



Intersectionality of Oppressions in the Character of *Budhe Mujirah* from the Story “*Gusti, Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar*”

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Abstract. One of the unique forms of oppression that women may face is when their age and gender intersect to limit their ability to express themselves. In some societies, an older woman may be perceived as lacking value or knowledge simply because of her gender and the expectation that women should remain quiet and subservient. This can lead to a lack of respect or acknowledgment of her opinions and ideas, further perpetuating gender-based oppression. In the short story titled “*Gusti, Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar*”, the character *Budhe Mujirah* is an old woman who insists on defending the *langgar* left by her grandparent, but she gets a lot of pressure from the residents and has no right to speak out. This highlights the interaction of gender and space, and how women are frequently denied the right to express and defend their beliefs. This refers to Iris Marion Young's theory of oppression, which focuses on the interconnectivity of many forms of oppression, such as gender, race, class, and age. *Budhe Mujirah*'s struggle against marginalization and powerlessness due to ageism is a common experience for many elderly women who face oppression due to their gender and age. This framework shows how multiple forms of oppression can intersect and compound, leading to unique experiences of discrimination for individuals who belong to marginalized groups.

Keywords: Ageism, Gender, Intersectionality, Oppression.

1 Introduction

Literature has been a powerful tool for expressing inequality in many areas, including the ability for women to express their ideas and arguments freely. Throughout history, women have faced numerous challenges when expressing their thoughts and opinions. This has been reflected in the limited representation of women as authors and the portrayal of female characters as submissive or secondary to male characters. Young's theory of oppression posits that oppression is not just the result of individual actions but is also deeply ingrained in social structures and institutions.

In her essay “*Throwing like a Girl*,” Young [11] argues that women are oppressed as a group because they are systematically excluded from certain activities and

opportunities based on their gender. The story "*Gusti Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar*" by Junaedi Setiyono [3], explicitly describes the oppression that occurs in old women, namely the character *Budhe Mujirah*. Although she is not the main character, the overall conflict involves *Budhe Mujirah*, who is trying to defend her family's inheritance, but her opinion is not heard, instead, she is cornered. The depiction shows how *Budhe Mujirah's* character does not have more space to give her opinion. On the other hand, she was also undervalued due to her old age, which was regarded to be fragile and worthless. All of these factors have resulted in the concept of intersectionality.

Budhe Mujirah's persona represents a variety of oppression, which leads to her social marginalization. For starters, she is a woman who faces gender discrimination and has limited access to resources and opportunities. As a woman, she is subjected to patriarchal standards and expectations, which frequently devalue her voice. Furthermore, *Budhe Mujirah's* age connects with her other identities, subjecting her to ageism. Society frequently marginalizes older people, diminishing their worth and achievements and limiting their access to resources and opportunities. Because of the intersectionality of ageism and gender-based oppression, her space to express her ideas is severely limited. Societal conventions and power dynamics frequently mute and discredit older women's viewpoints, relegating them to the outskirts of debate. *Budhe Mujirah's* age influences not just how people see and treat her, but also her ability to advocate for herself and demand her rights.

By examining the intersectionality of ageism and gender-based oppression in the character of *Budhe Mujirah*, we obtain a better understanding of *Budhe Mujirah's* numerous levels of marginalization by exploring the intersectionality of ageism and gender-based oppression in her character. Her experience shows the special obstacles and limitations that older women face, underlining the need to recognize and resolve these overlapping forms of discrimination. Recognizing the intersectionality of ageism and gender-based oppression allows us to confront the assumptions and biases that keep those who are marginalized oppressed. It advocates for a comprehensive approach that meets the particular needs and experiences of people like *Budhe Mujirah* while also promoting inclusivity and equality across all ages and genders.

The intersectionality of ageism and gender-based oppression is exemplified by the character of *Budhe Mujirah* in the story '*Gusti, Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar*,' revealing the compounded challenges and barriers faced by older women as they navigate a society that devalues and marginalizes them based on both their age and gender.

