

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Women's Marginalization in the Novel *Racun Puan* and Its Relevance to Critical Literacy in Indonesian Language Learning at Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

The issue of gender inequality is still frequently addressed in various literary works, including Ni Nyoman Ayu Suciartini's novel *Racun Puan*. The novel depicts various forms of women's marginalization. However, studies that specifically examine this issue in the novel remain limited. The objectives of this study are to describe the novel's depictions of women's marginalization and to investigate its potential use as teaching material to strengthen critical literacy in Indonesian language learning. This study used the qualitative descriptive method. Quotations from Ni Nyoman Ayu Suciartini's novel *Racun Puan* which demonstrate the marginalization of women were utilized as the main source of the data. Colleagues and teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Jatinom provided more information about the novel's use of marginalized forms as crucial literacy teaching resources. Questionnaires, interviews, and literature studies were among the methods used to gather data. Semiotic reading techniques and an interactive analysis model were used to analyze the data. The findings of the research are presented in two ways: (1) forms of marginalization of women in the form of control over the right to express opinions, women's movement, and social circumstances; and (2) as teaching resources to enhance critical literacy in Indonesian language learning. The findings of this study contribute to feminist literary criticism in the context of Indonesian literature. Furthermore, the novel has the potential to serve as contextual teaching material that fosters high school students' critical literacy and raises their awareness of social issues within their communities.

Keywords: Marginalization of Women; Critical Literacy; Literary Learning.

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INTRODUCTION

A novel is a literary work that represents the author's experience in confronting social reality, as shaped by the power of imagination (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2020). It reflects the author's sensitivity to various aspects of life and presents not only fictional narratives but also a wide range of social issues. Among these issues, gender inequality has frequently become a central theme in literary works. Gender inequality is a system or structure that disadvantages both men and women as its victims. This inequality is manifested in five forms: marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence, and workload burden (Fakih, 2023).

One form of gender inequality is the marginalization of women. According to Wiludjeng et al. (2020), the marginalization of women is a process that places women in a marginalized position within social life. The marginalization of women is a form of injustice that involves restricting or denying their access to social environments and rights through efforts to isolate, exclude, and control their lives (Rakhmayanti, 2019). These various efforts effectively place women in a socially marginalized position.

Marginalization takes various forms in women's lives. The marginalization of women consists of six forms of control over their lives (Rakhmayanti, 2019; Hilmi et al., 2022; Sukmana et al., 2025), namely: (1) labor control, which involves restricting women's access to employment, preventing them from enjoying equal rights in the workplace; (2) control over reproduction and sexuality, which involves restricting women's decisions regarding their bodies, sexual relationships, and reproductive functions; (3) control over women's movement, which restricts their mobility and physical activities, preventing them from moving freely; (4) control over the right to express opinions, which limits women's ability to voice their opinions, ideas, or decisions within both the family and society; (5) control over property rights and economic resources, which limits women's ability to own, access, and manage economic assets; and (6) control over social circumstances, which hinders women from interacting, participating, and positioning themselves equally in social life.

Novels can serve as a reflective medium for addressing the issue of women's marginalization, which hinders social harmony (Rakhmayanti & Wiyatmi, 2019). Women are often the most marginalized group due to gender differences (Hasanah, 2023). This indicates that gender bias continues to contribute to social injustice in society.

Gender is a social construct that defines the roles of men and women, unlike sex, which is biological in nature. This inequality arises from societal stereotypes and norms rather than

natural factors (Fakih, 2023; Cahyawati et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025). Consequently, its meaning is dynamic and may change over time.

To examine the issue of women's marginalization, a feminist literary criticism approach is employed. Feminist literary criticism is an approach to understanding literary works from a feminist perspective (Afiah & Muslim, 2021). Feminism is an ideology that highlights gender injustice and exposes the oppression of women through literary studies that critique the roles and experiences of women in texts (Safitri & Al-Ma'ruf, 2024). In literary studies, the concept of feminism is developed through feminist literary criticism, which places women at the center of analysis (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2020). This analysis uncovers the representations, roles, and injustices experienced by women to challenge patriarchal biases while fostering critical awareness among readers.

