

# Girls' Naming in Indonesian Folktales

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## ABSTRACT

Girls have prevalently played significant roles in Indonesian Folktales as either protagonist or antagonist characters. Besides, many Indonesian folktales are also titled after girls' names. This paper aims at investigating girls' naming in Indonesian folktales. It focuses on nouns used to denote the young heroines and villain as well as other young female characters, while examining some structures in the use of the terms. Deploying content analysis, girls' names from 50 Indonesian folktales whose main characters are girls are analysed. The results show that girls' names in Indonesian folktales are of three kinds: proper names, names initiated by a term referring to a girl and names indicated the age. In addition to the pattern, the naming of the heroines and villains also illuminate structures which are related to the opposition between the heroine and the villain. Furthermore, the name of girls in Indonesian folktales also reveals some designations i.e. a place where the baby heroine is found or where they are looked after, her look, a punishment she receives or designates a disaster that a girl resolved. This paper contributes to the discussion on the girlhood in traditional literature in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *girls, naming, Indonesian folktales*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian folktales, like other folktales in the world, contain universal truths and reflect the values of the times and societies in which they originated, many of which are still honored today. Researchers use the notion of motifs as a fundamental element to analyze and identify the similarities in tales from various cultures; it is small narrative unit recurrent in folk literature [1][2]. Some motifs, defined by [3][4] as any of the parts into which a tale can be analyzed; any element in a tale that distinguishes it from other tales are practically universal, suggesting similar thought processes in people living in different parts of the worlds.

Theme in Indonesian folktales tells about the rich and the poor, the wise and foolish, mythical quests, lovers, animals and supernatural beings and magical powers. At the same time, they also reflect the moral values, superstitions, social custom, and humor of the times and societies in which they are rewritten.

In regard to the themes of Indonesian folktales, girls have prevalently played significant roles in which many of the stories depict girls as either the protagonist main character or antagonist characters [5]. However, many of those folktales circulated to children in Indonesia

are still dominated by stories depicting girls as the weak and passive heroines who are usually become the victim of gender-based violence[6][7][8].

Correspondingly, gender has been the dominant focus of existing research on girls in Indonesian folktales[9][10]. To the best of my knowledge, the exploration of the Indonesian folktales in terms of characters' naming is still very rare. This study fills this gap by providing the highlight how the girls names in Indonesian folktales are structured in relation to their roles in the stories.

Besides, there are many Indonesian folktales are also titled after the girls' names. Correspondingly, the characters' names can tell people a lot about the theme, structure and other related aspects of the story as well as how the characters are represented in the literary works[11][12]. Also, characters' names are potential to indicate gender as well as gender roles [13]. In literary works, the writers often communicate their message discretely. In addition, the characters' names are possibly to function as the expression of experience, ideology and the attitude of the writers[14]. Hence, names in literary work help in understanding of the general work and the writers' meaning. This paper aims at investigating girls' naming in Indonesian folktales to scrutinize the patterns and the structure of the naming. Furthermore, it focuses on nouns used to denote the young heroines and villain as well as other young female characters, while examining some structures in the use of the terms. By investigating the patterns of girls naming in Indonesian folktales, this paper contributes to the discussion on the girlhood in traditional literature in Indonesia.

## **2. METHOD**

The data of this research are girls' names from 50 Indonesian folktales whose main characters are girls. The names include the names of both the girl heroine (the girl as protagonist), and if there are any, the girl villain (the girl as antagonist). The names are analysed deploying content analysis, focusing on the structure of the names and its relation to the themes of the stories.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Girls are prevalently to be the main characters in Indonesian folktales. In the folktales, girls can be either heroines or villains, and can be either princesses or non-aristocratic girls. In addition to girl characters, the villains can also be represented by a monstrous creature such as a giant, giant bird, or family member such as the sister(s), the stepsister(s), the father, the stepmother, or the aunties.

The content analysis of girls' naming showed that the patterns of girls' naming in Indonesian folktales are of three kinds i.e. real names in the form of proper names, proper names initiated by a generic term referring to a girl and names indicating age. The first naming, proper name, is the narrative designation names for heroines and villains. Popular names for heroines include: Bawang Putih, Purbasari, O Bio Mokara, Lona Rara, Purui, Si Leungli, Peria Pokak, Gadih Ranti, Rara Jonggrang Bunga Jarak, Bunga Terung, Rangda, Layonsari, Gigimani, Rara Mendut, Timun Emas, Ni Tuwung Kuning, Landorundun, Tumbai, Sri Minte, Lala Buntar, Nai Manggale, Dewi Luang Indung Bunga, Ratna Ayu Wideradin, Lala Seruni, Sitiha, Sisitiand Kleting Kuning. Respectively, popular names for villains include: Bawang Merah, Purbararang, O Bio Moloku, Lona Kaka, Datirijawa, Kleting Abang, Kleting Ijo and Kleting Biru.