2 Methodology

This study's methodology adopts a dual approach that combines a literature review and descriptive qualitative analysis. The initial phase included a comprehensive literature review in accordance with the chosen theoretical framework. A comprehensive search of respected academic journals, papers, and databases was done, driven by specific keywords such as "intersectionality," "gender-based oppression," and "ageism."

Key scholarly resources such as *Google Scholar* were used to extract a varied array of texts that provided insights into the characters' interrelated layers of marginalization. Articles that critically analyzed the intricacies of intersectionality, dug into gender-based oppression, and studied ageism as defined in the theoretical framework were selected for inclusion. This methodical data-gathering methodology guaranteed that the chosen literature represented a diverse range of viewpoints, complementing the later examination of the character's portrayal and her experiences with intersecting oppressions within the story.

A descriptive qualitative analysis was undertaken, building on the foundation of the literature study, to delve deeper into the intersectionality of oppressions inside the character of *Budhe Mujirah* from the story "Gusti, Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar." The qualitative research sought to reveal the character's multiple levels of marginalization and the interplay of identities. This analysis used a qualitative lens to present a nuanced assessment of the character's experiences as they were situated within the story framework.

This methodology enabled a two-pronged investigation: first, by drawing insights from existing literature to inform the study, and second, by undertaking a qualitative evaluation that goes beyond surface-level comprehension. The fusion of a literature study and descriptive qualitative analysis leads to a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the character's portrayal as well as the narrative's themes of intersectionality, gender-based oppression, and ageism.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality. According to Neo Marxisme in Devi [4], it is explained that the concept of intersectionality itself is a concept that describes how a person's oppressed identity interacts with other identities to generate deeper oppression. Crenshaw [1], the inventor of intersectionality, developed the term in the 1980s in response to workplace discrimination encountered by black women. In employment cases, there are many black women. At the time, General Motors solely hired white women and black males, with no consideration given to black women [1]. This discrimination targeted black women who were at the intersection of oppression due to their gender and racial identities, resulting in a higher level of inequity.

If intersectionality between gender and race is discussed in Crenshaw's case [2], the analysis of this paper will discuss intersectionality between gender and age, where both of these can be found in the story character, *Budhe Mujirah*, who faces oppression from local residents, particularly from *Pak Lurah*, resulting in a loss of space for freedom of speech and power. The limitation of freedom of speech for women also affects their ability to advocate for themselves and others; women who cannot speak out against gender oppression or ageism may be more vulnerable to abuse or mistreatment. This can lead to a cycle of discrimination that is difficult to break.

Gender-based Oppression. Gender-based oppression is a form of discrimination that is rooted in social and cultural norms surrounding gender. It is a complex issue that

affects individuals of all genders, but it disproportionately impacts women. Young [11] claimed that, unlike Marx's definition of exploitation, oppression could not be reduced to a single process or fundamental essence. Rather, she claimed that oppression had 'five faces': exploitation, marginalization, helplessness, cultural imperialism, and violence [12]. She also pointed out that all oppressed individuals, in the broadest sense, encounter barriers to their capacity to create, use, and express needs, thoughts, and feelings. It can be said that all people who are oppressed share the same situation in an abstract sense [12].

Budhe Mujirah's character represents the multifaceted aspects of gender-based oppression as defined by Young's perspective. We can see how multiple forms of oppression overlap and compound in *Budhe Mujirah's* life, creating her character:

- *Budhe Mujirah* is marginalized because she is excluded from decision-making processes and social arenas due to her gender and age. Female experiences and voices may be ignored, restricting her participation.
- *Budhe Mujirah's* persona may exhibit powerlessness since she lacks control over her own choices. She may feel disempowered in her interpersonal connections, as well as confront systemic restrictions that limit her freedom of speech.