Novels serve an educational purpose because they convey educational values without coming across as preachy (Anggraini, 2018). Novels can serve as a tool for critical literacy because they provide readers with space to reflect on social realities presented in the text. According to Jumiah (2024), critical literacy is a way of reading that fosters awareness and a critical attitude toward social injustice in texts, thereby encouraging readers to engage in social change.

Critical literacy can foster critical awareness and attitudes among students in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum refines the previous curriculum to make learning more relevant and in-depth (Ndari et al., 2023; Azmi et al., 2023). Through this curriculum, students are encouraged to learn independently, while teachers are given greater flexibility to manage learning based on competencies (Al Fajri & Andarwulan, 2023). Therefore, instructional materials must be systematically designed to meet learning needs. These materials are essential to ensure a smooth teaching and learning process (Astuti & Ismail, 2021). There are four types of instructional materials commonly used in the learning process: (1) print materials, including books, modules, brochures, handouts, worksheets, photographs, illustrations, and mock-ups; (2) audio materials, such as radio broadcasts, cassettes, and audio CDs; (3) audiovisual materials, such as films and videos; and (4) interactive materials, such as interactive CDs.

The novel *Racun Puan* is noteworthy for its portrayal of the complexities of gender inequality, family and social relations, and the caste system. It was also recognized as a "Manuscript That Attracted the Judges' Attention" in the 2021 Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) Novel Competition, reflecting both its literary quality and the relevance of the issues it

addresses. The story centers on Aruna, a Balinese woman who experiences marginalization within her family and society. Despite her efforts to fulfill her roles as a daughter, wife, and mother, she continues to be overlooked and regarded as a failure. Through Aruna's experiences, the novel highlights the limitations imposed on women's agency, recognition, and pursuit of happiness.

The novel *Racun Puan* has been examined through various scholarly approaches. Putri (2024) for example, analyzed the novel from the perspective of literary psychology. A similar approach was also employed by Khairani (2025). Numerous studies have been conducted on the issue of marginalization in novels. A study by Rakhmayanti & Wiyatmi (2019) explores women's marginalization in the novel *Kremil*. Similarly, a study by Mawaddah et al. (2024) examines women's marginalization in Joko Gesang Santoso's novel *Nyutrayu*.

Research on critical literacy has been conducted in various contexts. Mangera et al. (2021) investigated the use of novels to develop critical literacy and their relevance as teaching materials for Indonesian language in junior high school. Research on critical literacy was also conducted by Meloche et al. (2020) focusing on critical literacy as a source of evaluation in world history classes. Meanwhile, Bahri (2022) examined literacy as a means of protection against the dangers of hoaxes.

The distinction of this study lies in its focus and findings. Although the novel *Racun Puan* has been examined from various perspectives, no previous study has specifically investigated the marginalization of women in the novel. The novel distinctly portrays women's marginalization through gender and caste relations within Balinese tradition, which restricts women's rights, opportunities, and social status from birth. This differs from previous studies, which have generally focused on gender construction, stereotypes, or patriarchal stigma. Furthermore, no prior research has integrated the study of women's marginalization in the novel with critical literacy in Indonesian language instruction at the senior high school level. This study has the potential to foster students' understanding of gender equality and to develop critical awareness of social injustice. In addition, critical literacy-based teaching materials are still rarely used in schools. Therefore, this study aims to examine the marginalization of women in the novel *Racun Puan* while also developing teaching materials to strengthen critical literacy in Indonesian language education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Fiantika et al. (2022) qualitative research aims to understand specific phenomena. These phenomena

include the experiences of the research subjects, which are then described in detail using words that accurately reflect the reality of the situation.

The research data consist of sentences and paragraphs that illustrate various forms of women's marginalization in the novel. Additionally, the data include information on how these forms of marginalization in the novel can be used as teaching materials for critical literacy. The source of the research data is the novel *Racun Puan* by Ni Nyoman Ayu Suciartini, published by Bentang Publishers in 2023, with a total of 142 pages.

