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# DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN INDONESIAN TEEN MOVIES FROM 1970s TO 2000s

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## Introduction

This study aims to analyze the shifting discourse of teen's masculinity in Indonesian movies targeting adolescent from the period of 1970s to 2000s. In this regard, movie is considered as a social text which provides important cues regarding dominant discourse of masculinity in a certain period. This study focuses mainly on how discourse of teen's masculinity is constructed in teen movies and how the discourse has interrelationship with social and political context in Indonesia. To be more specific, this study attempts to analyze the way in which teen's masculinities are represented audio-visually in the chosen movies representing each decade. Afterward, this study attempts to identify and analyze shift on the discourse of teen's masculinity from 1970s to 2000s.

This study assumes that there are changes in the way in which teen's masculinity is constructed from decade to decade in line with the social changes occurred in Indonesian society. In this regard, other discourses such as discourse of religion, of gender and of ethnicity apparently play a significant role in the construction of teen's masculinity. The result also illustrates the role of shifting political context in Indonesia from the New Order to the Post-New Order era in the construction of teen's masculinity is analyzed as well in this study.

Teen movies become an important entry point to scrutinize the dynamic of adolescent's life. Ashadi Siregar (2008) asserts that any mass media that

are specifically addressed at teenage audiences is basically an indicator of the thinking, values and perspectives of young people in a society where media is produced and distributed. It is interesting to understand the discursive construction of masculinity in mass media since adolescence is a crucial phase in seeking their self identity, including the identity of becoming a man, and mass media becomes the window for adolescent to comprehend the problem of masculinities. Movie is one of the most consumed mass media among teenagers. Based on the aforementioned reason, this paper will explore some Indonesian teen movies from 1970s to 2000s to understand the discursive construction of masculinity in each period.

## Teen's Masculinity

Masculinity is a term that refers to social roles, behaviors, and meanings assigned to men in society and in certain time. Kimmel defines masculinity as a term that refers to social roles, behaviors, and meanings assigned to men in society and in certain time (Kimmel and Aronson, 2003: 503). Men was understood and taken for granted as powerful, rational, and aggressive. Then, how is the construction of teen's masculinity? Teenager or adolescence is mentioned as critical period since this period is the time when adolescent starts to face problems and dynamics of life. Adolescent is defined as transitional phase from childhood to adulthood (Brown *et.al*., 2002: 2).

In that phase, individual experiences physical, cognitive, social and psychological changes. According to Hebdige (Barker, 2005 : 426), adolescent is often related to their rejection of the daily norms and values, so they are constructed with figures like hooligan, motorbike boys or street gangs associated with criminal, violence, and delinquency. They are also represented as fashion consumers with certain style and leisure time activity.

## Men in Movies

Adolescence is also a period in which the adolescent search for identity (Widyastuti, 2006). For that purpose, they need role model to form their identity, including gender identity. In that case, mass media plays its roles as the source of information about life style, how to get along and to appear attractively.

Research conducted by Roberts *et. al* (2005 in Kirsh, 2006: 77) showed that adolescentspent his/her time almost nine hours a day to consume media. In this case, movie is one of the most popular and most wanted media among adolescent.

In general, Shary (2005: 1) points out that teen movie has become the most influential entertainment media in the world since it plays a major role in the notion of cultural formation processes associated with adolescent's history, behaviors, and values. Thus, teen movie can be awindow to see the reality of adolescent's life, gender identity, and in this case, how masculinity is constructed in a certain period.

## Teen Movies's List

Movie text is considered capable of recording the social dynamics and power relations that took place in the society when the text appears. The object of the study is Indonesian teen movie texts produced and distributed in 1970s-2000s. There are 8teen movies as the representation of each decade, started from 1970s to2000s, as followed.