Ageism. Robert Neil Butler coined the term "ageism" in his 1969 paper, *Age-ism: Another Form of Bigotry* to describe the occurrence of discrimination towards the elderly. According to Butler, ageism has three components. First, there is prejudice towards old age and the aging process. Second, there are numerous forms of discrimination toward elderly persons, third, a variety of institutional practices and regulations continue to reinforce negative preconceptions of older people [6].

Ageism marginalizes and devalues older people, limiting their chances, resources, and social engagement. It reinforces the idea that older people are less capable, useful, and deserving of respect and dignity. When older women, like *Budhe Mujirah*, face prejudice based on both their age and gender, ageism crosses with gender-based oppression.

3 Analysis

3.1 Intersectionality of gender, oppression, and ageism.

Developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The theory of intersectionality seeks to understand how different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism, intersect and interact with one another to shape individuals' experiences of discrimination and marginalization. At its core, intersectionality recognizes that individuals have multiple social identities that intersect and interact with one another in complex ways. In the story, *Gusti Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar*, *Budhe Mujirah* may experience discrimination not only because of her gender but also because of her age, and these two forms of oppression may interact with one another to create unique forms of marginalization that cannot be fully

understood by looking at gender or age alone. She may be disdained for being a "woman," but it is not enough to make her ostracized; another aspect is "old age." When these two forms of oppression intersect, it can create unique challenges for older women. This is portrayed in the story that she is a persistent person, being the only person who says no to the restoration or modernization of the *langgar*.

- “*Namun, karena aku tahu siapa itu Budhe – satu-satunya orang di lingkungan sekitar langgar yang berani bilang tidak pada Pak Lurah*”
- “*Dan, seperti biasa beliau akan meninggikan suaranya, “Selain **aku** tentu saja semua setuju!” dengan tekanan pada kata aku. Ya, begitulah Budhe, entah sudah berapa kali kudengar lengkingan suara beliau pada saat membicarakan kebijakan Pak Lurah.*”

Eng. Translation:

- However, because I knew who *Budhe* was, she was the only person who would dare to say no to the *lurah*,
- As usual, *Budhe* raised her voice and spat, “Everyone agreed except me,” emphasizing the word me. Well, that’s our *Budhe*. I’ve lost count on how many occasions she raised her voice when she talked about the *lurah*’s policies.

Oppression becomes structural and thoroughly rooted in the routine operations of daily life. According to Young [12], structural oppression cannot be removed by directly eliminating the rulers or adopting new laws because it has systematically evolved in significant economic, political, and cultural institutions. This modification in the definition of oppression allows for the identification of privileged groups who benefit from and contribute to the oppression of specific groups; these can be men, White people, the middle classes, or the able-bodied.

Gender oppression can compound these biases by assuming that women are weaker or less deserving than men. Even though there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that women are inherently weaker than men, historically, the belief that women are weaker than men has been perpetuated by societal norms and gender stereotypes. These stereotypes have been reinforced through media portrayals of women as delicate and in need of protection, while men are depicted as strong and capable.

Budhe is a Javanese term for a parent's older sister. So, *Budhe Mujirah* is the older sister of the main character's parents, Prasojo. But in the story, it is the discrimination that happens, which may not be an issue if *Budhe Mujirah* was a man, or in Javanese widely known as Pakdhe. This is not without reason, as the "village elder or tetua desa" character in Indonesian folklore stories is usually shown as an elderly man who is respected by the local people. But in the story, *Gusti Doa Siapa Yang Akan Kaudengar* the old woman character is not portrayed with the same treatment of being respected.

- “*Memang untuk dapat dimasukkan menjadi golongan orang-orang yang nantinya masuk surga itu perlu pengorbanan harta benda. Semua warga sudah setuju ... kecuali satu orang yaitu Yu Mujirah. Mungkin karena merasa diri keturunan ningrat, jadinya ya biasalah ... tidak merakyat. Dan Den Pras tahu sendiri ‘kan*

kalau Yu Mujirah itu orang yang tidak waras?” Begitu Pak Lurah menyelesaikan ucapannya dengan enteng.