The literature data were analyzed using semiotic reading methods, including heuristic and hermeneutic readings. The field data, consisting of information on the use of teaching materials, were analyzed using an interactive model. This analysis involved three steps: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The research procedure consisted of the following steps: (1) reading the novel *Racun Puan* carefully and repeatedly; (2) identifying and recording data in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs that indicate forms of women's marginalization; (3) grouping and analyzing the data to uncover the meanings of marginalization represented in the novel; (4) developing teaching materials based on the results of the analysis; (5) validating the teaching materials through questionnaires and interviews with peers and Indonesian language teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Jatinom; (6) presenting the findings and their application as teaching materials in a descriptive manner; and (7) compiling the research results and drawing conclusions based on the findings.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through data source triangulation. This triangulation technique was conducted by administering questionnaires to five colleagues from the Master's Program in Indonesian Language Education at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. In addition, questionnaires and interviews were conducted with Indonesian language teachers at State Senior High School 1 Jatinom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study cover two aspects: the forms of women's marginalization in the novel and the development of teaching materials designed to strengthen critical literacy in Indonesian language education.

Forms of Women's Marginalization in Novels

Based on the analysis, it was found that women experience various forms of marginalization. The characters who experience marginalization include Aruna, Sam

(Samudra), Aruna's mother, Ayu Laras, and other women in the novel. Aruna serves as the main character, Sam is Aruna's daughter, Aruna's mother is portrayed as her maternal figure, and Ayu Laras is Aruna's younger sister.

In the novel, women experience marginalization in terms of control over their right to express opinions, control over their movements, and control over their social relationships. The following table presents the forms of marginalization.

No	Form of Marginalization	Female Characters	Details
1.	Control over the right to express opinions	Aruna, Samudra, Ayu Laras, and Women	Aruna is not free to express her opinions and is prohibited from speaking by her husband, Kawa. Sam is not given the opportunity to express her opinions and is not taken seriously by her mother. Ayu Laras does not have the freedom to choose her future spouse. Women's opinions are often disregarded by men.
2	Control over women's movement	Aruna and Samudra	Kawa restricted Aruna from celebrating Galungan with her family. Sam is not granted the freedom to engage in activities of her choice.
3.	Control over social circumstances	Aruna, Aruna's mother, and Women	Aruna is ostracized by her husband's family, faces restrictions on access to education, and receives unfair treatment from her parents. Aruna's mother is treated differently because of her status as a Sudra and is not recognized as a wife by her husband. Other women in the novel also experience different treatment because of their status as Sudras.

Table 1. Forms of Women's Marginalization

Control Over the Right to Express Opinions

Control over the right to free speech constitutes a restriction on women's ability to express their opinions, ideas, criticisms, and decisions, both within the family and in society. Wahyuni & Prautomo (2023) state that women have an equal right to express their opinions, as every opinion has the potential to bring change. However, this freedom is often limited by the perception that women lack influence and the ability to create significant change.

In this novel, Aruna, Sam, Ayu Laras, and other female characters experience a form of marginalization manifested through restrictions on their freedom of expression. These restrictions limit their ability to voice their opinions openly. The specific forms of these restrictions are presented below.

Sekarang baru kusadar, jahat sekali temanku yang meracuniku dengan gagasan itu. Temanku itu bilang, abaikan saja kalau ada perempuan mengeluh. (Suciartini, 2023:16)
Only now do I realize how cruel my friend was to fill my head with that idea. My friend told me to simply ignore it whenever a woman complained. (Suciartini, 2023:16)

This quote reflects an attempt to dismiss women's complaints, indicating that their voices are often trivialized in everyday life. Beyond its literal meaning, the statement carries a symbolic representation of patriarchal oppression. Labeling women's complaints as

emotional reactions serves to silence their critical voices. This situation reflects a social contradiction: although women have the right to speak, their opinions are still considered less valuable than men's, making such silencing appear normal. This aligns with Dasilva et al. (2025), who note that the strength of the patriarchal system in society controls women's right to express their opinions and restricts their freedom of speech.

Aruna experienced a similar situation. The issue occurred on a smaller scale, namely within her household. This is reflected in the following data.

Tutup saja mulutmu biar kau tak banyak menuntut. (Suciartini, 2023:25)
Just shut your mouth so you will not make so many demands. (Suciartini, 2023:25)

The excerpt illustrates Kawa's prohibition of Aruna expressing her opinions. The phrase "just shut your mouth" has become a symbol of the silencing of women within patriarchal family relationships that position men as the dominant party. Consequently, this silencing is often normalized in society as a form of a wife's obedience. This phenomenon aligns with Harahap & Jailani (2024), who state that it is rooted in social norms demanding women's obedience to their husbands in the domestic sphere and reinforced by a patrilineal system that privileges men.

