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Soma as Commodity: An Analysis of the Double Exploitation of Women in Pangku (2025)

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Abstract

This study examines the multimedia representation of structural economic constraints driving the commodification of women's bodies (Soma) in the informal sector along Java's North Coast Route (Pantura). The research employs a qualitative approach using Critical Semiotic Analysis, drawing on Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth. The primary data consist of verbal and visual signs from the film *Pangku*, including dialogue, settings, body gestures, and narrative structures. These signs are interpreted through Materialist Feminism, Social Reproduction Theory, and the Constrained Choices framework to reveal how capitalism, patriarchy, and informality shape women's labor and agency. The findings reveal that Sartika's participation in *kopi pangku* labor is not a free choice but a structurally constrained survival strategy driven by poverty, gendered labor markets, and the absence of state protection. Her body and emotions are commodified as productive resources in the informal economy, while her reproductive labor as a single mother remains unpaid and socially devalued. The study identifies a condition of double exploitation, where surplus value is extracted simultaneously from affective, sexual, and caregiving labor. Additionally, symbolic violence operates through emotional debt, moral stigma, and narratives of benevolence that normalize exploitation and erode social capital across generations. The study concludes that *Pangku* represents women's exploitation not as an individual moral failure but as a systemic outcome of patriarchal capitalism. Sartika's experience demonstrates how constrained choices produce the illusion of autonomy while continuously relocating exploitation from public production spaces to domestic and intimate spheres. The film exposes how informal labor regimes and patriarchal family structures mutually reinforce women's subordination specifically analysing how cinematographic codes transform labor into a visual commodity.

Keywords: Pangku (2025); Materialist feminism; Social Reproduction Theory; Informal economy; Soma commodification; Critical Semiotic Analysis

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Introduction

Java's North Coast Route (Pantura) not only functions as a national logistics artery that sustains macro-capitalist circulation, but also constitutes a space of informal economic contestation marked by gendered dynamics and class inequality. Amid the roar of trucks (similar to diegetic industrial noise) and the dust-laden roads that signal the constant mobility of commodities, the phenomenon of *kopi pangku* or lap coffee emerges as a manifestation of what Breman (2010) describes as the fragile "legs of capitalism", representing a form of gray work that is both distinctive and deeply problematic. Unlike conventional prostitution, which is spatially localized, or regular coffee shops that operate as neutral public spaces, *kopi pangku* situates women's bodies within an ambiguous terrain of space and function.

Within this setting, physical touch, the willingness to engage in prolonged conversation as a form of emotional labor, and the act of seating customers on the workers' laps become the primary commodities exchanged. These practices often surpass the exchange value of the coffee itself (Hochschild, 2012). This phenomenon reflects a complex intersection between moral stigma, in which women working at night are frequently labeled as "dirty", and pressing material necessities (Crenshaw, 1989). For lower-class women along the Pantura, *kopi pangku* is not merely a social deviation, but rather a survival strategy within an increasingly informal and precarious labor market (Gersuny & Turner, 1987)

In the landscape of Indonesian cinema, the film *Pangku* emerges as a significant cultural text, capturing this marginalised reality through a distinct visual language that commodifies the Soma. Broadly, the film follows the life trajectory of Sartika, a single mother living in acute poverty on the north coast of Java. To survive and raise her only child, Bayu, Sartika is compelled to work at a *kopi pangku* stall. She becomes trapped in an unequal power relationship with Mrs. Maya, the stall owner, who exercises control over Sartika through mechanisms of emotional debt. The conflict intensifies when Sartika meets Hadi, a man who seems to offer love and an escape from the nightlife. Rather than providing liberation, however, this relationship draws Sartika into new layers of complexity that further test her autonomy as a woman.

Through this narrative, *Pangku* challenges hegemonic representations of poor women in mainstream cinema. The film foregrounds social reality without falling into poverty porn or voyeuristic portrayals that aestheticize suffering for visual consumption. At the same time, *Pangku* serves as a sharp social critique, visualizing the double burden borne by single mothers under structural economic pressure. The film urges the audience to shift away from a moralistic, judgmental gaze that reduces women to the label "women of the night" and instead offers a sociological understanding of systemic

poverty. It asserts that individuals are pushed into exploitative forms of labor primarily by their position within economic structures, rather than by personal moral failure.

Starting from this synopsis, this research focuses its analysis on Sartika as a representation of the concept *constrained choices*, namely when individual choices are limited by structural inequality (Bird & Rieker, 2008). The research questions asked are:

1. how structural economic limitations encourage the commodification of Sartika's soma in the practice of *kopi pangku*;
2. how Materialist Feminism explains the double exploitation she experienced, including production work and the reproductive burden of being a single mother; and
3. how is the film *Pangku* represents Sartika's search for autonomy, as well as the causes of her failure which culminates in domestic patriarchal exploitation.

In line with that, this research aims to:

1. identify the mechanisms of economic exploitation that trigger the commodification of Sartika's soma;
2. examine the forms of double exploitation she experienced, including structural pressure from Mrs. Maya and the social stigma that influenced her relationship with Bayu as a child; and
3. analyzes the representation of the illusion of autonomy in film, particularly the shift in exploitation from the realm of production to the domestic realm.

Previous studies have shown a dissonance between analyses of cinematic representation and economic materialist foundations. Three primary comparative studies confirm this significant research gap.

First, Nuraeni (2017) Research on feminism in Perempuan Berkalung Sorban focuses on the patriarchal dimension within literary texts and employs qualitative content analysis. Her primary focus is on the values, morals, and cultural meanings in non-film texts, particularly those related to religious understanding and the interpretation of social norms. Due to the limitations of the medium and theoretical focus, this research does not offer an adequate framework for analyzing the informal labor dimension in the gray sector, let alone linking it to the commodification of the body as a means of production in the realm of film work. This approach is too far removed from the economic materialism needed to understand the *Kopi pangku* case.

Second, Tandian (2021) The study of the commodification of the body and love in the film *Love for Sale* is theoretically sound within Baudrillard and Mulvey's framework. Still, it is also tied to the digital urban context and the rent-a-girlfriend phenomenon. Although his analysis examines commodification, it focuses on urban consumerism and the use of digital technology as a medium of exchange. This context differs fundamentally from the reality of *Kopi pangku*, which is driven by non-digital structural poverty and operates in the gray labor-production realm of the Pantura coast. Therefore, Baudrillard's framework of consumer society is less able to capture poverty as a primary determinant of Sartika's exploitation.

Third, Rachman & Febriana (2024) study of Yuni's film uses Barthes's semiotic analysis to examine the representation of women's liberation. This study focuses on the narrative of cultural meaning, symbols, and the rejection of patriarchal norms that bind young women. While addressing the issue of women's agency, the analysis does not pay attention to the material basis or relationship between reproductive labor and capital accumulation in the lives of poor workers. This research remains at the level of culture and representation, without delving into the exploitation institutionalized by poverty and the labor system.

The gap that emerged from these three studies lies between the critique of cultural representation and the material basis of the economy. Previous research has focused more on explaining how women are represented or how cultural norms are resisted in the cultural realm, but has not yet addressed why women are pushed and continue to be exploited in the context of materially conditioned work. No study has explicitly used Materialist Feminism to unpack the commodification of the body in the Pantura gray work sector as a product of structural economic failure, rather than simply a moral issue or cultural interpretation. Thus, no research adequately positions Sartika's body as a means of production commodified by the structures of poverty and informality of the labor market.

