short stories were compared to identify similarities and differences in how the texts construct gender and power. This comparison aims to address how masculinity is constructed in each text, how their similarities and differences reveal the gender ideology of the 1950s, and how the texts illustrate the pressures placed on male subjects in two distinct social contexts (Butler & Trouble, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) . To deepen the analysis of masculinity, this study also employs the concept of hegemonic masculinity from Connell and Messerschmidt and the idea of gender performativity from Butler as

supporting conceptual frameworks (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Butler, 1990).

The validity of interpretations is ensured through careful reading, comparison of textual evidence, and consistency between data and theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Mills, 1995) . Interpretations are accepted only if they are supported by quotations that demonstrate recurring patterns, not by general impressions. In this way, the analysis does not stop at subjective opinions but is built upon traceable textual evidence (Mills, 1995) . This framework enables the research to produce systematic, focused, and relevant readings that directly address the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This chapter presents a textual-comparative analysis of "Jodoh" by A.A. Navis and "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz" by Asrul Sani based on the six categories in the analytical framework. The main finding is that both short stories challenge men's claims to authority, but do so in different ways. "Jodoh" highlights the tension between the power to choose a partner and the obligation to be a husband and father, while "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz" deconstructs the image of masculinity constructed by Darla through his name, appearance, and the story he tells about himself.

Gender Constructs in "Jodoh"

The opening of "Jodoh" immediately frames marriage within the context of the number of women, the scarcity of jobs, and societal judgments regarding marriageable age. Women over the age of twenty-five are described as being viewed by society as "individuals who cause distress to families." The word *"oknum*" implies that single women are problematic, but the source of this judgment must be read carefully. The narrator attributes it to "society," rather than directly stating it as a fact of the story. At the same time, the portrayal of Badri as merely having to "point his finger" to find a wife illustrates just how easily women are positioned as available for selection.

Table 1. Textual Analysis of Gender and Masculinity in the Short Story "Jodoh"

Category	Textual Data (Quote / Indication)	Preliminary Finding & Critical Effect
Lexical Choices	"an individual who causes anxiety for the family."	Single women are positioned as a source of social anxiety through an evaluation attributed to society.
Transitivity	Badri "researches," "records," and "makes a choice" in his search for a partner.	This sequence of actions positions Badri as the manager of the partner-selection process.
Focalization	Calculations about expenses and partner criteria are conveyed through Badri's thoughts.	Women's experiences are more often presented through Badri's measurements, calculations, and assumptions.
Reader Positioning	The scene in which Lena rejects Badri's grip is followed by a frame depicting their married life.	The ending invites a happy reading, but it does not erase the tension in the rejection scene.
Hegemonic Masculinity	Badri considers financial support, his prospective wife's employment, and his role as a father.	Male adequacy is negotiated through economic capacity and family responsibility.
Gender Performativity	Badri shifts from an idealistic bachelor to a husband and father who prioritizes his family.	Masculine identity appears to change alongside social practices and demands.

Source: Textual analysis of A.A. Navis's short story "Jodoh," based on the gender and masculinity analysis framework.

The details of the partner search clarify the distribution of agency. Badri compiles a list of women from the matchmaking column based on occupation, height, age, and other criteria; after screening the candidates, he "makes his choice." Grammatically, Badri is the agent of the actions of researching and selecting, while the women primarily appear as entries to be compared. However, this reading does not mean that women do not act at all: Lena avoids Badri's advances, cuts off interaction upon learning of his relationship with Rosni, and later refuses unwanted physical contact.

Badri's criteria also reveal an economic contradiction within his masculinity. He wants a prospective wife who works because he fears his salary won't be enough to support a family, yet he still sets conditions regarding women's bodies and jobs according to his own needs. Thus, Lena's job is initially recognized as an economic resource, not merely as her own life choice. When the story later mentions that Lena was advised to quit her job as a teacher after the birth of her second child, that initial premise is simply abandoned without an equivalent explanation of Lena's own perspective on her work.

The tension between Badri's perspective and Lena's actions reaches its peak during their encounter in front of the store. Badri interprets the encounter as a sign that Lena is his destined partner, then grips her arm "tightly." Lena asks him to let go and actually screams when Badri challenges her. This scene is significant because Lena's actions shatter Badri's belief that he can determine the meaning of the encounter while simultaneously controlling a woman's response in public space.