**Tabel 1. List of Analyzed Teen Movies**

| No. | Movie Title | Year of Production |
|-----|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. | *Ali Topan Anak Jalanan* (ATAJ) | 1977 |
| 2. | *Gita Cinta dari SMA* (GCDS) | 1979 |
| 3. | *MerpatiTakPernahIngkarJanji* (MTPIJ) | 1986 |
| 4. | *Lupus I: Kejarlah Daku Kau Kujitak* | 1987 |
| 5. | *Ricky Nakalnya Anak Muda* (RNAM) | 1990 |
| 6. | *Olga dan Sepatu Roda* (OSR) | 1992 |
| 7. | *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (AADC) | 2001 |
| 8. | *Ekskul* (Eks) | 2007 |

In order to explain the discursive construction of masculinity in Indonesian Teen Movies from 1970s to 2000s, this analysis is divided into two categories namely appearance and attitude and behavior.

## Male Teen's Apparences: Rebellious Guy
### Male Teen in 1970s

In 1970s, the discourse of good-looking and ideal physical appearance of men was not exposed too much in the movie. Men were constructed as masculine and virile. It made men identical to rebelliousness. Their appearance was influenced by the American youth's fashion style in 1970s, especially during the anti-Vietnam war movement in 1972 (Herald, 2007: 9). Men often used bell-bottom jeans trousers with tight shirt, jacket with badge, and scarf. This model inspired by Jacket with badge which was inspired by military uniform of American soldier sent to Vietnam. Bell-bottoms jeans trouser also became trend fashion in western countries during 1960s and 1970s (Pendergast *et al.,* 2004:902). The scarf and thick-soled leather shoes were also trend and inspired from the style of the singer or rock star, such as Rod Stewart and David Bowie (Heral, 2007: 41).



Youth adoption of western culture was the form of Anti-Soekarno movement which was marked by their acceptance of prohibited things, such as rock music (Vickers, 2005: 164). In this period, teenager that tended to follow western life-style was considered as rebellious. It closely related to the government's anxiety to the mass media, especially television and its advertisements which disseminated life styleas opposed to national identity (Kitley, 2000: 69).The aforementioned construction of rebelliousness was strengthened with gang-style and the use of the trail bikes as their vehicle to speeding on the road. These signed the phenomenon took place in Indonesia in 1970s that is called as "the beginning of liberalized of youth culture" (Vickers, 2005: 164).

## Male Teen in 1980s

Men in 1980s were depicted to aware to be looked at attractively, especially for women. Teen movies in 1980s started to show men appearance though it was not too dominant. Men were shown to see themselves in the mirror. In LKDKKJ, there is ascene which showed Lupus set his long hair with foam in front of the mirror. It indicatesmale character in the movie also tried to be attractive.



Even though men started to attain attractive look, men's appearances were not too problematic. Their appearance was categorized as rebellious. Men could have style at his will. Guntur and Lupus as the main actors in both movies used to wear high school uniform that was different from his friends. They let the top shirt button opened and nobody objected, or even, let their shirt seemed untidy.

Lupus and Guntur's style and appearance were almost the same, untidy with long hair as typical of rebellious youth. It is socially perceived that long hair for men was bad. Its negative image is closely related to the agenda of New Order regime that assumed men with long hair were potential enemies. New Order government released the anti-long hair regulation followed by in-place haircut as a punishment to anyone who disobeyed the regulation.
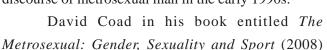
At the same time, there was ayouth movement of resistance in western countries followed by hippies and counter culture signified by eccentric fashion, such as long-hair. Later on, this movement dispersed to Indonesia via mass media. Youth started to wear loose clothing and lengthen their hair (Yudhistira, 2010:104). Guntur and Lupus were depicted as the figure of rebellious adolescent who rejected everything that was not suitable with their point of view.

## Male Teen in 1990s

Men's appearance started to be both verbally and visually discourse in this period. Ricky in RNAM was represented as a good-looking and cool man. It was mentioned in the conversation betweenRicky, Lita, danLita's grandfather when Ricky was introduced to him. He said that Ricky was good-looking. His

good look was also confirmed by the camera movement. The following figures are examples in the bathroom scene.



The above illustrationsdescribe how man started to notice the way he looks. Mirror becomes the symbol on how someone cares to his appearance. Movies in this decade began to consider that appearance was not only for women. It was related to the emergence of the discourse of metrosexual man in the early 1990s.

