

# Power Relations in Kamila Andini's Kretek Girl Film Series: An Analysis of Michel Foucault's Critical Discourse

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines power relations in Kamila Andini's *Gadis Kretek* series using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach grounded in Michel Foucault's theory. Set in the kretek industry in Indonesia, the series explores themes of family conflict, business competition, and the search for identity through a cultural lens. This study investigates how power operates through discourse, discipline, and social control as reflected in the relationships between characters, which aligns with Foucault's theory. Discourses on tradition, gender, and national identity are analyzed as tools for normalizing and reinforcing dominance, particularly in maintaining hierarchies within the family business. The analysis focuses on specific scenes that highlight the stigmatization of thought, control of the body, and resistance to existing power structures. The findings reveal that the series portrays power not only as physical domination but also as control over the mind and body, deeply embedded in cultural practices and family relationships. This study offers a deeper understanding of how media represents power relations within Indonesia's social structure while emphasizing the symbolic significance of kretek as a representation of national identity.

**Keywords:** Power Relations, Film, Cigarette Girl.

## I. Introduction

According to Budianta (in Sholikhah, 2020), literary works are fictional creations not entirely based on the author's imagination or fantasy. They can also be derived from real-world experiences observed in the author's surroundings. From this perspective, literary works reflect social life encapsulated in documents representing a specific period and region. Literary works that revisit past events are often used to reflect on contemporary life or are considered a meaningful response warranting in-depth study. This is particularly true for literary works depicting power and resistance relationships within social life.

Representations of the interplay between power and resistance can be found in several scenes of the film series *Kretek Girl*, which is the primary data source for this research. The events experienced by the characters in the series vividly illustrate how power operates in tandem with the control of thought during the 1960s New Order era in City M (Narti et al., 2024). This study employs a critical and objective approach to examine the *Kretek Girl* series through Michel Foucault's concepts of power relations, control over thought, and resistance. Michel Foucault is renowned for his theory of power relations, particularly its connection to discourse and discursive practices.



Ratna Ayuningtyas discusses the forms of power relations and the representation of power relations in the novel *Anak Rantau* by Ahmad Fuadi (Ayuningtyas, 2019). Similarly, Mohammad Ulil Azmi Arifudin explores Michel Foucault's study of power relations as applied to the novel *Canting* by Arswendo Atmowiloto (Arifudin, 2019). These two prior studies serve as references for this research article. However, the key distinction is that the data source for this study is a film series adapted from a novel. Furthermore, this research focuses on the concept of power over knowledge and the causes and effects of power and knowledge relations through the lens of panoptic (surveillance) mechanisms reflected in the characters. Based on this framework, this article aims to (1) Analyze the forms of power relations over knowledge depicted in the film series *Kretek Girl* by Kamila Andini from Michel Foucault's perspective. (2) Examine the causes and effects of power-knowledge relations in the film series *Kretek Girl* by Kamila Andini, using Michel Foucault's theoretical framework.

## II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1. Power Relations from Michel Foucault's Perspective

Michel Foucault's analysis suggests that the concept of power is not confined to institutions or the state. Power is also not understood as a rigid structure that enforces a set of rules to be obeyed by a group of individuals. Instead, Foucault argues that power can originate from anywhere and exists everywhere. His theory of power emphasizes that power operates within relationships and must inherently exist in every relationship (Foucault, 1990). Foucault explains that power is not necessarily restricted to state structures; it can emerge in any context (Foucault, 2002). Furthermore, in Foucault's understanding, power is closely linked to planned and implemented strategies across various spaces. Instruments of power include rules, systems, regulations, and structures. Power does not operate externally but arises from interactions and relationships between individuals, creating opportunities for power to emerge. Foucault views power as a multifaceted and pervasive relationship akin to a network with strategic dimensions. This network connects individuals and groups. Rather than defining power, Foucault focuses on how power is exercised, accepted, and perceived as truth. Power relations are intrinsically tied to discourse and communication.

Culture and society exist in a dialectical relationship with discourse; society and culture are both shaped by discourse and, in turn, shape discourse structures. Every use of language contributes to creating and transforming society and culture. This concept serves as the organizing principle of Foucault's theory of culture and underpins the analytical framework of his subsequent essays. According to Foucault, power is rooted in the strength of the mind and body, expressed through various activities ranging from minor to significant. Consequently, Foucault divides power relations into two categories, as outlined below:

#### 1. Power Relations Over the Mind

Foucault argued that one of the best ways to understand the balance of power between competing discourses at a particular time is to analyze the language used to discuss various topics. Language can serve as a tool to reveal how the body is typically perceived or indicate its intended purpose (Jones & Saifuddin, 2009). For instance, terms referring to prostitution are almost always associated with women. However, this contrasts sharply with the lack of equivalent language to describe the same activities when referring to men.