The novelty of this research lies in two complementary scholarly contributions. First, this research applies Materialist Feminism integrated with Bird & Rieker (2008) Constrained Choices framework. This integration presents significant methodological novelty by providing a precise analytical tool for understanding women's work in the informal sector not as a matter of free choice, but as a structurally constrained one. Acute poverty is a determining factor that eliminates opportunities for dignified work. This approach helps the research move beyond moralistic judgments and emphasizes the material conditions underlying exploitation.

Second, the novelty also lies in the reading of the commodification of Sartika's soma as a form of exploited reproductive labor. This form includes emotional labor, caregiving, and affectional functions commodified within the structure of informal capitalism that incurs high social costs

(Federici, 2004). This analysis broadens the understanding of labor beyond production hours to include the continuously exploited work of social reproduction. The film *Pangku* serves as the primary text for this materialist reading, thereby providing a concrete visualization of the research's theoretical thesis.

Theoretically, this study presents a fundamental materialist critique of informal labor in Indonesia, transcending moral discourse and cultural interpretations. Its primary theoretical significance lies in testing and developing the concepts of Western Materialist Feminism. This study specifically examines the validity and adaptability of Delphy & Leonard (1984) concept of the domestic mode of production in the Indonesian context, particularly the Pantura informal sector influenced by street capitalism. Another important contribution is the development of the concept of double exploitation experienced by Sartika, encompassing the burden of economic production work in a coffee shop and the high costs of social reproduction resulting from the stigma and marginalization of gray work. This study emphasizes that the bodies of women workers in the informal sector are the primary arena of the struggle between economic needs and patriarchal subordination.

Methodologically, this study exemplifies the interdisciplinary application of the Constrained Choices framework by connecting film textual analysis with sociological and economic structural determinants. This approach offers a more critical model of cinema analysis grounded in materialism.

Practically and socially, this research contributes to Indonesian cinema studies by offering a critical analysis grounded in gender and class theory that challenges superficial readings of films on poverty. The findings on double exploitation and limited options are expected to provide substantial policy input to reformulate the issue of *Kopi pangku* and similar forms of informal work. This issue is positioned not as a moral issue, but as a pressing labor and social security issue. The relevance of these findings is crucial for single mothers and other vulnerable workers in the informal sector who need social protection and economic recognition for their reproductive work.

Literature Review

Film Studies and Social Context

Synopsis *Pangku* and Sartika's Position as a Trapped Subject

This literature review places the film *Pangku* within the tradition of critical film studies that views cinema as a cultural practice that is not ideologically neutral, utilising mise-en-scène and lighting to reinforce the materialist conditions of its subjects. From a cultural studies perspective, film is understood as a social text that plays a role in shaping meaning, identity, and power relations, particularly through the process of representation (Hall, 2012). Representation does not simply reflect social reality, but actively constructs how the public understands certain social groups. Several studies

in film studies have shown that cinema often reproduces dominant narratives about lower-class women as vulnerable subjects, morally ambiguous, and in problematic social positions, which ultimately reinforces stigma and structural inequality (Mulvey, 1975).

The film *Pangku* presents a micro-narrative about the life of Sartika, a woman who works in the informal sector as a waitress at a *Pangku* coffee shop. Sartika's position can be understood as that of a subject trapped, both structurally and personally. Within the framework of social practice theory, this condition aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where individual choices are shaped by objective structures such as social class, economic capital, and internalized life experiences (Bourdieu, 1986). Sartika's decision to work in the informal sector is not an expression of complete free will but rather the result of limited access to safer, more dignified economic and social resources.

Empirical studies of the informal economy in Indonesia show that women from lower economic classes tend to enter high-risk work sectors because of the flexibility of their time that allows them to continue fulfilling domestic responsibilities, despite facing vulnerability to exploitation and social stigma (Chen, 2012; Ford & Lyons, 2012). In this context, the film *Pangku* represents a structural reality that has been widely discussed in the literature on development and women's labor studies.

Sartika's position can be understood through the dialectic of agency and structure. She demonstrates agentic capacity in her efforts to survive and protect her child. However, this agency operates within the constraints of oppressive social structures, including poverty, patriarchal gender norms, and unequal labor relations (Khader, 2018). Feminist research refers to this condition as constrained agency, namely a situation in which individuals continue to act, but within a very narrow and risk-laden choice space (Mahmood, 2012).

Sartika's relationship with Bu Maya, the food stall owner, reflects a common pattern of patronage in the informal economy. Studies of informal labor relations in Southeast Asia show that patrons not only control access to jobs but also exert symbolic control over the bodies, emotions, and morality of female workers (Elyachar, 2005). In *Pangku*, this relationship reinforces Sartika's position as a subject constantly monitored and evaluated, both economically and morally.

In the domestic sphere, Sartika continues to bear primary responsibility for reproductive work and childcare, despite also being the breadwinner. This situation aligns with feminist economic findings, which emphasize that women's reproductive work is often undervalued, despite being fundamental to the sustainability of the capitalist economic system (Harahap et al., 2025). Studies on poverty and gender show that economic crises tend to exacerbate women's burdens without significantly disrupting patriarchal structures within the household (Chant, 2006).

Sartika's entrapment can be understood as a manifestation of structural violence, a concept introduced by Galtung to explain the suffering produced by social, economic, and political systems, rather than by direct violence between individuals (Galtung, 1969a). This structural violence often operates through symbolic violence, namely the process by which individuals accept injustice as something natural and inevitable (Bourdieu & Bourdieu, 2002). Sartika's representation in Pangku shows how this violence operates latently through silence, submission, and everyday negotiations.

The Concept of *Kopi pangku* and Gender Stigma in the Pantura Region

The practice of *Kopi pangku* in the Pantura region is an informal economic phenomenon that has grown amid limited access to formal employment and structural gender inequality. Empirically, the informal economic sector often serves as a subsistence space for lower-class women when the state fails to provide an adequate social safety net for vulnerable groups (Chen, 2012). In the context of *Kopi pangku*, the activity of providing beverages alongside personal interaction services functions as a body-based economic strategy, in which women's bodies become the primary medium for producing economic value. Similar phenomena in the informal service industry based on affection and sexuality have been widely discussed in feminist literature as a form of commodification of women's bodies under the structural pressures of poverty and gender inequality (Federici, 2012).

To understand the social dynamics surrounding this practice, Erving Goffman's Stigma Theory provides a relevant analytical framework. Goffman defined stigma as an attribute that socially discredits an individual, transforming them from a whole subject into a reduced and demeaned subject in social interactions (Goffman, 1986). In the context of female *Kopi pangku* workers like Sartika, stigma works by creating a damaged identity, where her social identity is no longer read through her maternal role or economic contribution, but rather through negative moral constructs attached to her type of work. Empirical research shows that women working in the informal sector that intersects with sexuality tend to experience social exclusion, symbolic discrimination, and limited access to public services (Scambler, 2009).

This stigma operates not only at the interpersonal level but also shapes intrapersonal and family relationships. Social psychology studies have shown that stigma attached to parents can be transmitted to children through the internalization of shame and social inferiority (Bos et al., 2013). Children who grow up in environments that stigmatize their mothers' work are at risk of experiencing psychosocial distress, low self-esteem, and difficulty establishing a positive social identity. This suggests that stigma operates structurally and across generations, not simply as an individual experience.

