

Exploring Intersectionality in *Induk Gajah* Season 2: A Literary Perspective on Gender, Culture, and Family Pressure

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Received: February 2025; Revised: April 2025; Published: June 2025

Abstract

This study explores the role of intersectionality, as theorized by Crenshaw, in shaping gendered experiences within patriarchal cultures as represented in *Induk Gajah* Season 2. It focuses on how cultural norms, family expectations, and societal pressures intersect to impact women's autonomy and well-being. The research drew on dialogues from selected scripted scenes in the series and employed qualitative, thematic analysis to examine how reproductive and familial expectations create specific pressures on women. The findings reveal that within the depicted patriarchal system, women's choices are often marginalized in favor of family honor and cultural conformity, leading to the normalization of gender-based inequality. This pattern reflects a broader cultural issue where reproductive roles define women's worth, limiting their freedom in decision-making and reinforcing systemic discrimination. The study concludes that intersectionality provides a crucial lens for understanding how overlapping social identities and cultural expectations create unique challenges for women. By applying an intersectional lens to a media text, the study contributes to gender and media studies by illustrating how traditional values are represented, negotiated, and potentially challenged in popular cultural narratives. It also highlights the need for further research into how traditional values and family structures shape women's experiences, particularly in contexts where cultural pride and social reputation are placed above individual rights.

Keywords: Gender; Culture; Family pressure; Intersectionality; Patriarchy

How to Cite: Agung, I.G.A.M., Saragih, T., & Batubara, L.K. (2025). Exploring Intersectionality in *Induk Gajah* Season 2: A Literary Perspective on Gender, Culture, and Family Pressure, *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 5(2), 290-304. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i2.2638>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v5i2.2638>

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INTRODUCTION

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Crenshaw (1989), is a framework that highlights how various forms of discrimination based on gender, race, class, and other social categories interact and shape unique experiences for individuals. It moves beyond single-focus approaches that examine only one form of inequality, such as gender, to reveal how multiple systems of power work together to shape a person's reality (Labibah & Wajiran, 2024). For women, particularly those in deeply patriarchal societies, the challenges they face often go beyond gender alone. These experiences are layered with cultural and societal expectations, creating a more complex form of pressure (Jannah et al., 2024). Intersectionality allows us to explore how these overlapping dimensions influence women's lives, allowing us to see the bigger picture beyond gender-based issues. Instead of viewing these pressures as separate experiences, intersectionality enables us to understand how they interact to create distinct forms of struggle (Prasetyaningrum & Ahdiani, 2024).

Intersectionality and Gendered Expectations

In patriarchal societies, the intersection of gender and tradition plays a significant role in shaping women's lives, placing rigid expectations on them as wives, mothers, and caregivers, while often disregarding their personal ambitions and emotional needs (Megbowon, 2024). These expectations can create significant internal and external pressures, leaving women with the feeling that they are valued primarily for their ability to fulfill specific gendered roles. As a result, many women face constraints that limit their potential, reinforcing a system that denies them the autonomy to make decisions about their own lives (Rapi et al., 2024). The effects of patriarchy are not only restrictive but can also lead to personal trauma, mental health struggles, and feelings of inadequacy as women try to navigate a world where they are expected to conform to ideals that may conflict with their own desires or well-being (Wei et al., 2024). Over time, the weight of these expectations can become internalized, leading many women to question their self-worth, feel insecure, and experience emotional and psychological strain as they try to reconcile their personal goals with societal norms (Kamyeb & Hoseinzadeh, 2023).

Patriarchy in Batak Society

In the context of Batak culture, intersectionality becomes an essential tool for understanding the experiences of Batak women, who are expected to uphold family traditions while also navigating modern societal expectations. The Batak ethnic group has a deeply rooted patriarchal culture, with family lineage and inheritance strongly dependent on the presence of male heirs (Hutabarat et al., 2024). Sons are seen as essential figures who will carry forward the family name and are given preferential treatment in matters of inheritance and social standing (Naibaho, 2023). The value placed on sons stems from the tradition that family legacy is passed through male descendants, positioning them as the rightful heirs and primary figures in family decision-making (Sinurat et al., 2024). Daughters, on the other hand, are often viewed as secondary members, primarily because they are expected to marry into other families and, as a result, contribute to another family's lineage rather than their own (Simangunsong, 2022). This patriarchal system is deeply embedded in Batak customs, ceremonies, and social interactions, where men are regarded as leaders and women as supporters. This view places an immense weight on Batak women to produce sons, as their ability to bear male children is closely tied to their value and acceptance within the family (Karota & Afiyanti, 2022). In this cultural context, women's worth is often measured by their reproductive success, particularly in producing a male heir.