Although Aruna was a victim, she did the same thing to Samudra. This reflects a similar pattern of behavior. The following excerpt illustrates this situation.

Dia memintaku menjawab. Bagaimana bisa aku menjawab jika dia tidak berhenti bicara? Dia tidak berhenti menuduh. Dia terus saja bicara mengikuti alur pikirannya sendiri. Aku menjawab. Ibu membantah. Padahal, yang dia pikirkan sama sekali tidak benar. (Suciartini, 2023:52)
She asked me to answer. How could I answer if she would not stop talking? She would not stop making accusations. She just kept talking, following her own train of thought. I answered, but my mother objected. In fact, what she thought was not true at all. (Suciartini, 2023:52)

The passage shows that Sam's responses are consistently ignored by her mother. This continual disregard serves as a symbol of the lack of recognition of a girl's voice and reveals a power imbalance within the family from an early age. Implicitly, this condition suggests that patriarchal values have been internalized and are being reproduced by women within the household. Ironically, in society, such practices that perpetuate gender inequality are often considered normal in child-rearing practices.

The disregard for women's voices also occurs within family relationships. This situation can be observed in interactions between husbands and wives. This attitude is reflected in the following quote.

Aku bercerita panjang lebar kepada suamiku. Namun, yang kudapat adalah pembelaan dan permintaan agar aku mengalah saja. (Suciartini, 2023:109)
I explained the situation at length to my husband. However, all I received was his defense of him and his request that I simply give in. (Suciartini, 2023:109)

Literally, the quote depicts the wife's emotional neglect as Aruna's attempts at dialogue are hindered by her husband's demand that she yield. The implied meaning of this act of yielding exposes the patriarchal system that forces women to suppress their voices for the sake of maintaining domestic harmony marked by inequality. As a result, women are required to maintain harmony without being given equal space to speak. This finding is consistent with Apriliandra & Krisnani (2021) who argues that a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture reinforces male dominance and restricts women's rights and freedoms.

The disregard for women's voices affected not only the main character but also other female characters. One of these characters is Ayu Laras. This situation occurred during the process of selecting a marriage partner, as illustrated in the following excerpt.

Sementara itu, Ayu Laras menikah dengan lelaki pilihan Ayah dan Ibu. Gadis polos yang tak mengenal cinta itu selalu memiliki pemikiran "Bukankah cinta bisa datang karena terbiasa, Mbok Aruna?" katanya yang ingin meyakinkanku bahwa pilihan Ayah dan Ibu tidak sepenuhnya salah. (Suciartini, 2023:131)
Meanwhile, Ayu Laras married the man her parents had chosen for her. That innocent girl, who knew nothing about love, always believed that 'Can't love grow out of familiarity, Mbok Aruna?' she said, trying to convince me that her parents' choice was not entirely wrong. (Suciartini, 2023:131)

The data show Ayu Laras's personal right to choose her own future, which is instead determined by her parents. This unilateral decision serves as a symbol of the limited rights women have to determine their own future, as their will is subject to family authority. From a gender perspective, women should ideally have the same freedom as men to choose or reject a life partner. However, social reality shows that women's decisions are often still controlled by their families in the name of tradition thereby reinforcing inequality resulting from patriarchal influence.

The findings show that women are denied opportunities to voice their opinions, express grievances, exercise freedom of expression, and choose their life partners. Women are placed in lower positions in both social and domestic spheres, resulting in their voices and aspirations receiving less consideration. Thus, marginalization in the novel is manifested through restrictions on women's participation in decision-making, a practice that has become normalized in everyday life.

An example of women's marginalization through restrictions on freedom of expression in the social sphere is also found in the study study by Bahardur & Afrinda (2024) on the novel *Orang-orang Blanti*. However, unlike the findings in *Racun Puan*, that study did not identify restrictions on women's freedom of expression within the family sphere. In *Orang-orang*

Blanti, women's voices in socio-political contexts are frequently ignored, silenced, and threatened, while women also face difficulties in accessing social and political power.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Rakhmayanti & Wiyatmi (2019) regarding the novel *Kremil*. Their study revealed the silencing of women's voices within the family sphere. Women were prohibited from rejecting prospective partners and from speaking negatively about their prospective husbands. However, the findings of the analysis of the novel *Racun Puan* indicate that restrictions on the right to free speech occur not only within the family sphere but also within the broader community.