The short story's ending adds a layer that cannot be reduced to a simple restoration of patriarchy. After the incident, the reader learns that the story they have

just read is a manuscript written by Badri; Lena, now his wife, protests his plan to publish their story. This framing gives Lena a voice to evaluate Badri's act of storytelling, but control over the narrative remains with Badri. The concluding narrative then emphasizes family happiness and replaces the idealism of youth with the aspiration to make his wife and child happy. Therefore, readers can view this ending both as a domestic reconciliation and as a part of the story that warrants further scrutiny. Lena's experiences and decisions are not explored as thoroughly as Badri's change of heart.

Gender Construction in "My Friend Cordiaz"

Unlike Badri, Darla does not establish her authority through economic stability. She introduces herself as C. Darla, adopts striking appearance markers, speaks in a mix of languages, and recounts her experiences in Singapore. The "I" narrator initially admired her, then repeatedly revised that assessment upon discovering the gap between the image Darla projected and what the narrator later learned. Darla's masculinity emerges that constantly requires recognition from other.

Table 2. Textual Analysis of Gender and Masculinity in the Short Story "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz"

Category	Textual Data (Quote / Indication)	Preliminary Finding & Critical Effect
Lexical Choices	The narrator describes Darla's actions as "odd" and "full of symbolism."	The narrator's evaluation creates ironic distance from Darla's image in the reader's eyes.
Transitivity	Darla states, "No one can replace me"; at the end of the story, his wife shows the marriage certificate to the narrator.	Darla's claim of influence over Arni is contrasted with another character's actions that restrict his version of events.
Focalization	Darla's story is conveyed by the "I" narrator.	Readers come to know Darla mainly through his friend's observation, filtering, and subjective interpretation.
Reader Positioning	The ending states that Darla's ambition to become "Cordiaz Darla" remains unfulfilled.	Narrative irony encourages readers to question, rather than simply accept, the identity Darla constructs.
Hegemonic Masculinity	Darla claims to be irreplaceable to Arni, yet he appears to lose control over the story of his own life.	The superiority he claims does not receive stable social recognition from those around him.
Gender Performativity	The name "Cordiaz," a bracelet bearing that name, clothing, language, and stories of experience.	His self-image is repeated through a series of symbolic signs, but remains vulnerable without genuine social recognition.

Source: Textual analysis of Asrul Sani's short story "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz" (1972), using Mills's feminist stylistics model and gender theory.

In her relationship with Arni, Darla tries to present herself as the man who determines a woman's worth. She refers to Arni as an "ex" lover and says, "No one can replace me." However, the text presents Arni's situation solely through Darla's

account; the reader does not hear Arni's direct response. When Darla's letters and packages are returned, the incident undermines her claim that the relationship was entirely under her control.

The "I" narrator plays a decisive role in this process of unmasking. He admits to being interested in and even admiring Darla at one point, but he also interjects doubts, subtle mockery, and interpretations that may not be entirely fair. For example, the narrator links Darla's departure from the boarding house to the mice in the room, even though the reason stated in Darla's letter was that the house was too noisy. Since readers receive the story solely through this narrator, the short story's irony need not be accepted as an objective judgment of Darla; it also reveals the narrator's power to shape the image of her friend.

The wedding scene makes the struggle for control over the narrative even clearer. Darla had previously established the name "Cordiaz," but the marriage certificate shown by his wife bears the name Chaidir Darla. The wife answers the narrator's questions about their marriage and, according to the narrator's observation, does not allow Darla to speak much. This action does not automatically make Darla's wife a fully empowered character; the text still does not provide direct access to her thoughts and motives. What is certain is that the documents and her statements disrupt the self-image Darla has long projected.

The short story's conclusion maintains an ironic tone. The money the narrator sent with the message "For the cost of becoming Spanish" was actually received by Darla's wife and, according to the maid's account, used to buy a kebaya. The narrator then states that Darla's aspiration to be named Cordiaz has once again come to naught. This event can be interpreted as a failure of Darla's identity performance and as an example of how another man—the narrator—holds the power to mock and bring her story to a close.

Intertextual Comparison

The six coding categories indicate that the two short stories do not merely present "strong" and "weak" men. Both Badri and Darla strive to construct socially acceptable self-images, while the female characters disrupt those images through refusal, speech, or action. The difference lies in the narrative outcome: Badri's transformation culminates in a family life depicted as harmonious, whereas Darla's efforts to preserve her reputation and image are left open to irony.