Furthermore, societal expectations placed on Batak women often extend beyond the family and into the community. Women are not only expected to bear children, preferably sons, but are also judged on their ability to maintain family honor and uphold cultural values (Nasution, 2024). Failing to meet these expectations can result in social stigma, ostracism, or feelings of failure (Sitanggang et al., 2024). This pressure is further compounded by economic class and education level. While some urban, educated Batak women may have more freedom to push back against these norms, many women in rural or conservative communities face harsher scrutiny and limited options (Baiduri & Wuriyani, 2023). This dynamic creates a rigid framework where Batak women are constantly negotiating their identity between cultural expectations and their own desires for independence and self-determination.

Media Representation of Gender, Culture, and Resistance

The TV series *Induk Gajah Season 2* offers a narrative that reflects the complexities of these cultural dynamics through the story of a Batak couple facing familial pressure to have children, specifically a son. However, the couple has chosen to delay having children, a decision driven by the wife's deep-seated trauma stemming from her own experiences

with patriarchal rejection. Her decision to delay having children challenges the traditional narrative, offering a rare insight into how women negotiate autonomy and identity within patriarchal structures. This study aims to analyze the intersection of various dimensions in the main character's life, including gender, culture, family expectations, and personal trauma, that create intense pressure for her as a Batak woman. By applying the framework of intersectionality, this research seeks to reveal how these overlapping factors shape her experiences and decisions. Considerable attention has been given to the patriarchal traditions in Batak culture, as seen in studies conducted by Rigitta (2021), Tantri & Asmarani (2021), Harahap (2022), Pohan (2022), Sianturi & Hidir, (2023), and Sitinjak et al. (2023). However, this study brings a fresh perspective by focusing on the intersectional struggles of a Batak woman, who carries the weight of both cultural expectations and unresolved personal trauma. This intersectional analysis highlights not only the cultural pressures but also the emotional consequences of defying them, making this study a significant contribution to discussions of gender, culture, and personal agency. To guide this analysis, the study poses the following research questions:

1. How are gendered and cultural expectations represented in *Induk Gajah Season 2*?
2. In what ways do these expectations intersect and influence the female protagonist's autonomy and emotional well-being?
3. How does the series portray the negotiation of identity and resistance within the framework of Batak patriarchy?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the complexities of gendered expectations and intersectional pressures portrayed in the Indonesian television series *Induk Gajah Season 2*. Qualitative research was chosen due to its strength in uncovering nuanced social phenomena and allowing in-depth interpretation of cultural and gendered dynamics embedded in media texts. The research aimed to delve beyond surface-level representations and to interpret the layered experiences of women through the lens of intersectionality. By focusing on the dialogues, character interactions, and narrative developments within the series, the study examined how the text reflects and critiques societal expectations placed on women, particularly within Batak culture and the broader Indonesian patriarchal context. This method enabled a deeper understanding of how fictional media can mirror and construct real-life social issues.

Research Object

The object of this research was *Induk Gajah Season 2*, an Indonesian streaming television series produced by MD Entertainment and premiered in August 2024 on Prime Video. Directed by Muhadly Acho and starring Marshanda, Dimas Anggara, and Tika Panggabean, the series offers a rich narrative depicting the lived realities of Batak women negotiating identity, tradition, and autonomy within a patriarchal society. Central to the series is the female protagonist's journey through cultural expectations, family pressure, and emotional trauma, making it a relevant text for feminist and intersectional analysis. The study focused on selected scenes and dialogues that explicitly illustrated themes of gender norms, family-imposed roles, and cultural expectations, with a particular emphasis on how these intersect to shape the protagonist's lived experience.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process followed an interpretive qualitative approach grounded in Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality framework, which emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, and class. After transcribing key scenes and dialogues, the researcher engaged in thematic analysis to