#### 2. Power Relations Over the Body

Foucault highlights the importance of the systematic organization of the body in modern society for two main reasons. First, population pressures caused by urbanization have led to a population explosion in urban areas, which, in turn, impacts the politics and economy of urban communities. This situation has given rise to rules governing the body about gender, referred to as anatomical politics, and broader social regulations concerning the body, known as biopolitics. Second, due to the demands of industrial capitalism, modern capitalist societies actively promote the idea of a healthy body as a strong and central cultural ideal.

By modeling body standards tied to urban culture, the body becomes a site for the operation of capitalist goods and values (Foucault, 1997).

### III. Research Method

This research falls under the category of qualitative research. It employs methods of collecting, organizing, and interpreting information obtained through the five human senses to filter data (Fadli, 2021). The research data was gathered using the documentation study method, incorporating listening and note-taking techniques. The documentation method involves repeatedly collecting and processing data from the Kretek Girl film series. This method requires accessing and reviewing relevant documents (Nasution, 2024). The data collected through this approach can include historical data, secondary data, or pre-existing data. Researchers analyze these documents to understand and interpret the information contained within them. The recording technique was implemented by observing and recording the Kretek Girl film series, while the note-taking technique involved transcribing specific dialogue from the series.

### IV. Results and Discussion

This sub-chapter discusses four key aspects: power relations over the mind, power relations over the body, the elements of power, and resistance.

#### 4.1. Power Relations Over the Mind

[data 1] "Dasiyah, why do girls play with cigarettes? "Who wants to have their hands smell like tobacco?" said Djagad (Episode 1 (36:45)).

[data 2] "How do you get into the sauceroom?" "Who gave permission?" "Women are not supposed to enter the sauceroom." "Wow, this is too much, Mr. Idroes. Cannot! You cannot have girls in the sauceroom! Not good! "If after this, Merdeka kretek tastes sour, do not blame me," said Dibjo (Episode 2 (27:27))/"

The discourse presents a conversation between Dasiyah and her business partners, Djagad and Dibjo. In discourse data 1, it is evident that Djagad stigmatizes Dasiyah regarding the smoking culture, which is traditionally associated with men. He argues that if women engage in this practice, it will have negative consequences in line with the prevailing local cultural norms. This cultural perspective is further highlighted through a satirical comment about Dasiyah, suggesting that she has never found a soulmate at her age. In discourse data 2, which builds upon data 1, Djagad's stigmatization is reinforced, and Dibjo adds his own, claiming that women are not allowed in the Sauce Room. This prohibition goes against existing traditions, with the belief that if women enter the Sauce Room, the kretek they create will have a sour taste. This belief aligns with Foucault's idea that power can exist anywhere in large institutions and in small, everyday settings. Power, according to Foucault, is essentially directed at the individual.

The conclusion drawn from this discourse is that power in society is shaped by individual behavior, as it is influenced by the stigmatization embedded in the cultural norms of each society. As a result, individuals are likely to change quickly when confronted with power that serves their interests. This dynamic connects to the following discourse on power relations over the body.

[data 1] "Idroes Moeria and Soeraja are on the list," said Soldier 1. "Those names were not included in the list. It is just Idroes Moeria," said Soldier 2. "Bring him," said Soldier 1. "Father!" said Rukayah. " "Let go of Dad," said Dasiyah. Soldier 1 then screamed and hit Idroes Moeria using a rifle until he died. (Episode 4 (1:01:55)).

[data 2] "I am taking a huge risk hiding you, King." "We should be able to trust each other." "Luckily, you are still alive. My offer is still the same. "Works for me," said Djagad. "That is not what I want; I just want Dasiyah to be safe," said Raja. The table was banged, "You think it is easy to remove your name from the list?" said Djagad. (Episode 4 (52:10)).

#### 4.2. Power Relations Over the Body

This discourse highlights several forms of power relations over the body in the Kretek Girl film series. The form of these relations can manifest through objectification or stigmatization by others. The body serves as a medium through which power is exercised. In the Kretek Girl film series, as seen in sample data 1 and 2, power relations over the body encompass various aspects, including political and economic power dynamics.