Table 3. Comparison of Masculinity Construction Across Texts

A comparative reading of A.A. Navis's "Jodoh" and Asrul Sani's "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz"

Category	"Jodoh"	"Sahabat Saya Cordiaz"	Point of Comparison
Lexical Choices	Single women are initially associated with family anxiety.	Darla is evaluated through the narrator's labels and ironic comments.	Evaluative language positions the characters before readers assess their actions.
Transitivity	Badri actively calculates, selects, and pursues; Lena also refuses and screams.	Darla makes numerous claims; the returned package and marriage certificate test those claims.	Women's actions limit the portrayal of men as sole controllers.
Focalization	The story remains close to Badri's calculations and changing thoughts.	The story is filtered through the "I" narrator's observations of Darla.	Readers' access to women is limited, but the mediating perspectives differ.
Reader Positioning	The ending offers family reconciliation while leaving questions about Lena's choice.	The ironic ending invites readers to question Cordiaz's image.	The first resolution tends to calm the conflict; the second preserves the failure of the claim.
Hegemonic Masculinity	Badri's adequacy is tied to work, financial support, marriage, and fatherhood.	Darla's claim to superiority depends on charm, influence, and cosmopolitan identity.	Both require social legitimacy, not merely personal conviction.
Gender Performativity	Badri's everyday practices change after he becomes a husband and father.	Darla repeats identity markers through his name, clothing, language, and stories.	Masculine identity is formed through practices that may change or fail.
Dominant Gender Ideology	Family happiness becomes the framework of the ending.	The authenticity of the male claim is tested through social irony.	Both open space for gender critique, but neither gives women an equal voice.

Source: Comparison based on a textual reading of "Jodoh" and "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz."

Theoretical Discussion

Findings regarding lexical choices, transitivity, focalization, and reader positioning demonstrate the value of Mills's feminist stylistic approach: gender issues arise not only in what characters say but also in who is positioned to judge, act, and conclude the story. In "Jodoh," readers largely follow Badri's logic, even though Lena's actions occasionally disrupt it. In "Sahabat Saya Cordiaz," the reader follows the narrator's assessment of Darla, so the deconstruction of Darla's masculinity simultaneously depends on the narrative power of the "I" character. Focalization, therefore, needs to be analyzed alongside the limitations of the narrator's knowledge, rather than treated as evidence that the text is entirely biased toward a single character.

Connell and Messerschmidt's concept of hegemonic masculinity helps explain why these two forms of masculinity cannot be assessed solely based on the characters' personal traits. Badri measures his self-worth through income, marriage, and family responsibilities; Darla seeks recognition through her influence over women and her

cosmopolitan image. However, this theory also reminds us that gender hierarchies contain contradictions and must allow room for women's agency. Lena's resistance and Darla's wife's actions are significant precisely because they both reveal the limits of men's claims to social control.

A reading grounded in gender performativity sharpens the analysis, provided that performativity is not equated with the free act of choosing one's identity at will. For Darla, her name, bracelet, clothing, language, and stories of her work experiences function as recurring signs, but these signs are not enough to ensure that others recognize her as "Cordiaz." For Badri, his identities as a husband and father are also shaped through shifting practices and values that are continually reaffirmed by the end of the story.

Both demonstrate that masculinity is not a fixed trait; the difference lies in the fact that the narrative grants Badri's practices a relatively stable place, while Darla's practices are continually thwarted by the knowledge and judgments of others. The contribution of this comparison lies in the distinction between the authority to act and the authority to narrate. Badri does not always succeed in controlling Lena, but he gains the opportunity to write their story and articulate the ultimate meaning of his marriage. Darla fails to maintain the story of "Cordiaz" because the narrator, the marriage documents, and the actions of other characters continually provide counter-narratives. In both short stories, the critical question is not only whether women can reject men, but also whether their voices are given sufficient space to determine how their rejection and subsequent lives are interpreted.

CONCLUSION

A comparative textual analysis reveals that "Jodoh" and "My Friend Cordiaz" both portray masculinity as a position requiring social recognition, rather than an inherent trait possessed by men. In "Jodoh," Badri is given the space to choose a partner, interpret events, and write the story of his marriage. Lena's rejection reveals the limits of his control. The story's ending allows for Badri's transformation as a husband and father, while simultaneously leaving open the question of how Lena's choice is interpreted.

In "My Friend Cordiaz," Darla constructs her self-image through her name, appearance, language, and stories about her influence on others. That image cannot survive without social recognition. The actions of other characters and the narrator's account continually present different versions of Darla's claims. Unlike Badri, whose story concludes within the framework of family life, Darla remains within a framework of irony.

Both short stories also demonstrate that women's opportunities to act are not always accompanied by equal opportunities to narrate their experiences. Lena can reject Badri, while the female characters in Darla's story can undermine her claims. Nevertheless, their experiences primarily reach the reader through the interpretations of male characters. Therefore, gender construction in both texts operates not only through word choices and actions but also through the framing of perspective and the authority to determine the final meaning.

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