David Coad in his book entitled *The Metrosexual: Gender, Sexuality and Sport* (2008) explain that the terminology of metrosexual man was mentioned in Mark Simpson's publication, "*Here Come the Mirror Men*" in *Independent* newspaper in November 1994. Simpson (1994) said that a metrosexual man was *the mirror man*, man who cared and gave attention tohis appearance and did self-caring. Ricky in the above scenes explained what Simpson defined as the mirror man. In addition, Ricky's masculinity was also supported by his style. In this sense, jeep was Ricky's vehicle which supported his masculinity. Jeep as *off-road*car had masculine characteristic from itstoughness inspired from American military heavy vehicles.

Another attribute attached to Ricky's masculinity man on how he never stopped smoking. Smoking was symbol of men's masculinity. Here, smoking is often associated with masculinity and virility.



## *Male Teen in 2000s*

Men in this period were depicted as cool and ignorant that made them different from men in general. The main actors in both movies characterized as guys

who were alienated from the community of adolescents at school. Audience accepts this unusual character as a portrayal of masculinity. It is closely related to the beginning of the reform era where society started to accept some norms, values, and ideologies that were prohibited in the previous era. It influenced the dynamic of youth's life where different discourse, even in contrast to mainstream, started to be accepted.



## Male Teen's Personality and Behaviour: Active and Protective

*Teen Male's Personality and Behavior in 1970s*

Teen movies in 1970s raise the discourse of smart and excel teens as ideal personalities. Ali Topan and Galih represent this ideal. Ali Topanis smart at math and playing basketball, and so was Galih. Galih is also good at singing and playing guitar. In this sense, men are also depicted as active and aggressive figures. Men tend to show their power upon women, through their material ownership, achievement in school and recklessness. Men are being characterized as women's protectors.

In GCDS, some of Ratna's male friends always offered to take her home. Women in those movies placed themselves as the one who needed to be protected. In one scene, Ratna asked Galih intentionally to take her home when it was too late at night. Galih was willing to offer his jacket for Ratna without being asked, so she would not feel cold. He also took care ofRatna from her father's anger.

Another example is when Ali Topan as an aggressive guy showed his being gentleman by protecting Anna. When his classmate tried to disturb Anna, he reprimanded directly to the distracting guy, and asked him to ask forapology to Anna. When the distracting guy got so scared, it illustrated Ali Topan's domination. On another scene, Ali Topan and his friends helped a woman who was snatched by two bikers. Ali Topan fought with one of them, and he got a terrible injury. Hence, the aforementioned scenes show Ali Topan'sheroic character. His aggressiveness to challenge and involve in fight for protecting women is typical of masculine man.

According to Julia Grant (Donnelly, 2008: 15), men fight to show his physical power and it is a symbol of masculinity. Ali Topan aggressiveness is the implication of power he has. He has a high self esteem encouraged by his socio-economic background and academic achievement. Those factors make him dominant. Kimmel explains that masculinity is constructed in the arena of power and resistance, both men power over women and to the other men (2005: 6-7).

Ali Topan's effort to protect women makes him a hero. The label 'hero' attached to men, in Bellicchi's standpoint, has become one of the most visible and refers as archetype of masculinity. All men, especially children and adolescent, dream to have bravery, recklessness, expertise, and ability as soldier or hero (http://johnbellicchi.com/seminars/the-mens-workshop/masculinity-and-male archetypes).

Men in the movies in 1970s are depicted as gentlemen. It is mentioned explicitly in ALAJ. When Ali Topan took Anna home, Anna asked him to leave immediately or he would get a problem with her father. Nevertheless, Ali Topan refused and took a risk for it, asillustrated in the following conversation.

Anna : *Nanti kamu kena marah*. (I'm afraid if you will be scolded)
Ali Topan : **Gentleman** *itu harus mengantar gadisnya sampai ke pintu*. (**Gentleman** has to take his girl to the door).

The term 'gentleman' comes from French word '*Gentil homme*' means man with value, character, and high status. In Webster Dictionary, gentleman is defined as (1) A man well born; one of good family; (2) One of gentle or refined manners. In French, the term 'gentleman' is identical with royal status, referring to the knights and European soldier in the 14th and 15th century who dedicated their life to king and to defend their countries. This term istheexpanded meaning of beinga good and polite personin opposite of the term 'ladies'.