Eng. Translation:

- “Indeed, to be able to join those who go to heaven, a material sacrifice is needed. Everyone has agreed. Everyone except for one person: *Yu Mujirah*. Maybe because she considers herself nobility, she figures she’s above worrying about the common folks. And you probably know that *Yu Mujirah* isn’t thinking right,” the *lurah* ended lightly.

On the other hand, there are also Age-based stereotypes that can perpetuate negative attitudes toward older people, such as assuming that they are frail, forgetful, or unable to learn new things [7]. Ageism can lead to assumptions that older individuals are less capable or deserving of certain treatments or resources, identifying ageism as oppression might seem relatively unproblematic in the context of the evidence of age discrimination in many societies [5, 8, 10, 13]. When the elderly resist changes, they can be exceedingly obstinate, as shown by the portrayal of *Budhe Mujirah*. However, most people have stereotypes that these elderly folks are actually demented or crazy, as evidenced by Pak *Lurah*'s mockery of *Budhe Mujirah*.

- *Dan dengan penuh semangat dia membela diri, “Benar, karena kipas angin itu kurang menyejukkan, bahkan bisa bikin kami-kami ini, orang yang sudah tua, jadi masuk angin. Apalagi yang memang pada dasarnya tidak sehat seperti Yu Mujirah. Alat pendingin ruang lain lagi, ccess krenyess... sejuk, tanpa angin dan tanpa bunyi uwuk-uwuk.”*
- *Betul Den Pras, tapi karpet ini kasar dan tipis. Dengkul bisa ngilu dan jidat bisa perih. Apalagi jika jidat dan dengkulnya kurus dan layu seperti punyanya Yu Mujirah. Karpet yang baru jauh lebih tebal dan gambarnya bagus. Ini sebetulnya demi orang-orang yang sudah sepuh seperti Yu Mujirah.*

Eng. Translation:

- “Yes, I will. The air from the fan is not cool enough, and it might even make us old people catch a cold, especially those who are frail like *Yu Mujirah*. The air conditioner operates differently. The air is cool, but there’s no wind nor any humming sound.”
- “You’re right, Den Pras, but the material feels rough on the skin and it’s thin. Our knees ended up hurting and our foreheads scratched. This would be even more so for those who have thin and old knees and foreheads, like *Yu Mujirah*. The new rug is much thicker and has a beautiful design. Actually, we do this for older people like Sister *Mujirah*.”

In the dialogue above, *Yu Mujirah*'s name is repeatedly mentioned by Pak *Lurah* as the reason why *langgar* has to buy new carpets and air conditioners. This portrays Pak *Lurah*, a male village leader, attempting to show *Budhe Mujirah*'s powerlessness because she's just a sickly old lady and the villagers won't be swayed by her objections.

3.2 Constraints on Space for Opinion

Budhe Mujirah's ability to express herself may be severely limited as a result of the intersecting forms of oppression she faces. When it comes to voicing their thoughts on issues that concern them, societal conventions and power dynamics frequently stifle and marginalize the voices of older women. *Budhe Mujirah's* comments may be ignored or discarded, adding to the erasure of her perspective. This restriction on her freedom of expression highlights the structural and cultural hurdles that perpetuate her marginalization and impede her ability to confront oppressive systems.

The powerlessness faced by *Budhe Mujirah* is also caused by the absence of support from her side, *Budhe Mujirah* may have a decreasing social circle and fewer support networks, putting her at risk. One person who is close to her, Prasojo's mother, cannot fight back and prefers to give up their *langgar*.

- *Dan Ibu, kita sudah tahu persis sifatnya, pasti hanya akan mengatakan:sumangga kula nderek, silakan saja saya setuju.*

Eng. Translation:

- And knowing Mother, she would only have said, “*Sumangga kula nderek*: I agree, please go ahead.”