Control Over Women's Movement

Control over women's movement refers to restrictions on women's physical mobility and activities, preventing them from moving freely and carrying out their daily routines. According to Apriliandra & Krisnani (2021), the division of public and domestic roles limits women's freedom of action. As a result, it is difficult for women to achieve equality with men in the public sphere. This situation also highlights the boundary between the public and private spheres Nurislamia (2020).

Based on the analysis, Aruna experiences restrictions on her freedom of movement imposed by her husband. Sam faces similar restrictions imposed by her mother. Consequently, both characters experience limitations on their mobility and personal activities.

"Bisakah Galungan ini kita rayakan di rumahku saja?" tanya Ibu.

"Sudah berapa kali kukatakan bahwa menjadi istri berbeda dengan gadis. Kamu harus mendahulukan perayaan di rumah keluargaku, di Singaraja," jawab Ayah. (Suciartini, 2023:63)

"Can we celebrate Galungan at my parents' house instead?" Mom asked.

"How many times have I told you that being a wife is different from being a young woman? You must prioritize celebrating it at my family's house in Singaraja," Dad replied. (Suciartini, 2023:63)

The excerpt highlights Aruna's limited freedom in choosing where to celebrate Galungan after marriage. The phrase "being a wife is different from being a girl" symbolizes restrictions on women's freedom of movement, as they are expected to prioritize their husband's family within a patriarchal system. According to Rahmawati (2021), in Balinese tradition, the concept of *purusa* places men higher in the family hierarchy, while *pradana* places women lower, so that after marriage, women become part of their husband's family. This indicates that customs and the husband's status still control women's mobility, so that women's identity is tied to their husband's family and separated from their family of origin.

Sam was also in a similar situation. Her freedom of movement within the family was restricted by her mother, Aruna. This situation is reflected in the following excerpt.

Aku tak pernah begitu saja menerima alasan-alasan yang dikatakan anak perempuanku. Aku selalu mencurigainya. Aku memeluknya terlalu erat hingga dia sulit bergerak bebas. (Suciartini, 2023:117)
I never simply accepted the reasons my daughter gave me. I was always suspicious of her. I held her so tightly that she could hardly move." (Suciartini, 2023:117)

The data indicate Aruna's excessive control over Sam through a suspicious attitude that deprives her daughter of freedom. This parental authority is used to restrict the girl's independence from an early age. According to Monika & Dora (2025) gender influences parenting practices, with girls facing greater restrictions on their activities than boys. This attitude is evident in parents' imposition of their will and excessive restriction of their children's behavior (Sari et al., 2020). These restrictions indicate unequal communication within the family, resulting in the child's wishes and plans are set aside by parental authority. According to Sholeh & Juanirti (2022) gender inequality in family communication is evident in the conflict between children's desires and plans, their position within the family structure, and the portrayal of women as passive participants.

These findings show that women's marginalization is perpetrated not only by men but also by mothers toward their daughters within family relationships. Restrictions on women's mobility occur in both public and domestic spheres through customs and parenting practices. Moreover, Aruna's experience reflects the enduring influence of Balinese traditions that continue to shape women's lives.

This study shares similarities with the research conducted by Bahardur & Afrinda (2024) and Rakhmayanti & Wiyatmi (2019), regarding the control of women's mobility. However, a key difference lies in the findings of *Racun Puan*, where restrictions on women's freedom of movement occur within the family sphere and are imposed by both husbands and mothers. As a result of these restrictions, women in the novel are not free to celebrate holidays with their families of origin or to engage in activities they enjoy.

A study by Bahardur & Afrinda (2024) found that men in social settings control women's movements in public spaces for various reasons. Meanwhile, a study by (Rakhmayanti & Wiyatmi, 2019) showed that women lose their freedom of movement due to restrictions, surveillance, and prohibitions on socializing with the opposite sex within both social and family settings. Furthermore, the study revealed control over women's physical appearance through restrictions on the use of powder, lipstick, and wearing their hair down.