The stigmatization of female *Kopi pangku* workers is further strengthened within the context of the patriarchal ideology that dominates the Pantura region. In a patriarchal society, women's sexual

morality is often used as a tool of social control, while men, as consumers of services, are rarely subjected to equal stigma. Wieringa's research confirms that the politics of morality in Indonesia often positions women as solely responsible for violations of sexual norms, while men's consumption practices are socially normalized (Wieringa, 2002). This phenomenon aligns with gender power relations, where hegemonic masculinity maintains social privilege by regulating women's bodies and sexuality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

From a political economy perspective, stigma functions as a mechanism of social control with material implications. By labeling female *Kopi pangku* workers as immoral, society effectively excludes them from access to social capital, legal protection, and legitimate economic mobility. Scambler and Paoli demonstrate that stigma is not simply a cultural phenomenon but also a structural tool that reinforces class and gender inequalities by limiting stigmatized groups' access to resources (Scambler, 2018).

From Pierre Bourdieu's perspective, this condition can be understood as the erosion of social capital. Social capital refers to the network of relationships, trust, and social recognition that enables individuals to improve their social standing and well-being (Bourdieu, 1986). The stigma attached to Sartika not only drains her emotional energy but also damages the social network that should serve as a support for her child's well-being. When social capital is degraded, the reproduction of social inequality becomes increasingly difficult to break, and the children of stigmatized women risk inheriting the same structural vulnerabilities.

Thus, the practice of *Kopi pangku* cannot be understood narrowly as an individual economic choice, but rather as a complex arena where gender stigma, patriarchal ideology, and structural inequality intertwine. Theoretical and empirical literature shows that the body-based stigma against women workers in the informal sector functions as a mechanism for reproducing social injustice with intergenerational impacts. This analysis emphasizes the urgency of a structural and gender-sensitive approach to understanding the *Kopi pangku* phenomenon, rather than simply prioritizing individual moral judgments.

Materialist Feminism

Constrained Choices and the Illusion of Autonomy.

The phenomenon of Sartika's work in a vulnerable socio-economic condition can be analyzed critically through the Forced Choice framework or *constrained choices*. This framework developed in response to the dominant neoliberal narrative that views individuals in the informal sector as rational agents fully autonomous in determining work choices and life strategies. Within this paradigm, individual decisions

are often understood as a reflection of personal preferences, so that the vulnerabilities and risks experienced are considered natural consequences of those choices. The Forced Choice perspective instead emphasizes that unequal socioeconomic structures and systemic institutional constraints always shape individual choices.

Mahy argues that individuals working in the informal sector are never truly free to choose. While they act rationally to survive, that rationality operates within a space of choice narrowed by structural poverty, weak labor protections, and the absence of a social safety net. Thus, seemingly voluntary work choices are actually a form of adaptation to structural constraints rather than an expression of free will (Mahy, 2017). This approach is important because it shifts the focus of analysis from individual responsibility to the configurations of power that shape the possibility of choice itself.

Kabeer also developed an understanding of agency under conditions of constraint through the framework of agency and power relations. Kabeer emphasized that the ability to choose is inseparable from access to material, social, and symbolic resources. Choices can only be considered meaningful if individuals have relatively equal opportunities to evaluate and realize available alternatives. In the context of poverty and gender inequality, women often experience reduced agency, so their decisions are better understood as survival strategies rather than manifestations of freedom (Kabeer, 1999)

In Sartika's context, the decision to work at the Pangku Coffee shop can be understood as a form of constrained agency. On the surface, the decision appears to be a rational choice to earn quick income to meet Bayu's care needs. However, this decision stems from pressing economic pressures, unequally shared reproductive responsibilities, and limited access to secure and dignified formal employment. These conditions create the illusion of autonomy, in which individuals appear free to choose, even though those choices result from broader structural failures.

This critique of the illusion of autonomy aligns with Nancy Fraser's analysis of the contradictions of contemporary capitalism. Fraser points out that capitalism relies not only on the exploitation of labor in the market, but also on unrecognized and unprotected reproductive labor. When the state and the market fail to provide support for social reproductive needs such as childcare and welfare, the burden is shifted to individuals, particularly women. Under these conditions, women's participation in the market economy often occurs under conditions of structural coercion, rather than as a free choice (Fraser, 2016).

Several empirical studies support the argument that women in the informal sector are often trapped in exploitative work patterns due to a combination of gender discrimination, domestic responsibilities, and weak state protection. Chen shows that women's concentration in low-wage, high-risk informal jobs is not due to personal preference, but rather to structural constraints that force them to seek jobs with

flexible working hours to accommodate their caregiving burden (Chen, 2012). This flexibility often comes at the cost of job security and social protection.

Furthermore, the concept of Forced Choice also intersects with the literature on precarious work and the economics of vulnerability. Studies of precarious work indicate that individuals in these conditions face a lose-lose choice situation, where each alternative carries significant negative consequences. In this context, choice is not a means to well-being, but rather a mechanism for minimizing losses under less-than-ideal conditions (Burgess & Campbell, 1998).

Thus, Sartika's experience cannot be reduced to a moral narrative about individual choice. Every decision she makes is a response to intertwined structural pressures, ranging from economic poverty and gender inequality to the absence of adequate state intervention. These choices are always made within a framework of compulsion, where no truly safe or dignified options are available. The Forced Choice approach allows for a more ethical and structural reading of women's work experiences in the informal sector, while avoiding the tendency to blame individuals for conditions produced by systemic inequality.

Violence Structural and Economic Control through Debt of Gratitude

The relationship between Sartika and Mrs. Maya can be understood as a manifestation of structural violence that works indirectly through seemingly personal and non-coercive social relationships. The concept of structural violence was first formulated by Galtung as a form of violence embedded in social structures and resulting in systematic inequality in the fulfillment of basic needs such as food, shelter, and security of life. This violence does not require individual perpetrators who carry out direct aggressive actions because its detrimental effects are produced through the mechanism of unequal and ongoing distribution of resources (Galtung, 1969b). In this context, the poverty experienced by Sartika is not merely an individual condition but rather the result of the social system's failure to provide protection and guarantee the welfare of vulnerable groups.

When the state and formal economic structures fail to meet these basic needs, informal patronage-based relationships become an alternative means of fulfilling them. Scott's research shows that patron-client relationships in poor communities are often framed as mutually beneficial moral relationships, but are fundamentally fraught with power inequality because patrons have control over vital resources (Scott, 1976). The material assistance provided by Mrs. Maya in the form of shelter and food places Sartika in a position of high dependency, thereby limiting her room for negotiation and autonomy.

From Bourdieu's perspective, the practice of aid can be analyzed as a form of symbolic violence that operates through the mechanism of misrecognition. Symbolic violence occurs when the relationship of domination is not perceived as violence, but as something natural, moral, or even benevolent (Bourdieu, 2010). Sartika accepts Mrs. Maya's aid as a legitimate form of generosity, thus internalizing the sense of indebtedness as a moral obligation. In this condition, domination is not imposed from the outside, but is accepted and reproduced from within the consciousness of the dominated subject.

This debt of gratitude operates as symbolic capital that gives Mrs. Maya the legitimacy to demand reciprocation in the form of obedience and labor. The debt is repaid not through formal economic mechanisms, but through the surrender of Sartika's body and affection in the realm of reproductive and sexual labor. Numerous feminist studies have shown that women's reproductive labor is often disguised as devotion or gratitude, making the exploitation difficult to recognize as a form of structural injustice (Glenn, 1992).