Budhe Mujirah might face patriarchal power dynamics that limit her voice and elevate men's opinions over her own. This is portrayed by her need to seek support from his nephew Prasojo, a younger male, and Prasojo's need to go directly to the Pak *Lurah* and write a letter to his elder brother.

- *Mas Agung yang baik, Bila tidak karena Budhe Mujirah, aku tidak akan menulis surat ini, Mas. Sebenarnya sudah sejak sepekan yang lalu beliau memintaku untuk mengirimimu surat, tapi baru kali ini aku bisa. Bukan karena sibuk tetapi karena aku harus menata hati terlebih dulu. Ya, ini tentang langgar kita.*

Eng. Translation:

- Dearest Mas Agung,
If it were not for *Budhe Mujirah*, I wouldn't bother you. Actually, she asked me to write to you last week. I delayed, however—not because I was busy. I had to sort out my own feelings first, as this is about our *langgar*.

Traditional gender roles and societal expectations may position women as subordinate or less significant in decision-making processes. This power imbalance limits her ability to express herself and be heard. *Budhe Mujirah's* intersecting oppressions may limit her access to decision-making places where her perspectives are heard and valued. Older individuals may be excluded from crucial discussions and decision-making processes as a result of structural ageism, whereas patriarchal systems may prohibit women, particularly older women, from having a seat at the table. This

lack of access further inhibits *Budhe Mujirah's* ability to express herself and contribute to molding the environment around her.

- *Tetangga yang kita minta menemani Ibu menelponku sekitar seminggu yang lalu. Dia katakan bahwa tiga hari lalu atap teras rumah Budhe Mujirah, yang sudah makin rapuh dan doyong ke arah langgar, membawa masalah. Beberapa gentingnya melorot dan ada yang jatuh menimpa kepala salah seorang jamaah langgar. Katanya, orang-orang menggelandang Budhe Mujirah ke rumah Pak RT.*

Eng. Translation:

- The neighbor we often ask to accompany Mother called me about a week ago. She told me that the roof over *Budhe Mujirah's* verandah, which was old and leaned towards the *langgar*, had caused a problem. Some of its tiles slid off and fell on a worshipper's head. She also said that the villagers confronted *Budhe Mujirah* and hauled her off to the *lurah's* house.

Budhe Mujirah, as an elderly woman, may face ageism from the locals. Ageism fosters the perception that older people are less important, less capable, or more burdensome to society. This attitude may emerge as condescending behavior, a dismissive attitude, or a lack of concern for her thoughts and perspectives.

4 Conclusion

Budhe Mujirah's story experiences demonstrate the convergence of gender-based oppression and ageism. Understanding how these overlapping types of prejudice affect her enables a more thorough examination of her marginalization. We can work toward a more equitable society that values and supports people of all ages and genders by addressing the biases and barriers that result from the intersection of gender and age. We see the compounding impacts of these intersecting kinds of oppression via her experiences, which severely limit her room for opinion and expression. *Budhe Mujirah* is subjected to marginalization, limited social support, loss of autonomy, internalized stereotypes, and disdain from local citizens, all of which limit her ability to express herself.

Gender-based oppression and ageism overlap to emphasize the particular and complicated issues that older women experience. It emphasizes the importance of addressing ageism not only as a separate issue but also in conjunction with other forms of discrimination, such as gender. Recognizing and addressing the linked nature of these oppressions can help society create inclusive places that value and empower people of all ages and genders.

To address the limitations of *Budhe Mujirah's* space for opinion, it is critical to confront ageist and sexist views, promote tolerance and diversity, and create chances for meaningful engagement and participation. To empower older women like *Budhe Mujirah*, oppressive structures must be dismantled, empathy and understanding must be fostered, and venues, where their experiences, wisdom, and viewpoints can be acknowledged and appreciated, must be created. By identifying and fighting to

eliminate the intersecting kinds of discrimination that *Budhe Mujirah* confronts, we may strive for a more fair and inclusive society that values the voices and contributions of all persons, regardless of age or gender.

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