Control Over Social Circumstances

Control over social conditions refers to the restrictions women face that prevent them from interacting, participating, and positioning themselves equally in social life. According to Sulistyowati (2020) women within the social structure of society continue to experience gender-based discrimination. As a result, women are often treated unfairly in social settings.

An analysis of the novel reveals disruptions in the social lives of Aruna, Aruna's mother, and other female characters in the novel. These disruptions are manifested in the form of limitations and social pressures they experience. The following data illustrates the forms of social control experienced by these characters.

Tampaknya, ayahmu melihat mereka tak menerima kehadiran orang asing sepertimu di keluarga. Namun, kau malah bilang mereka bersikap baik kepadamu. Tambahmu, mereka menganggapmu warna lain karena kau berasal dari daerah yang budaya dan cara pandangnya berbeda. (Suciartini, 2023:19)
It seems that your father felt they did not accept the presence of a stranger like you in the family. However, you said that they were actually kind to you. You added that they viewed you as different because you came from a region with a different culture and way of thinking. (Suciartini, 2023:19)

This excerpt shows that Aruna is viewed differently because of her cultural background. The term "different color" serves as a symbol of women's marginalization, positioning her as an outsider despite her status as a lawful wife. This reality reveals the existence of marginalization within the family, which forces women to conform to male-defined family standards in order to be accepted. According to Hall & Wilson (2021), family exclusion manifested as indifference or exclusion from events makes a person feel that their existence is not acknowledged. This situation creates injustice because it contradicts the family's function as a space of acceptance. It also shows that women remain vulnerable to marginalization, to the extent that their presence and voices are often ignored.

The character Aruna also experiences control over her social circumstances. This is evident in her limited access to education. An example of the data is presented below.

Kerabat, teman, masyarakat memandang Ibu sebelah mata. Mereka bilang Ibu tidak seharusnya berpendidikan tinggi jika ujungnya akan berkutat di dapur dan mengurus anak. (Suciartini, 2023:62)
Relatives, friends, and members of the community look down on her. They say that she should not have pursued higher education if she was only going to end up in the kitchen and taking care of the children. (Suciartini, 2023:62)

The statement reflects the negative view that higher education for women is considered pointless if they ultimately end up in domestic roles such as cooking and childcare. This stigma symbolizes gender restrictions that confine women to the domestic sphere and hinder their intellectual development. This reality reflects a patriarchal culture

that prioritizes boys' education over girls'. In line with (Dewi & Tobing, 2025), girls are often not prioritized for higher education because they are expected to become part of their husband's family after marriage. This educational imbalance, according to Anwar & Fauzi (2023), is deeply rooted in unequal parenting practices within the family.

Aruna's mother also experienced unequal treatment in her social life. This was due to her status as a Sudra. This situation is reflected in the following excerpt.

Ibu ingin anak-anaknya dapat diterima dan dihargai meski lahir dari rahim perempuan sudra (Suciartini, 2023:127)

The mother wants her children to be accepted and respected, even though they were born to a Sudra woman. (Suciartini, 2023:127)

This quote reflects Aruna's mother's desire for her children to be accepted by their social community. This desire symbolizes the discriminatory treatment experienced by Sudra women, indicating that social status continues to influence the acceptance and respect they receive in society. This situation demonstrates that a woman's position is shaped not only by her gender but also by her social background. Consequently, Sudra women face limitations not only in gaining social acceptance but also in the social relationships and lives of their children.

Aruna's mother also experienced marginalization within her household role. This occurred because her husband viewed her as a mother figure rather than as his partner. This situation is reflected in the following quote.

Ayah seperti menganggap Ibu sebagai ibunya, bukan pasangannya. Ayah ingin diperlakukan seperti bayi, dilayani, dan dirawat sebaik mungkin. (Suciartini, 2023:127)

The father seems to view the mother as his own mother rather than as his partner. He wants to be treated like a baby, waited on, and cared for as well as possible. (Suciartini, 2023:127)

Literally, this quote illustrates a relationship in which the father demands treatment and care similar to that given to a baby by the mother. The implied meaning of this data suggests that women are marginalized through the denial of recognition as equal partners in marriage. In this context, Aruna's mother is positioned as the one who serves rather than as a partner with equal rights and needs. This situation is influenced by a deeply rooted patriarchal culture within the household, which places the husband in a dominant position while the wife bears the burden of caregiving and service without reciprocity. Consequently, women have limited agency within the relationship and in their domestic roles.