This symbolic violence is further reinforced by the emotional narrative Mrs. Maya constructs about the economic conditions of her food stall. By emphasizing business competition and the threat of losing customers due to other entertainment venues offering similar services, Mrs. Maya constructs work relations as a mutual aid scheme. Within the framework of ideological theory, such narratives function as a mechanism for the naturalization of power relations. Althusser explains that ideology works by shaping subjects who voluntarily accept their roles within a particular social structure without realizing the exploitative nature of those relations (Althusser, 2024).

This narrative of helping produces what is known in the sociology of emotions as emotional debt. Hochschild's study of emotional labor shows that emotions can be commodified and used as instruments of control in work relationships, especially when workers feel morally responsible for the welfare of others (Hochschild, 2012). In Sartika's case, empathy and sympathy for Mrs. Maya led her to accept risky, self-defeating work practices, including her willingness to provide lap services to customers.

Empirical research on the exploitation of women's informal labor shows that consent in the context of unequal power relations cannot be understood as a free choice. When access to basic needs depends on a single dominant actor, consent becomes a product of structural coercion, not individual autonomy (Kabeer, 1999). Thus, Sartika's compliance cannot be separated from the material conditions that drastically limit her life choices.

Overall, the relationship between Sartika and Mrs. Maya demonstrates how structural, symbolic, and emotional violence intertwine in everyday social practices. The fulfillment of basic needs, both

charitable and personal, transforms into an effective mechanism of control when not accompanied by equitable structural protections. This relationship emphasizes that exploitation does not always manifest in the form of physical coercion, but can operate subtly through feelings of gratitude, empathy, and moral obligation generated by systemic social inequality.

Intersectionality Gender

The exploitation experienced by Sartika cannot be adequately understood through a single analytical category. An intersectional approach provides a theoretical framework that allows for a comprehensive reading of complex social experiences, particularly when subjects are at the intersection of multiple structures of oppression. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in her analysis of legal discrimination against African American women. Crenshaw asserts that identity categories such as gender, class, and social status do not operate in isolation but intersect, forming a unique experience of injustice that cannot be reduced to a single dimension (Crenshaw, 1991). In this context, oppression is simultaneous and structural, not simply the accumulation of individual factors.

In Sartika's case, an intersectional approach demonstrates how exploitation arises from the intersection of three main axes of oppression: economic class, gender, and de facto single motherhood. From a class perspective, Sartika occupies a position as a poor worker in the informal sector, systemically vulnerable to economic exploitation. Marx explained that in a capitalist production system, exploitation occurs through the extraction of surplus value from labor, particularly for workers who lack control over the means of production and are not protected by formal regulations. Contemporary studies of the informal economy show that this sector has become a space for capital accumulation that relies heavily on extreme flexibility, income uncertainty, and the absence of social security. Standing (2011) calls this condition part of the formation of the precariat, a new social class living in structural insecurity and chronic economic dependence.

The gender dimension further exacerbates this class vulnerability. As a woman, Sartika experiences patriarchal sexual exploitation that positions women's bodies as economic commodities. Marxist and radical feminist theories emphasize that capitalism is inseparable from patriarchal structures that control women's bodies and labor (Marx & Engels, 2018). Federici demonstrates that women's bodies and reproductive labor are the hidden foundations of capital accumulation. In economic practices based on affective and sexual services, as represented in the *Kopi pangku* arena, femininity is constructed as a monetizable selling point. MacKinnon asserts that sexual commodification is not an aberration of the economic system, but rather an inherent part of patriarchal power relations institutionalized in the market.

The gender exploitation experienced by Sartika is not only material but also symbolic. Her body becomes not just a source of income but also an object of moral and social control. Bourdieu explains that symbolic domination operates through the internalization of norms and stigma, so that women in subordinate positions often accept exploitation as inevitable. The stigma against women working in informal sexual spaces reinforces their subordination and limits access to social mobility, education, and legal protection.

A third dimension that deepens Sartika's vulnerability is her status as a de facto single mother. Without a partner and adequate state support, Sartika bears the entire burden of reproductive labor individually. Socialist feminism asserts that reproductive labor such as childcare, nursing, and household management are prerequisites for the sustainability of the capitalist system, yet they are systematically devalued and unpaid. Fraser calls this condition a care crisis, where the demands of the market economy collide with the capacity of individuals, particularly women, to carry out reproductive functions without structural support.

Walby (1997) distinguishes between private and public patriarchy to explain how women experience oppression in both the domestic and institutional spheres. In Sartika's context, the absence of state support for single mothers demonstrates the operation of public patriarchy, where social policies fail to accommodate the experiences of female heads of households. Empirical studies show that single mothers are at a significantly higher risk of poverty than two-parent households, particularly in countries with weak welfare systems. Brady & Burroway (2012) demonstrate that single mothers' poverty is not a result of individual failure, but rather a consequence of gender-biased labor market structures and social policies.

An intersectional approach allows for an explanation of why Sartika experiences a heavier burden of oppression than poor men. The gender stigma surrounding her work exacerbates her class vulnerability, while structural poverty limits her ability to fulfill her maternal role according to dominant social norms. Ideal maternal norms, as described Hays (1996) in the concept of intensive mothering, demand time, emotional, and economic resources that are impossible for poor single mothers to meet. This tension between normative demands and material realities results in multiple layers of moral and psychological pressure.

Crenshaw asserts that individuals at this intersection of identities are often invisible in public policy because legal and social systems tend to operate in single categories. Consequently, Sartika's vulnerability is not solely the result of individual circumstances but is systemically reproduced through markets, social norms, and the absence of state protection. In this context, Sartika's exploitation can be understood as a result of the synergy between capitalism and patriarchy.

Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative framework to interpret the ideological meanings embedded in the visual and verbal representations in the synopsis and the film *Pangku*. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth reading of signs that function not only as aesthetic elements but also as a medium for conveying social values and power relations. The primary focus of this research is to uncover how the mechanisms of dual exploitation of women and children are constructed through cinematic language.

The type of research used is Critical Semiotic Analysis. Semiotic analysis serves as the primary method for dissecting the signs present in the film, whether in the form of dialogue, scenes, visual symbols, or body gestures. Roland Barthes's framework of thought is used to understand how signs work on two levels of meaning. The first level is denotation, which refers to the literal meaning of what is seen and heard. The second level is connotation, which refers to the cultural and ideological meanings attached to the sign. This analysis is directed critically to reveal how these connotations are influenced by the ideological structures of capitalism and patriarchy, especially in the context of poverty, informal work, and women's gender roles.

The primary data sources in this study are the complete synopsis and verbal-visual representations of the film *Pangku*, which are treated as the corpus for analysis. The unit of analysis is defined as key signs that have ideological relevance. Verbal signs include dialogues that represent power relations, social stigma, and the normalization of exploitation. Visual signs include settings such as dimly lit food stalls, the female characters' clothing choices, body gestures that represent patronage relations, the absence of a father figure as an index of weak social capital, and pregnancy symbolism that represents women's reproductive burden. All of these signs are analyzed as interconnected systems of meaning.