The second kind, names initiated by a generic term referring to a girl, usually uses the term such as ‘putri’, ‘puti’, ‘ni’, ‘gadiah’ and ‘roro’. This can be seen, for example, in the name of PutriBussu. ‘Putri’ is the most frequently term used and may refer to princess or other member of a royal family such as PutriAnjani, PutriMandalika, PutriSibontarMudar, PutriKandita. However, ‘putri’ also refers to non-aristocratic girl in general such as PutriPandanBerduri and PutriLambungKapas. Interestingly, the pattern of naming by using a generic term referring to a girl seems to be the dominant kind.

Other names of this kind include PutriAyu, PutriIkanEmas, PutriTadampalik, Putri Pinang Masak, PutriRainun, PutriDewaGunungLumut, PutriKesupuk, PutriPucukGelumpang, PutriBungaMelur, PutriJunjungBuih, PutriGintingpase, PutriDanawa Sari, PutriKesumba, GadiahBasanai, PutriGadingCampaka, PutriSiluman, PutriIntan, PutriSedoroPutih, PutriKemuning, PutriJailan, PutriBurung PallasBaruni, and PutriKesupuk.

When ‘putri’ is used to call a non-aristocratic girl, it connotes to a well-behaved girl or it contains a hope of the parent that the girl will be virtuous like a princess. Further, ‘putri’, ‘gadiah’ [girl], anakperempuan [daughter], ‘perempuanmuda’ [young female], and ‘wanitamuda’ [young woman] are also used to refer to a girl. These terms are usually used in the initial introduction of the female characters. This can be seen in the following example:

*Di sebuahdesahidupseorangjandatu Bersama tujuhorang  
anakperempuannya(PutriTujuh)*

[In a village, lived an old widow together with her seven daughters]

*DisebuahdesatingalahseoranggadiahbernamaPeriaPokak.Iahidup Bersama  
ibunyadanenambibinya. (PeriaPokak)*

[In a village, lived a girl named PeriaPokak. She lived with her mother and her six aunts.]

The third kind of naming, names indicating the age, usually used the term ‘bungsu’ or to name the heroine which means the youngest. This name mostly presents when the villain is another girl or a group of girls. The villains are usually called by the term ‘kakak’ which means the elder (sister). Sometimes the term ‘bungsu’ is also conjoined by the term ‘putri’ which then becomes ‘PutriBungsu’. The Variant of this name is ‘PutriBussu’. Different from the common pattern, there was a story, PeriaPokak, which uses the term ‘bibi’ (auntie) instead of ‘kakak’ to characterize the girl villains. In addition to the patterns, the naming of girls in Indonesian folktales also correlated to the relation between the girl as the protagonist and the antagonist character in the story.

The dominant pattern of naming in Indonesian folktales whose both heroine and villain are girls can be summarized as follow:

	Heroines	villain(s)	Examples
1	proper name	proper name, general term referring to a girl	BawangPutih (heroine)-BawangMerah(villain) Purbasari (heroine) – Purbararang (villain) LonaRara (heroine) – Lona Kaka (villain) Miaduka (heroine) - Miaodop (villain) PeriaPokak (Heroine) - <i>Bibi</i> Auntie (Villain) RatnaAyuWideradin (heroine) - <i>Kakak</i> older

			sister (villain)
2	proper name initiated by a general term referring to a girl	proper name, proper name initiated by a general term referring to a girl, general term referring to a girl	PutriBungaMelur (heroine) – TuntungKapur (villain) PutriBongsuAlang (heroine) – Jebak Jabir (villain) PutriBussu (Heroine) – PutriAnam (villain) PutiSerubutTaliNyawa (heroine)- PutiSelerang Mata Ikan (villain)
3	name indicating age	proper name initiated by a general term referring to a girl, general term referring to a girl	PutriBussu (heroine) – PutriAnam (villain) , Si Bungsu (heroine) - <i>Kakak</i> older sister (villain)

Table 1. Patterns of girl naming in stories whose both heroine and villain are girls

The figure demonstrates that the girl heroine is mostly depicted to be called by proper name, and the name of the girl villain tends to follow the pattern of the heroine's name. When the heroine is called by a proper name, the villain then is called by a proper name or by other naming. When the heroine is called by a proper name initiated by a generic term referring to a girl, the villain is called by the same naming or only by a generic term for girl. The villain, instead of her name, what she does affecting the heroine is her central meaning in the story. Moreover, there are many stories whose heroine are girls are named after the heroines.