From the context of the conversation between Ali Topanand Anna, gentlemanrefers to Ali Topan's attitude and responsibility to make sure that Anna will be fine. It indicates that Ali Topan's courage to face potential anger of Anna's father related to their action against him. Masculinity is represented by the figure of Ali Topanand then signified with aggressive and courage

personality to confront against his opposition. Moreover, the construction of active and dominant men signified by his aggressiveness and traits as protector related to the discourse of new order politic, state of *ibuism*. It is about how to be ideal women whose roles as wife, housewife, and mother (Suryakusuma, 1996:101). Those roles posit women in domestic area, whereas men in public area; as breadwinner implicated to the construction of men as active and dominant side.

## *Male Teen's Personality and Behavior in 1980s*

The two movies still firmly hold traditional gender construction that tends to place man as person who has an active role. For example,Poppy in LKDKKJ disagreed if she had to pick Lupus up on the date-day as he suggested. She preferred to wait for Lupus's initiative. It also happened in their second plan to date. On the other scene, Poppy decided to end up their relationship and tried to make him jealous. Poppy actually just waited for Lupus to be active to pursue her and asked for apology. It means that man is conditioned as the person who has to be active and has the initiative in approaching woman.

Movies in 1980s still tried to emphasize that men are rational and women are emotional. It is mentioned in the scene of LKDKKJ when Poppy felt jealous with Lupus as illustrated in the dialog as followed.

Lupus : *… Dalam berpacaran **kitaharus pakai rasio, pikiran yang matang.***
(in relationship, we have to use ratio, a mature mind)
Poppy : *Jadi, kamu anggap saya nggak punya rasio?*
(So, you think that I'm not rational?)
Lupus : *Punya, punya .. Cuma **ketutup ama emosi kamu**…*
(Yes, you are but it is covered by your emotion)

The above dialog shows the way men are being rational and logical which is taken for granted. In western tradition, Janet Saltzman Chafetz explains seven points on traditional masculinity areas, such as,men areprohibited to be emotional and intellect. It means that men are logical, rational, objective, and well-experienced (https://www.valleychurchia. com/uploads/Challenges.pdf).

The two movies tend to place man as a protector. Man has thecapacity to take his girl home, as mentioned in the case of Poppy and Lupus above. It proves that man is a trustedinitiator. Men in the two movies are depicted as women's heroes. Another example is a scene in MTPIJ when Guntur tried to attract Maria attention. He hired three men to disturb her and Guntur acted like a hero to save her.

The heroic figure of Lupus also illustrated in a scene where he helped the canteen owner and her daughter, Indah. He conducted a demonstration with his friend to protest the school policy to close the canteen. Indah and her mother was the victim of defamation. When Lupus succeeded in helping them, he was a hero. Lupus is also a hero for his family. As the only man in the family after the death of his father, he had responsibility to protect his mother and sister. That made him took the job as a reporter to earn some money for his family.

## Male Teen's Personality and Behavior in 1990s

Men's capability in sport makes him masculine. This is shown in the figure of Ricky. His excellence in softball is the factor that strengthened his masculinity. According to Drummond (2008: 32), sport and sport activity play major roles in the construction of men's sight of masculinity. Sport is a domain where the construction of masculinity applied. Men notice if they master any kind of sports, especially sports that identical with champion power, aggressive and violence, they will be considered to have masculine character.

Connell (1995) gives example that a man who has sport skill was attached with certain social significance, and becomes symbolic proof of men's superiority (Stibbe, 2004:32). Besides excellent in playing softball, Ricky also did kickboxing to support his aggressive and superiority.

Men's masculinity emerged from men's aggressiveness and rude behavior, for instance, Ricky's desire to show off his influence through physical

power. His virility and assertiveness were accentuated from his courage to do fighting. It means that movies in 1990s still put emphasized on traditional masculinity which demonstrates physical power.

Teen movies in 1990s also mentioned how men disagreed to women who thrived for success. In OSR, Bang Ucup was the representation of men who wanted to hamper women's success. There was men's fear of women's success and intelligence. Jean Killbourne (1999) asserts that men tend to imagine that intelligence, success and empowered women possibly petrified and threatened their credibility as men. Traditional masculinity requires men to be dominant and subsequently, it forces men to repress and counter everything that can erase their masculinity. Admitting women's intension can be considered as a threat to men that can possibly decline men's level and domination.