Data collection techniques were conducted through intensive reading of the film's visual and verbal texts. Researchers systematically identified and recorded signs related to the themes of exploitation, gender inequality, and structural violence. To facilitate interpretation, the data were organized into a semiotic analysis table that included signs, their denotative and connotative meanings, and their relationship to critical theory. This table serves as an analytical tool to maintain consistency of interpretation and demonstrate the logical relationship between signs and the ideology being promoted.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages. The first stage was the identification of signs and the determination of their descriptive denotative meanings. The second stage was a connotation analysis that focused on the ideological and cultural values attached to the signs. The third

stage was myth deconstruction, the process of linking various connotations into a dominant belief system naturalized through the film's narrative. In this context, the film reproduces the myth of the benevolence of patronage that disguises symbolic violence and the myth of the hard work of single mothers that masks structural exploitation. The final stage was to link these findings to critical theoretical frameworks, such as materialist feminism and social reproduction theory, to develop an analytical argument about the representation of gender exploitation in the film.

The validity of the analysis is maintained through the principle of semiotic consistency. Every interpretation of the connotative meaning must be logically traceable from the denotative meanings apparent in the film and supported by a relevant theoretical framework. Thus, the resulting interpretation is not speculative but rather based on a coherent relationship among the signs, social context, and ideological structures under analysis.

Table 1. Critical Semiotic Analysis of *Pangku* (2025)

Visual/Verbal Sign	Denotation (Literal)	Connotation (Ideological)	Myth (Naturalized Belief)
Dimly lit coffee stall	Low-light interior	Space of gray-sector labor	Normalization of "hidden" exploitation
Lap coffee (<i>Kopi pangku</i>)	Physical proximity	Soma as a primary commodity	The myth of "benevolent" patronage
Absence of Father in Documents	Empty administrative field	Lack of masculine social capital	Public patriarchy as a state standard

Results and Discussion

Dynamics of Forced Choice (Constrained Choices)

The character Sartika shows that her life experiences were shaped by the regime's constrained choices, a situation in which a person is forced to make a decision not out of free will but due to material and social pressures that limit their mobility. As a poor woman and single mother with very limited educational and social capital, Sartika faces a labor market that does not provide opportunities for mobility and does not even guarantee the fulfillment of basic needs. The formal, non-sexual jobs she previously held, such as farm laborers or domestic workers, were never able to provide sufficient income to sustain the family. This is clearly illustrated when Sartika returns from the fields and finds that there is no longer any rice in the house, while the day's income is insufficient to meet food needs. The pressure of this situation leads her to work as a waitress at Mrs. Maya's coffee shop to survive. This scene emphasizes that the decision is not born of personal preference but a direct response to the material situation that severely limits her choices.

Sartika's story aligns with the thesis of Materialist Feminism formulated by Delphy & Leonard (1984), which emphasises that material structures and unequal relations of production limit women's autonomy in patriarchal capitalist societies. In this context, Sartika's decision to enter the coffee stall business cannot be understood as a manifestation of freedom of choice in the labor market. It is more appropriately understood as an attempt to survive in conditions in which her previous job failed to

provide a decent income, there was no social safety net, and the state was absent in protecting poor women who shouldered the burden of caregiving. Thus, Sartika's agency was shaped by structural pressures that forced her to seek quick survival strategies despite the social and personal risks.

Sartika's narrative also reveals a broader institutional failure. The economic system is unable to provide decent jobs for informal workers such as farm laborers, so jobs generally considered appropriate and secure do not guarantee the fulfillment of basic needs. The absence of state protection, whether in the form of social assistance or food price stabilization, exacerbates the conditions of vulnerable groups. This failure is further exacerbated when viewed through an intersectional perspective. Sartika's identity as a woman, a single mother, and a member of the lower economic class places her under a multi-layered workload. She must juggle domestic duties and earn a living, yet her access to training, stable employment, or a supportive environment is severely limited. This multi-layered identity narrows her options, forcing her to choose jobs that offer quick income despite the risks.

This entire series of events demonstrates that Sartika's exploitation was not the result of individual error. It was a product of institutionalized systemic dysfunction. Working as a coffee vendor became an adaptive strategy to address an unfair economic structure that failed to provide poor women with a decent life. Sartika's story clearly demonstrates that the fundamental problem lies not in personal morality, but in the patriarchal capitalist structure that limits women's agency and forces them to accept choices that were never truly their own.

Commodification of the Body in Public Space

In the film *Pangku*, the coffee shop functions as a space that allows for the instrumentalization of the body, where the camera's gaze facilitates the transition of the Soma from personhood to product. Sartika's physical capital, such as her attractiveness, youth, and ability to provide intimacy, is systematically converted into production factors that generate income. The coffee shop space operates with two faces. Publicly, it appears as a place for consuming food and drink, while in a hidden layer, it becomes a location for transactions of sexual and emotional services. This duality creates conditions that allow women's bodies to be treated as resources that can be processed and exchanged. This situation aligns with Bourdieu's view that every social space is an arena where economic and symbolic capital compete, so that actors with limited capital tend to occupy subordinate positions (Bourdieu, 1984).

The commodification of the body occurs through two simultaneous mechanisms. The first is the extraction of emotional labor. Hochschild explains that emotional labor occurs when individuals are asked to regulate and display specific emotional expressions to meet job demands, transforming emotions into marketable commodities (Hochschild, 2012). In Sartika's case, displays of friendliness,

attention, and the impression of intimacy become part of the service being traded. Efforts such as offering cigarettes as tips demonstrate that emotional labor is not merely affective performativity but also a survival strategy that enhances the exchange value of interactions between workers and customers.

The second mechanism is the commodification of physical aspects through bodily interactions, even to the provision of sexual services. Within Marx's framework, anything previously outside the logic of the market can be pushed into the market and become a commodity with exchange value when economic pressures force individuals to sell it (Marx & Engels, 2018).

Sartika's body undergoes this transformation, becoming a transactable unit of value. This situation reflects extreme objectification. As Nussbaum (1995) explains, objectification occurs when a person's body is reduced to a tool for the benefit of others, thereby weakening individual agency. This aligns with the concept of sexual capital, which becomes particularly relevant in contexts where physical attributes and interpersonal skills can be leveraged for financial gain, especially within relationships marked by power imbalances (Michael, 2023).

Coffee shops ultimately become micro-arenas that reproduce structural inequality. Male customers consume the bodies of lower-class women with greater economic capital. This relationship demonstrates how patriarchy and capitalism operate simultaneously to control women's bodies. Fraser (2014) argues that modern capitalism relies on the exploitation of women's bodies and reproductive labor, often unacknowledged but serving as the foundation of capital accumulation. This condition is evident in Sartika's experience. The commodification of the body in this context does not arise from a completely free choice but is a response to material pressures that force individuals to sacrifice their bodies for survival.

Sartika as Double Exploitation Locus in the Production and Reproduction Room

Film Pangku shows that Sartika's life experience cannot be understood simply as an accumulation of roles or overlapping work hours, but rather as a locus of structural double exploitation. Sartika carries out Production and Reproduction work in an integrated manner in the same space and time, making her body, emotions, and social relations a medium for capital accumulation and labor maintenance. This condition goes beyond the concept of a double burden that tends to be descriptive, because what occurs is not just "working twice," but the simultaneous absorption of exchange value and use value by a capitalist system that is based on class and gender-based power relations. (Harahap et al., 2025).

Sartika's productive labor manifests itself through exchange-oriented economic activities, such as selling coffee and providing lap dance services in dimly lit cafes. Findings indicate that these activities involve not only physical exertion but also emotional labor and sexual performance, which are reduced to commodities, visually signaled through the recurring motif of the 'dimly lit cafe', which obscures individual identity in favor of labor-utility (similar to high-contrast low-key lighting). Long working hours, income uncertainty, and high security risks indicate a structural imbalance between the value Sartika produces and the rewards she receives. From the perspective of Marxian Surplus Value Theory, this condition reflects a mechanism of exploitation in which workers' surplus value is diverted to benefit capital accumulation, even though the employment relationship occurs in the informal sector. Informality in this context actually functions as a mechanism for depoliticizing exploitation, as the lack of contracts and employment protections normalizes the imbalance between the value produced and the value paid.