identify recurring patterns and significant motifs that revealed the intersection of patriarchal structures and cultural identity. Themes such as maternal control, societal judgment, emotional repression, and ethnic stereotypes were identified and analyzed in relation to the protagonist's struggles. This analytical approach allowed for a multidimensional reading of the series, revealing how personal trauma and cultural pressure are compounded by gendered expectations in shaping the character's behavior and choices. Through this lens, the study critically unpacked how *Induk Gajah* Season 2 portrays the often invisible yet powerful dynamics that influence women's lives in Indonesian society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping how women experience social pressures, particularly when cultural norms, gender expectations, and family obligations intersect. In patriarchal societies, women's identities are often reduced to their reproductive roles, leading to situations where personal well-being and health are overlooked in favor of family lineage and social reputation. This happens because deep-rooted cultural values prioritize the continuation of family names, especially through male heirs, placing immense pressure on women to fulfill these expectations. The tendency to reduce women's autonomy in favor of preserving family honor is driven by long-standing gender biases and societal structures that value legacy over individual rights. This pattern reflects a broader issue in patriarchal cultures, where systemic inequalities are normalized and reinforced through family and community dynamics, limiting women's agency and perpetuating gender-based discrimination. The discussion that follows illustrates how these intersectional pressures are represented through the experiences of the characters in the series.

Data 1

Ira's mother-in-law: *"You're in your 30s. You've been married for two years. But all you do is work and come home late every night. How do you expect to get pregnant?"*

(Acho, 2024, episode 1, 07:45)

Ira's experience in data 1 reflects structural intersectionality, where overlapping social expectations related to gender, age, and professional roles shape how she is judged. Her mother-in-law's comment highlights how societal norms still tie a woman's success to her ability to have children, especially after marriage. The focus on Ira's age and the duration of her marriage emphasizes the pressure many women face around fertility, with the assumption that there is a ticking biological clock that should not be ignored.

At the same time, Ira's dedication to her career is viewed negatively, as if working late and prioritizing professional goals directly conflict with her role as a wife and future mother. This reflects a broader societal issue where women are expected to balance, or even sacrifice, their careers for family life. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira is not simply being judged for her work habits or her age; rather, it is the combination of these identities that leads to the criticism. Her situation shows how cultural and family expectations can intersect in ways that pressure women to follow a specific life path, often sidelining their personal or professional goals.

Data 2

Ira : *"But I'm not ready, Sel."*

Marsel : *"Can you tell me when you'll be ready? I don't mind waiting. I just hate to see you being pressured by everybody. They say you're infertile or too busy with your career."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 1, 10:23)

The interaction in data 2 highlights the dynamics of structural intersectionality, as theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, where overlapping social expectations tied to gender, age, and career shape how women are perceived and judged. Ira's hesitation to have children is met not only with personal uncertainty but also with external pressures rooted in societal norms that tie a woman's worth to her reproductive role. Marsel's comment, referencing what "everybody" says about Ira being "infertile" or "too busy with her career," underscores how cultural narratives often reduce complex personal decisions into simplistic judgments, framing a woman's delayed motherhood either as a personal failure (infertility) or a moral misstep (prioritizing work over family).

This situation also reflects how societal pressures impact not just women but their family dynamics. Although Marsel expresses understanding and patience, his acknowledgment of the external criticism shows how these intersecting expectations create emotional strain within relationships. Ira's identity as a married woman in her 30s, coupled with her professional ambitions, places her at the crossroads of traditional expectations and modern aspirations. The assumption that career-driven women are less committed to family life or are somehow responsible for fertility issues reveals deep-rooted gender biases. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's experience is not solely about individual choice but is shaped by the convergence of societal norms around gender roles, age, and professional identity, all of which compound the pressure she feels.

Data 3

Ira's mother-in-law: *"A wife should wake up earlier than her husband. It's okay to have a career, but women should not neglect their responsibility as a wife. If you come home late every night, how can you take care of your husband?"*

(Acho, 2024, episode 1, 12:17)

The interaction between Ira and her mother-in-law in data 3 shows another example of structural intersectionality. The mother-in-law's statement reinforces traditional gender norms that position women primarily as caregivers, emphasizing that a wife's responsibilities should center around her husband's needs, regardless of her professional commitments. While she acknowledges that women can have careers, the conditional nature of her approval illustrates how societal acceptance of working women is often dependent on their ability to maintain traditional domestic roles. This places an unequal burden on women like Ira, who must navigate the dual demands of professional ambition and cultural expectations of marital duty.