Discourse data 1 illustrates power relations in politics through a scene where soldiers are on duty to eradicate individuals associated with the Red Kretek (PKI Organization) at Idroes Moeria's house. This conflict originated when Soeraja, who had worked for Kretek Merah, brought it into Idroes Moeria's household. This, in turn, strengthened the accusation of the Idroes Moeria family's involvement with Red Kretek, as evidence of the product was found in their home, brought by the former king. However, the accusation regarding the list carried by the army was not entirely accurate, as the list had been manipulated by Djagad, who sought to destroy the Idroes Moeria family while protecting the king for business purposes. In Discourse Data 2, power relations in the economic sphere are evident in a scene where Djagad indirectly reveals his malicious intentions in protecting the king at that time. Djagad continues to deceive the king with an appearance of compassion after having "saved" him. Everything Djagad does aims to further his mission to make his kretek successful with the king's help. In conclusion, the two sample data excerpts above prove that actions driven by power lead to murder. The power relations are tied to the business competition within the kretek industry in the 1960s in City M. The sample data also clearly proves that Djagad harbors a strong ambition to rival Idroes Moeria's kretek, using any means necessary to make his own kretek number one. Essentially, power relations cannot exist without the presence of power itself. This aligns with the following discourse:

[data 1] "Is there anything I can help you with?" said Djagad. "I saw that Mr. Djagad was close to Mr. General Dasiyah, sir," said Raja. "If you do not want to suffer the same fate as her father, you should forget that woman," said Djagad. "Please, sir." "I just want to know Dasiyah's whereabouts; please convey this to the General, sir," said Raja. "Your request is too high," said Djagad. "I have fulfilled your needs; sales have increased," said Raja. "But you have not fulfilled what I asked for," said Djagad. (Episode 3 (48:30)).

[data 2] "You can be like this because I am King, so, instantly, I can take it all whenever I want," said Djagad. (Episode 4 (14:17)).

#### 4.3. Elements of Power

This discourse exemplifies one of the elements of power, namely power itself. Powerlessness exists because strengths and weaknesses inherently define power. Individuals involved in power dynamics employ both elements- strength and weakness-. In the two discourse samples presented, one party wields significant influence, compelling the other to submit to their authority.

Djagad, the ruler, succeeded in making the king subservient to him through several rules, which the king unknowingly agreed to, instead of attempting to save Dasiyah, though this effort was never realized. At every opportunity, Djagad is depicted as constantly cornering the king, reminding him of the services he has provided. This is a form of stigmatization by Djagad, ensuring the king remains submissive to him and increasing Djagad's power.

In conclusion, every relationship involves power dynamics, with one party being powerful and the other powerless, whether the power is large or small. Justice and truth can be achieved when power is exercised relatively by overthrowing existing injustices and prioritizing justice and truth. Overthrowing one's authority is an act of resistance, as illustrated in the following discourse:

[data 1] "It turns out you still have the guts after being busy with the party, causing Dasiyah to be taken away and her father to die," said Seno. "I have no involvement in that matter..." said Raja. "Your name is not on the list because someone deliberately protects you. "If Djagad can protect you, he can also include Mr. Idroes' name," said Seno. "I..." Said the King. "You agreed with Djagad. You even married his daughter to strengthen your position in his family; great," said Seno. (Episode 5 (1:06:35))

#### 4.4. Counter Discourse (Resistance)

This discourse represents a form of resistance by Seno against the king, who had been concealing the truth behind all the misfortunes that had befallen the Idroes Moeria family and the king himself. The scene shows Seno conversing with Djagad, accusing him of being the mastermind behind the events. The truths and logical evidence presented clearly and compellingly are laid out for the king. Although the king attempts to dismiss this revelation, he becomes increasingly embarrassed. He refuses to acknowledge the bitter truth and the indirect reference to his actions, which furthers Djagad's mission to destroy the Idroes Moeria family.

This dialogue proves that the power of influence can be manipulated through words. When words are structured effectively and supported by data and evidence, they can be used to undermine or perpetuate injustice toward those subjected to power. Having supporters in the form of witnesses and evidence is crucial to resistance, as it strengthens the efforts of those challenging oppressive actions. This process of losing power is known as resistance, or counter-discourse, which logically overthrows the existing power.

## V. Conclusion

Based on the research and analysis of the Kretek Girl series using Michel Foucault's theory of Power Relations, it can be concluded that various forms of power relations emerge, reflecting the dynamics of everyday life, particularly within family and society. These power relations often arise in family relationships through manipulation, stigmatization, domination, objectification, and mind control. These power relations are also evident in society, especially in village environments that still uphold cultural values. This is due to the element of power inherent in social relationships. To counteract power that tends to be coercive or have adverse effects, resistance or counter-discourse is necessary to protect individuals from the harmful consequences of power. Power is not always coercive. It is often an inherent part of every individual. In its plot, the Kretek Girl film series shows that power exists in various relationships, with the goal of creating justice and truth, realized through knowledge, per Michel Foucault's ideas.

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