Exploitation in Sartika's production work becomes more complex when analyzed through the lens of feminist political economy. Cameron et al. (2011) shows that in sexual capitalism, women's bodies and sexuality serve as crucial sources of economic value, particularly in the informal economy. This finding is intertwined with Hochschild (2012) concept of emotional labor, which asserts that affection, friendliness, and emotional availability are produced and traded as an integral part of the labor process. In Sartika's context, production work demands the commodification of intimacy and attention, so exploitation occurs not only at the economic level, but also at the affective and symbolic levels. This relationship is intersectional, as exploitation occurs at the intersection of her class position as a poor worker and her gender subordination as a woman whose body is objectified.

On the other hand, Sartika simultaneously carries out reproductive work, which includes self-care and intensive care for Bayu, her son. This work is oriented towards utility, namely the restoration and continuity of daily life. Findings indicate that reproductive work is carried out immediately after, and often simultaneously with, exhausting production work, without the support of state infrastructure or an equal division of domestic labor. This situation demonstrates how reproductive work is positioned as a natural obligation for women, rather than as social work that makes a material contribution to the economic system.

This analysis aligns with Social Reproduction Theory, which positions domestic and caregiving labor as fundamental prerequisites for the continuity of production and capital accumulation (Ferguson, 2019). Federici (2012) asserts that capitalism systematically shifts the costs of labor reproduction onto women through unpaid labor, thereby enabling higher profits. In Sartika's case, reproductive labor is carried out primarily as a survival strategy to support Bayu and ensure his access to education. The findings indicate that Sartika's caregiving practices, daily caregiving, and sacrifice of time and energy

are directed towards sustaining life and increasing Bayu's opportunities for future social mobility. However, within the framework of Social Reproduction Theory, this subjective orientation does not negate the structural function of reproductive labor within capitalism. Sartika's reproductive labor continues to maintain her capacity as a workforce so that she can continue to enter the exploitative production cycle, while simultaneously ensuring the social reproduction of the next generation without support or compensation from the state or the market.

This integration of Production and Reproduction work places Sartika in a state of double exploitation. She not only faces a multi-layered workload but also simultaneously absorbs value from two distinct yet mutually supportive spheres of work. Her Production work is exploited for capital accumulation through the mechanism of surplus value. In contrast, her Reproduction work is exploited through the shifting of maintenance and replacement costs to herself as a woman. This condition affirms Mies (1986) critique of the masculine-biased concept of productive labor, where women in the Global South are forced to produce with minimal resources and reproduce life at zero cost.

Thus, Sartika's locus represents a form of structural oppression in which exchange value and use value are simultaneously absorbed by capitalism. Her body, time, and affective relations become sites of continuous accumulation, making Sartika not simply a subject who works more, but a subject who is doubly exploited in economic, social, and gender terms.

Emotional Debt and Symbolic Violence through the Deconstruction of Bu Maya's Benevolence

The research findings show that the relationship between Sartika and Mrs. Maya was formed within a context of extreme structural vulnerability. Sartika was found heavily pregnant, walking alone in the Pantura region, homeless and without family support. In this situation, Mrs. Maya provided her with free accommodation. Normatively, this action appears as an ethical and protective humanitarian practice. However, a materialist feminist analysis shows that assistance during a crisis phase actually becomes the starting point for the formation of an asymmetrical dependency relationship. As Bourdieu argued, the most effective domination is not established through overt coercion, but rather through moral legitimacy that makes power relations accepted as normal (Bourdieu, 2009). The provision of accommodation creates Mrs. Maya's symbolic position as a savior. At the same time, Sartika is constructed as a subject morally indebted, so that, from the outset, this relationship moves beyond contractual logic and enters an affective realm rife with inequality.

In the next stage, Sartika's employment relationship at Mrs. Maya's coffee shop is not articulated as a forced obligation. Mrs. Maya never directly orders Sartika to become a coffee shop

assistant. Instead, she constructs a narrative of economic rationality by emphasizing the difficulty of accessing employment amid a narrow labor market, while simultaneously positioning coffee shop assistant work as a realistic alternative to support Sartika's economy. She also describes the decline of her business due to her inability to compete with modern cafes and karaoke places that employ female entertainers. Within Bourdieu's framework of symbolic violence, this strategy operates through misrecognition, namely, when domination is accepted as a rational, voluntary choice. Sartika does not interpret this situation as an exploitative relationship, but rather as an opportunity and a form of solidarity in facing shared economic difficulties. However, the inequality of class and gender positions makes this choice never equal, because the lack of alternative work has already limited Sartika's space for agency.

This relationship is then solidified through the formation of layered emotional debts. Referring to Marcel Mauss's theory of exchange, every gift carries with it an obligation to reciprocate, so that assistance with housing and access to employment creates a moral burden that continues to accumulate (Mauss, 2011). In conditions of structural poverty, Sartika lacks the material resources to fulfill these obligations. As a result, debt repayment shifts to the nonmaterial realm of obedience, loyalty, and a willingness to undertake affective labor that demands bodily and emotional management. Materialist feminism, as explained by Jackson (2001), emphasizes that in hierarchical relationships, women's emotions are often mobilized as a source of economic value that is not recognized as labor. The feeling of being rescued and the fear of losing protection make it difficult for Sartika to reject her role as a porter, even though the work carries a heavy psychological and symbolic burden.

Structurally, these findings represent systemic violence as formulated by Johan Galtung. Structural violence operates not through repressive individual actions, but through social arrangements that limit the fulfillment of basic needs and the social mobility of vulnerable groups. The work system at the Pangku coffee shop is informal, provides no social security, and relies on unequal personal relationships, placing Sartika in a position that is difficult to leave without risking loss of shelter and livelihood. The absence of physical violence actually reinforces domination, as exploitation is legitimized through the language of empathy, economic hardship, and personal concern. Thus, Sartika's poverty cannot be understood as an individual failure, but rather as a consequence of the absorption of surplus value from women's affective and bodily labor within the informal economic structure. Bu Maya's benevolence functions as a political mechanism that normalizes exploitation, suppresses resistance, and maintains business sustainability through managing the emotional and material dependence of women's labor.

The Social Costs of Stigma

Stigma and Erosion of Social Capital in the Sartika Ecosystem

An analysis of the relationship between Sartika, Bayu, and their social environment shows that the exploitation Sartika experiences does not stop at the deprivation of the economic value of her labor; it extends to the symbolic and relational realms that shape everyday life. In the film's narrative, this exploitation is mediated through stigma, which functions as an ideological instrument of patriarchy, imposing additional work in the process of social reproduction. Sartika's material poverty is intertwined with symbolic poverty, which systematically undermines her social capital and limits her access to basic citizenship rights.