In addition to the pattern in figure 1, the naming of the heroines and villains also shows two typical structures. First, the heroine is usually called by a proper name or a proper name initiated by a term referring to a girl when the heroine is in one to one opposition to the villain. This happens not only when the villain is a girl but also when the villain is of other characters such as : a monstrous creature such as a giant in the story of TimunEmas, the severe condition or drought in a village in the story of DewiLuingIndungBunga, the concubine in the story of PutriKandita, a beastly bird in the story of Rerayu and in the story of Putri Pinang Gading, the villain is the father in the story of PutriPucukGelumpang, in the story of PutriLambungKapasand in the story of Ni TuwungKuning and the villain is the uncle as in the story of DayangBandir. Similarly, when the heroine is a resourceful girl who wanders to seek knowledge or to seek her future husband like in PutriPandanBerduri, PutriAnjani and PutriGiriLayang, the heroine is also usually called by a proper name or a proper name initiated by a term referring to a girl.

The second structure, the heroine is called by proper name or name indicating her age such as 'Bungsu' [the youngest] or 'PutriBungsu' [the youngest]. This structure is used particularly when the heroine is not in one to one opposition with the villain, meaning that the villains are a group of girls. The stories presenting this structure of naming seem to depict seven female characters and the heroine is always the youngest 'bungsu'. The villains are usually called by names that indicate they are older than the heroine, and the villains' names are usually 'kakak' [older sisters] or 'bibi' [aunt (ies)]. Significantly, within this pattern, all

the villains are called by the same name which shows that they cooperate in their villainy as a team.

Furthermore, the name of girls in Indonesian folktales also reveals some designations. Besides real names, the heroine's name may indicate a place where the baby heroine is found or where they are looked after as well as their look. Also, the name of a girl can designate a punishment she receives or designate a disaster that a girl resolved. The first designation indicating place can be seen in PutriPucukGelumpang in which 'Putri' is a generic term referring to a girl; 'Pucuk' indicates the height; and 'Gelumpang' is a name of a tree. Hence, the name indicates a girl who is looked after up in the Gelumpang tree.

Other examples are TimunEmas meaning a golden cucumber, the place where a widow finds the baby heroine; and PutriBungaMelur meaning a 'putri' [a girl] who is found in the petals of the Melur flower. The second name designation, the heroine's look, can be seen for example in the story of PutriMayangTerurai. PutriMayangTerurai means a 'putri' [a princess] whose hair look is like an unraveled 'mayang' (a name of a flower). Another example is in the story of PutriAyu in which the name of PutriAyu means the beautiful princess. Furthermore, the third name designation includes the girl's punishment and as in the story of PutriBatuMenangis and PutriKemarau. PutriBatuMenangis means a 'putri' [a girl] who is punished to become a crying stone and PutriKemarau which means a 'putri' (a girl) who resolves a problem of 'kemarau' [drought].

The analysis of the pattern of naming of girls in Indonesian folktales reveals quite different patterns of girl naming when it is compared to western fairy tales. The data show that girls in Indonesian folktales who are called either by real names or real names initiated by a generic term referring to a girl are preponderant than the number of other naming. Hence, the naming of girls, either as heroine or villain, confirms the significant existence of girls in Indonesian folktales. The results of the study indicate a different pattern of girls' naming from that of western fairy tales [15] in which the twelve versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' showed that only few texts of the stories accord the heroine a proper name. Instead, most of the stories use nickname which often a form of physical identification. In line with that, the finding of this study also showed a more various patterns of girls naming compared to those in various version of Grimm's 'The six swans' [16] suggesting that only a few of them use real names for the heroines and most of the tales seem to describe the girl rather than name them. Moreover, the way patterns of girls naming in Indonesian folktales are related the girls' roles in the stories elaboratively support the previous finding that names in literary works have been an influential semantic advantage in producing literary world and furthermore, they should convey significant conceptual identity of the characters [1] [17] [18].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Anatomically, girls' names in Indonesian folktales are of three kinds: proper names, names initiated by a term referring to a girl and names indicated the age. In addition to the pattern, the naming of the heroines and villains also illuminates two structures which implied the aspects of the stories. First, the heroine mostly uses proper name or proper name initiated by a term referring to a girl when the heroine is in one to one opposition to the villain. The second structure shows that when the heroine is not in one to one opposition with the villain, the name of the heroine can be in the form of proper names, proper name initiated by a term referring to a girl or name showing the age. Interestingly, the names of girls in Indonesian folktales also demonstrates more affluent patterns and more divergent culture-based names which to some

extent different from the canonical patterns. Further research should be done to obtain the more comprehensive scrutiny on the naming patterns in Indonesian folktales which covers more inclusive and wide-ranging data represented more Indonesian cultural background as well as more linguistic analysis of the names structure.

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