The women in the novel experience unequal treatment. This situation is related to their status as members of the Sudra caste. This is reflected in the following excerpt.

Perempuan yang menikah dengan laki-laki berkasta lebih tinggi biasanya akan menikmati penghormatan yang tidak didapatkannya sewaktu hidup dalam kasta terdahulu. (Suciartini, 2023:127)
Women who marry men from a higher caste typically enjoy a level of respect that they did not receive while living within their previous caste. (Suciartini, 2023:127)

The data illustrate the differential treatment of women based on the caste system, as their dignity is measured by the status of the man they marry. This situation symbolizes the marginalization of women within a discriminatory traditional structure, as women of lower castes tend to be overlooked unless they marry men of higher castes. According to Pitaloka et al. (2024), the relationship between caste and social status forms a hierarchy that influences how individuals are treated and the opportunities available to them within Balinese traditional society. This system is known as *catur varna*, consisting of the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra castes, with Sudra being the lowest.

Aruna was treated differently by her parents. This was due to her identity as a woman. This situation is reflected in the following excerpt.

Ketimpangan yang dialami perempuan ini makin kurasakan saat melihat Ayah hanya membanggakan adik laki-lakiku. (Suciartini, 2023:128)
I felt this inequality faced by women even more acutely when I saw my father praising only my younger brother. (Suciartini, 2023:128)

The findings show how Aruna experiences unequal treatment from her parents because she is a girl. This is evident in her father's attitude, as he shows greater pride in her younger brother. This practice of prioritizing sons serves as a strong symbol of the patriarchal system, which causes women to receive limited social recognition starting within the family environment. This aligns with Septiari & Dhammayanti (2023), who note that boys hold an important position in Balinese culture as the bearers of the family lineage. Conversely, girls are prepared from a young age to become part of their husband's family after marriage. Thus, the value and status of women remain shaped by patriarchal cultural perspectives.

Based on the findings above, marginalization in the novel operates on multiple levels through gender relations, the traditional Balinese caste system, and family dynamics, driven by discrimination in both domestic and societal spheres. These findings reveal that women are marginalized in both public and domestic spaces through the silencing of their voices, restrictions on education, social control, and the imposition of gender roles from childhood. According to Yana et al. (2021) these conditions give rise to various social problems that directly limit freedom and violate women's fundamental rights.

Amalia & Hartono (2023) study of the novel *Tempurung* highlights Balinese women's struggle against marginalization through their determination to become educated and forward-thinking individuals. The difference is that *Tempurung* emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge, whereas the novel *Racun Puan* illustrates forms of marginalization such as limited access to education. Nevertheless, both studies share a similarity in that they depict the experiences of Balinese women in facing social pressures.

Teaching Materials to Enhance Critical Literacy in Indonesian Language Instruction

Marginalization in the novel *Racun Puan* can be used to strengthen critical literacy in Indonesian language learning. According to Priyatni (2020), a critical literacy approach helps learners recognize that the novels they read contain biases that reflect power imbalances between dominant and marginalized groups. Thus, the novel *Racun Puan* is understood not only as a story but also as a representation of social injustice in the form of women's marginalization.

This topic is highly relevant as teaching material for Indonesian language instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum. In the reading and viewing component of phase f, this topic effectively supports students in achieving the expected competencies. This aligns with the learning outcome that states, "students are able to relate the content of a text to matters beyond the text."

The instructional materials developed consist of a 16 page printed handout complete with a cover, a preface, and instructions for use. The handout includes Phase F learning competencies for the reading and viewing elements, the novel text type, and the learning outcome that "students are able to relate the content of a text to realities beyond the text." The learning objectives are for students to analyze the novel *Racun Puan* through a critical literacy perspective and to connect the issue of marginalization in the novel with social phenomena through discussion activities. The material covers reading novels through critical literacy, the definition of a novel, the concept of marginalization, its causes, forms, and impacts, and is supplemented with a news video illustrating the lives of women in contemporary society.