The dimension of structural violence is most clearly seen in the scene where Bayu is refused entry to school due to the absence of his father's name on the population registration. This incident cannot be read as a mere bureaucratic technicality, but rather as a manifestation of public patriarchy institutionalized by the state. Walby (1997) asserts that the state plays an active role in reproducing patriarchal relations through formal regulations that appear neutral but are rife with gender bias. In this context, schools operate as ideological state apparatuses that normalize the heteropatriarchal nuclear family as the only socially and legally legitimate family form (Althusser, 2024). The absence of a father figure not only marks the absence of a domestic role but also undermines Bayu's legitimacy as a citizen in the eyes of the institution. The state, through administrative mechanisms, commits symbolic violence that transforms the status of a fatherless child into one without the right to education, simultaneously emphasizing that Sartika's reproductive work in raising Bayu loses social value without masculine validation.

The economic exploitation that forces Sartika to work late into the night in a morally ambiguous workplace directly impacts the domestic relationship between mother and child. This is illustrated in the scene where Bayu questions his mother, "Mom, why do you work so late? Do you have to be held on my lap when you work?" This question marks the collapse of the boundary between the private sphere of parenting and the public sphere of work, and demonstrates how the stigma of motherhood has seeped into the child's consciousness. Within Goffman's framework, Sartika experiences an identity crisis because she fails to manage impressions, even in front of her own child (Goffman, 1986). Sartika's moral authority as a mother is compromised not by individual negligence, but by the economic and moral structures that force her to survive through stigmatized work. Consequently, Sartika's reproductive work involves not only fulfilling material needs but also the additional emotional labor of negotiating the moral meaning of her work in front of Bayu. The failure to protect children from this reality opens up the potential for intergenerational trauma that perpetuates the cycle of social vulnerability.

This awareness of structural inequality is further emphasized in the dialogue between Bayu and Gilang when Bayu says that finding plastic is much easier than finding a father. This statement reflects the sociological perspective on childhood, in which children are not positioned as passive subjects but rather as agents capable of understanding the social structures around them. Plastic represents the abundant waste of capitalist consumption and is relatively easily accessible to the lower classes as a source of livelihood. Conversely, fathers represent a rare but highly valued form of social capital. In Bourdieu's view, social capital can be converted into other forms of capital, such as access to education, legal protection, and institutional recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Bayu intuitively understands that the absence of a father figure is not simply an emotional loss, but a deficit in social capital that places him and his mother in a vulnerable position to systemic exclusion.

These three scenes, when read integratively, demonstrate that economic exploitation works in tandem with moral stigma to destroy the social safety net that should support Sartika and Bayu's well-being. The stigma of being a widow and a prostitute serves not merely as a social label, but as a mechanism of exclusion that alienates Sartika from community support and state protection. Within the framework of social reproduction theory, capitalism relies on care work to reproduce its labor force, but Sartika's case demonstrates the destructive side of this relationship. Capitalism, through low wages and long working hours, collaborates with patriarchy through moral stigma to exploit Sartika's labor and undermine her capacity as a normatively idealized mother. Sartika is trapped in a paradoxical structural cycle, where hard work for survival serves as the basis for legitimacy for society and the state to stigmatize and marginalize her. In this situation, raising Bayu is no longer simply a practice of parenting, but a form of struggle against the structural currents that systematically eliminate the possibility of well-being.

From Economic Dependence to Domestic Patriarchal Traps

In Sartika's life landscape, marked by structural poverty, job insecurity, and simultaneous exploitation in both production and reproduction, Hadi's presence is constructed as a symbolic contrast to this reality. Hadi is not merely present as an individual, but as an imaginary figure filled with affective and ideological meaning. He is positioned as a light, a metaphor for hope, protection, and the possibility of respite from the pressures of a life that is almost without breathing space. Within this framework, the romantic relationship between Sartika and Hadi appears to afford personal autonomy, as if Sartika has room to choose and control her future. However, when read through the lenses of feminist criticism and political economy, this relationship reveals how the illusion of autonomy works subtly yet effectively to maintain conditions of oppression.

Sartika and Hadi's relationship represents cruel optimism, a condition where the subject attaches her hopes to something that actually hinders the possibility of true well-being (Berlant, 2011). For Sartika, love and emotional closeness with Hadi serve as the primary foundation for imagining a more stable future. This hope does not arise from an abundance of choices, but from a situation of urgency in which there are almost no alternatives to escape the trap of poverty. This romantic relationship functions as an anesthetic mechanism that soothes the psychological suffering caused by economic exploitation, but has no transformative power over the material structures that oppress her. This optimism is cruel because it encourages Sartika to continue enduring adverse conditions, believing that today's sacrifices will be repaid in the future, even though, objectively, the material prerequisites for such change are never truly present.

Hadi's fantasy of a normal life, such as a stable household and a secure nuclear family, functions as an imaginary horizon that is constantly postponed. Hadi's presence allows Sartika to postpone awareness of the systemic injustice she faces, as her suffering is framed as a temporary phase before happiness arrives. Thus, this relationship does not free Sartika from vulnerability but rather keeps her in a state of passive waiting, where injustice is accepted as a fate to be endured for the sake of love.

From a radical feminist perspective, romantic love functions as an ideological instrument of patriarchy that depoliticizes women's experiences (Firestone, 2015). Rather than encouraging resistance to oppressive class and gender structures, romance directs women to seek individual salvation through relationships with men. In the context of Sartika, the internalization of the myth of the male savior is evident in Bayu's need for a father figure and his search for a husband as a means to address economic insecurity. Women are positioned as incomplete subjects without the presence of men, while security is reduced to a matter of personal relationships, rather than a collectively guaranteed social right.

This situation aligns with Kandiyoti (1988) concept of patriarchal bargain, in which women strategically negotiate within patriarchal boundaries to gain relative protection. Sartika unconsciously trades some of her autonomy for the hope of stability promised by her relationship with Hadi. However, this bargaining is fragile because it relies entirely on the individual capacity of men, who are also in vulnerable social positions. Rather than opening access to public solutions such as state protection, social security, or economic rights, this narrative privatizes poverty and relegates it to the domestic sphere. Sartika's dependency is not erased, but rather relocated from public economic exploitation to potential subordination in intimate relationships.

Furthermore, this dynamic is inextricably linked to the commodification of emotion in modern capitalism. As explained Illouz (1997) Love does not exist outside of economic structures; rather, it is produced and mediated by cultural narratives that link happiness to consumption and domestic stability.

For Sartika, Hadi is loved not only as an individual but also as a symbol of the decent life she has been deprived of. Romantic relationships provide a space of escape from brutal reality, but this escapism is illusory because it lacks adequate material support. Without decent work and social security, the relationship remains in the shadow of the same economic pressures that have oppressed Sartika.

The illusion of autonomy works effectively at this point because Sartika feels she has made a free choice based on love. In fact, that choice is shaped by structural limitations that narrow her horizons. When the economic system fails to provide dignified living conditions, romance serves as a symbolic compensation that soothes, while masking the root of the problem. By focusing the conflict on the absence of a partner, this narrative obscures the fact that Sartika's primary enemy is the economic and social structures that systematically produce poverty.

Ultimately, Hadi's interpretation as a light or savior is a narrative trap that simultaneously reproduces the logic of patriarchy and capitalism. Individual love, however sincere, lacks the capacity to break down the walls of structural inequality. The hope attached to the male figure actually risks weakening Sartika's agency by encouraging her to wait for salvation from outside herself, rather than developing critical awareness and the potential for resistance against systemic injustice. Thus, romanticism in this narrative is not a path to liberation, but rather an ideological mechanism that normalizes suffering and maintains the status quo.