## Male Teen's Personality and Behavior in 2000s

Men in 2000s are not always depicted as active figure. In the two analyzed movies, men and women have equal position and opportunity in public domain. For example, in the domain of romance and relation, men are not the one who had initiative or active. Additionally, women have  used to do it. Cinta in AADC initiated to sent a letter or read Rangga'sfavorite book to attract his attention.She is also the one whoproposed the idea to come to Rangga's house and said that she loved him. Cathy and Sabina in *Eks*also came close and gave attention to Joshua.

The construction that women are emotional and men are rational has broken in the 2000s teen movies. That dichotomy gets more fluid. In AADC, Cinta and Rangga became emotional and rational figures in certain times. It also happens in *Eks*.WhenJoshua was emotionally hostage his friends to take revenge, and Cathy reassured him precisely and asked him to think rationally that it would harm him. Those two movies placed men and women as human beings with both emotion and ratio.

This decade is also marked the fluidity of the boundaries between domestic and public space. In patriarchal society, there isa construction that

public space is men's part, and domestic space is for women. Women are attached with the duty to serve husband and take care of the children. Kitchen is the area for women to do the duty. Women who are unable to cook considered as unideal women since she failed to function as the stated dichotomy. On the other hand, AADC offers difference depiction. Rangga was very competent in cooking. Moreover, he often teased Cinta's disability in cooking. When Cinta said that her inability of cooking was not a big problem, it didnot mean any problem for Rangga too. Rangga was more dominant in the kitchen than Cinta since he directed how to cook to Cinta.

Even so, the two movies in the 2000s still placed men as the protector of women. In AADC, although Rangga was depicted as a quiet and ignorant person, he still cared and gave protection to Cinta. For example, he held her hand, hugged her to calm her when his house was attacked by unknown people. He also offered to take to her home after dating.



Men is also discoursed as the one who had to be ready in facing problems and should not easily give up. As shown in AADC,Rangga's quiet and ignorant character was not considered as an ideal man since he became passive and too easy to give up. For example when Rangga did not want to chase her when they argued in second-hand book-shop. Limbo, the shopkeeper pushed him to chase her.

Limbo :  *Rangga, Rangga...bodoh kali kamu, Rangga. Jangan kau pikir cewek yang marah itu benar-benar marah. Nggak, itu cuma taktik buat memancing inisiatif kamu. Ayo, kejar!. Ayo... Kau perhati'in ya kalo sampe dia menengok kemari, itu berarti dia mengharap kau mengejarnya ... perhati'in ... tuh, ayo kejar cepet.* **Kamu ini laki-laki bagaimana sih?**

(Rangga, Rangga … you're so stupid. Do you think that she's really angry ? No, it's just a trick to provoke you. Chase her! Come on… Just notice, if she look back to us, it means that she wants you to chase her… Come on, chase her. **What kind a man are you?**)

It also happened when Rangga was in the airport and he would go to New York with his father. His father pushed him to call Cinta to say goodbye. When Rangga was doubtful, his father said that he was easily giving up.

Ayah Rangga  : *Yakin kamu nggak nelpon Cinta?*
                  (Are you sure not to call Cinta ?)
Rangga          : *Nggak*
                  (No)
Ayah Rangga  : *Sekedar* say goodbye?
                  (Just to say goodbye?)
Rangga          : *Dia udah* say goodbye *duluan*
                  (She just already said it)
Ayah Rangga  : *Payah, gitu saja nyerah!*
                  (Why do you just give up? Fool)

The above examples show that there is a construction in which men should protect women and not easily give up does not change from 1970s to 2000s although women in 2000s has already depicted as independent and equal to men in public and domestic space.

## Conclusion

There is a shifting discourse of teen's masculinity in Indonesian movies targeting adolescent from the period of 1970s to 2000s. Men's masculinity does not change much. Teen's masculinity is closely associated to rebelliousness, and men are depicted as active, aggressive, and protective figures. The difference is only the package of appearance and also the form of personality and behavior in each period. However, those package and form still placed men in the same discourse.

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