This teaching material includes exercises designed to strengthen critical literacy through novel reading and group discussions involving three to four students. These activities guide students in identifying forms of marginalization and their underlying causes, relating their findings to social conditions in the community, and proposing possible solutions. In addition, the handout includes post activity instructions, answer keys, self

assessment rubrics, and feedback from students and teachers for evaluation purposes. The teaching materials conclude with a glossary and a list of references.

The peer review results generated six suggestions for improving the teaching materials: (1) revising the learning outcomes, (2) adding page numbers, (3) providing a brief explanation of strategies for reading novels through critical literacy, (4) presenting the material on forms of marginalization in the form of infographics to reduce excessive text density, (5) integrating audiovisual and kinesthetic elements to accommodate diverse learning styles, and (6) adding a self-assessment and feedback section as a tool for student evaluation.

Despite these shortcomings, the author revised the teaching materials based on the feedback received. These improvements enhanced the quality of the materials, making them suitable for instructional use. The revised teaching materials can be accessed via the following link <https://s.id/OC7Hp>.

Indonesian language teachers believe that the issue of women's marginalization in novels is highly relevant for strengthening students' critical literacy. It is important to teach this topic so that students can understand the value of equality and avoid discriminating against others. This material is considered effective for today's students because it encourages them to respect one another, thereby preventing the emergence of social divisions. This is in line with Jumiah (2024), critical literacy is a way of reading that fosters awareness and a critical attitude toward social injustice in texts, thereby encouraging readers to engage in social change.

Based on the survey results, the developed instructional materials meet the principles of appropriateness. This is presented in the following table.

No	Principles of Instructional Material Suitability	Percentage
1.	Relevance	91,6%
2.	Alignment with students' ability level	95,83%
3.	Interconnection among components	100%
4.	Clarity and accuracy of content	95,83%
5.	Variety in material presentation	83,3%
6.	Interactivity	100%
7.	Readability and attractive visual design	91,6%
8.	Ease of access and use	87,5%
9.	Flexibility and adaptability	91,6%
10.	Evaluation and feedback	83,3%
11.	Alignment with local values and culture	100%

Table 2. Principles of Instructional Material Suitability

This study produced a handout on the marginalization of women for the Indonesian language phase f reading and viewing component. This teaching material supports the

learning outcome, namely “students are able to relate the content of a text to matters beyond the text.” In line with the research by Mangera et al. (2021), which utilized novels for critical literacy, this study differs in terms of subject matter and focus. This study examines the marginalization of women at the senior high school level, whereas Mangera’s study emphasizes character education values for seventh-grade junior high school students.

This study shares similarities with the research by Meloche et al. (2020) in applying a critical literacy approach to learning. The findings of Meloche et al. indicate that although students have limited prior experience, critical literacy is effective in evaluating information bias and beneficial for their academic development. However, the study by Meloche et al. (2020) focused on source evaluation in a World History class, whereas this study examines novels as teaching materials.

Both this study and Bahri (2022) study emphasize the importance of students’ critical literacy. Bahri’s study focuses on the ability to filter and evaluate information through an understanding of the theory of falsification. Meanwhile, this study places greater emphasis on the use of critical literacy-based teaching materials in Indonesian language instruction.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of the novel *Racun Puan* reveals various forms of women’s marginalization in the form of control over the right to express opinions, women's movement, and social circumstances. This issue was subsequently developed into teaching materials in the form of reading and viewing handouts for phase f of senior high school, aimed at enhancing students’ critical literacy in connecting textual content with external realities. Nevertheless, this study remains limited as it examines only a single literary work, does not provide a comprehensive picture of gender inequality, and has not tested the effectiveness of the teaching materials in classroom practice. Therefore, future research is recommended to broaden the scope to include aspects of subordination, stereotypes, violence, and the double burden, while also directly testing the applicability of these teaching materials in schools.

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DECLARATIONS

Ethical considerations

Not applicable

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

"The authors declare that the generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool ChatGPT was used exclusively for language editing and/or grammatical improvement. The use of AI did not influence the scientific content, study design, data analysis, data interpretation, results, or conclusions of the manuscript. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors."

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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