Gender Exploitation and Patriarchal Alliances

The Transition from Class Exploitation to Patriarchal Control

The findings of this research demonstrate that Sartika's experience cannot be understood as an individual event or personal moral failure, but rather as a manifestation of structures of gender exploitation operating through the institutions of marriage, labor migration, and patriarchal control over capital. Sartika's pregnancy, Hadi's absence as a husband, and Anisa's involvement as a migrant worker form a series of power relations that mutually support and deepen gender inequality.

Within the framework of materialist feminism, marriage is understood as an economic institution that regulates the unequal distribution of labor and resources between men and women. Delphy and Leonard assert that women's domestic and reproductive labor constitutes a form of exploitation legitimised by social norms and marital law, as such labor is considered a woman's natural obligation, not a valuable economic contribution (Delphy & Leonard, 1992). Sartika's pregnancy further emphasizes this subordinate position. At a time when the need for material and emotional support increases, Hadi leaves the household without losing his social status or structural control over the

marital relationship. Thus, pregnancy serves not as a source of protection, but as a mechanism that deepens women's dependence and vulnerability.

Hadi's absence during Sartika's pregnancy can be interpreted as a form of socially institutionalized desertion. While normatively, this action can be considered a moral violation, structurally, Hadi still benefits from a patriarchal system that does not demand full accountability from men for reproductive work. Sartika continues to carry out care and reproductive work alone, while this responsibility is not translated into strong economic claims or social rights. The violence that occurs is structural, as conceptualized by Galtung, namely, violence embedded in the social system that is not always apparent as a direct action but has a real impact on the victim's well-being (Galtung 1969).

This dimension of exploitation is further complicated by Anisa's presence as a female migrant worker. In her feminist migration studies, Parreñas demonstrates that migrant women are often trapped in what she calls a global care chain, a global chain in which the reproductive labor of women from developing countries supports the economies of their households and destination countries, while also subsidizing families in their home countries (Parreñas, 2003). Anisa sells her labor in the global domestic sphere at high social costs, including family separation and vulnerability to exploitation in her destination country. However, the outcomes of this labor are not entirely under her control.

Hadi's misuse of remittances demonstrates how women's migration capital is mediated by local patriarchy. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity operates not only through symbolic domination but also through the control of material and financial resources. In this context, Hadi functions as a masculine figure who monopolizes control of family capital, even though women generate it. Anisa's remittances, which should serve as a means of accumulating collective wealth, are reduced to instruments for fulfilling men's personal interests. This practice demonstrates that the exploitation of migrant women does not stop in the destination country but continues in the domestic sphere through patriarchal power relations.

Another important finding is how Anisa's exploitation indirectly reinforces Sartika's exploitation. The capital Anisa generates allows Hadi to maintain his lifestyle, mobility, and extramarital sexual relationships without suffering direct economic consequences. In this sense, globally exploited women subsidize the exploitation of other women locally. This relationship confirms Parreñas's argument that female migration often does not liberate women structurally, as the outcomes of their labor remain controlled by patriarchal actors in their countries of origin (Parreñas, 2003).

Hadi's profession as a fish transport driver reinforces this analysis symbolically and materially. The spatial mobility inherent in this job gives him access to economic and social networks outside the home, traditionally associated with productive masculinity. Meanwhile, Sartika and Anisa, despite

being in different locations, are both tied to domestic and reproductive work that does not provide equal social mobility. Connell calls this type of relationship a gender configuration, positioning men as mobile subjects and women as subjects bound by care obligations (Connell 2005).

The exploitation identified in these findings is not only economic but also moral and symbolic. Hadi violated the social contract of marriage, which requires responsibility and protection, but this violation was not met with adequate structural sanctions. Instead, both women involved bore the social, emotional, and material burden of this violation. This situation demonstrates how patriarchy operates not only through individual actions, but also through value systems and institutions that tolerate gender inequality.

Overall, this research's findings confirm that gender exploitation operates in layers and across space. Women in the local domestic sphere and women in global migration are both trapped in a system that allows men to accumulate material and sexual advantages through control over women's labor, bodies, and capital. By linking Sartika and Anisa's experiences to theories of materialist feminism, hegemonic masculinity, and gender-based labor migration, this discussion strengthens the argument that gender exploitation is a structural phenomenon integrated with the logic of global capitalism and local patriarchy.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study analyses Sartika's experiences in the film's narrative *Pangku* through the perspectives of critical theory and intersectional feminism. The main findings indicate that Sartika does not simply face a double workload as commonly discussed in gender studies, but is trapped in a state of structural, layered, and mutually reinforcing double exploitation. This exploitation operates through the intersection of class relations, gender, and reproductive labor institutionalized within a patriarchal capitalist system.

First, in the realm of production, Sartika is exploited as a female worker in the informal sector, where her physical and emotional labor is commodified through affective service work. Working conditions characterized by low wages, long hours, and a lack of social protection reflect class exploitation legitimized by the informal labor market. This exploitation does not stand alone but is reinforced by gender constructs that normalize the availability of women's bodies and affections as sources of economic value.

Second, this study demonstrates that exploitation is maintained not only through coercive mechanisms but also through subtle symbolic violence. The relationship between Sartika and Mrs.

Maya demonstrates how the practice of providing material assistance creates an emotional debt that forces compliance and acceptance of exploitative working conditions. Within this framework, kindness functions as an instrument of symbolic domination that masks power relations, thus making Sartika indirectly involved in the reproduction of her own oppression.

Third, gender-based exploitation is further exacerbated by the burden of reproductive labor borne by Sartika as a de facto single mother. The absence of spousal and state support places the burden of caregiving, pregnancy, and daily maintenance entirely on Sartika's shoulders. This burden is exacerbated by social stigma that operates as a form of structural violence, significantly severing Sartika's social capital, as evident in the rejection of educational institutions for her child. This stigma also justifies Hadi's dissertation as a husband who, ironically, continues to benefit from remittances generated by his other wife's global labor migration.

Synthetically, the Materialist Feminism framework reveals that Sartika's exploitation is not a localized cinematic trope but a systemic extraction of value where economic structures and gendered subordination converge. By operationalizing this framework, the study demonstrates that the film's representation of the Soma functions as a site of 'Double Exploitation', where the surplus value of production in the public sphere and the unpaid reproductive labor in the domestic sphere are simultaneously absorbed by patriarchal capitalism, effectively collapsing womanhood into a permanent state of commodity.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the data analyzed are sourced from film texts and narrative synopses. A critical semiotic approach allows for in-depth ideological reading but is not intended to generate empirical generalizations about the real conditions of women informal workers. The findings of this study reflect social representations constructed by the texts, not the results of direct field observations. Second, although it refers to the Pantura context, this study did not conduct geographical and cultural validation through ethnographic work; therefore, the analysis focused on the construction of meaning within the film narrative. Third, the focus on a single case limits comparative ability to capture variations in exploitation mechanisms across other informal sectors.

Based on these findings and limitations, further research is recommended to develop comparative field studies on the dual exploitation experienced by women in various informal sectors. An ethnographic approach can enrich understanding of how symbolic violence and class exploitation operate in different contexts. Furthermore, policy studies are needed that specifically examine the role of the state in providing social security, care services, and protection for single mothers in the informal sector, to assess the extent to which public policies contribute to or reproduce the burden of social reproduction. Future research should also deepen the analysis of the control mechanisms of

transnational capital, particularly the role of men as nodal actors in managing migrant women's remittances. Finally, it is important to shift the focus from solely victim narratives to exploring forms of resistance and women's collective agency, to understand the potential for negotiation and resistance against existing structures of exploitation.

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