This comment also exposes the implicit belief that a woman's value within marriage is measured by her adherence to specific domestic roles, such as waking up earlier than her husband or ensuring his needs are met before her own. By questioning how Ira can care for her husband if she comes home late, the mother-in-law frames Ira's career not as a source of empowerment but as a potential disruption to marital harmony. This reflects a broader cultural narrative that perceives working women as neglecting their familial roles, reinforcing the idea that professional success and domestic responsibility are in conflict for women, but not necessarily for men. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's experience shows how gendered expectations are not isolated but linked to societal norms about marriage and work, creating complex pressures that dictate how women are expected to balance their identities as both professionals and wives.

Data 4

Sasa : *"Why don't you tell the truth that you're not ready?"*

Ira : "Batak people don't delay pregnancy. Especially Marsel and I. Having a baby won't be enough for them, I have to give them a grandson."

Sasa : "Why is that?"

Ira : "Because Marsel is their only son. I have the burden to give them a grandson to carry on their family name."

Sasa : "So what if the family name stops with Marsel? What's the problem with that?"

Ira : "That's not how it works. It's unacceptable to them. If a man doesn't have descendants, then the family name would end there and disappear forever. They would also excommunicate me because they'd think I'm the problem."

Sasa : "I see. I didn't know."

Ira : "And you know what? Female descendants are not entitled to an inheritance. And the list goes on."

Sasa : "That's not fair!"

Ira : "There's nothing I can do about it. I didn't make the rules."

(Acho, 2024, episode 1, 14:08)

The conversation in Data 4 between Ira and Sasa, her office mate, reflects the complexities of structural intersectionality. Overlapping identities such as gender, cultural background, and marital status shape the specific pressures Ira faces. In this case, Ira is caught at the intersection of being a woman, a wife, and a part of a Batak family, where cultural norms intensify expectations surrounding reproduction and gender roles. The Batak patriarchal culture places significant importance on male descendants to continue the family name, leading to heightened pressure on women to bear sons rather than simply having children (Widihastuti et al., 2024). Her statement, "Having a baby won't be enough for them, I have to give them a grandson," highlights how reproductive expectations in this cultural context go beyond general societal norms and become deeply rooted in patriarchal lineage preservation.

This pressure is not only about fulfilling familial desires but also tied to the cultural consequences of failing to do so. Ira's fear of being excommunicated if she does not produce a male heir exemplifies how women are often blamed for reproductive outcomes, reflecting gendered biases that disregard male fertility factors (Moulton et al., 2021). This directly impacts Ira's autonomy, as her role in the family is defined not by her identity or choices but by her ability to secure the family legacy through male offspring.

Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's situation shows how cultural traditions can intensify gender-based expectations, creating layers of pressure that go beyond general societal norms. In patriarchal systems such as the Batak culture, women are not only expected to adhere to traditional roles but also bear the emotional and social burden of preserving family honor and continuity. This intersection of cultural and gendered expectations leaves women with limited agency, caught between personal desires and the rigid demands of cultural legacy.

Data 5

Ira's mother : "Don't wait too long, Ira. Aunt Grace's daughter just had a baby six months ago. And now she's pregnant again. And she's only 25."

Ira : "Pregnancy is not a race, Mom. Take it easy. God will bless us with kids when he thinks we're ready."

Ira's mother : *"Then get ready! How will you get a baby if you don't try and work late every night? You have to balance between work and family."*
 (Acho, 2024, episode 1, 20:44)

The conversation between Ira and her mother in data 5 illustrates the pressures women face when societal expectations around gender, age, and career intersect. Ira's mother compares her to a younger relative who has already had children, reinforcing societal norms that tie a woman's value to her reproductive timeline. The comment about Aunt Grace's daughter reflects the common cultural narrative that idealizes early motherhood and views it as a marker of success for women. Ira, being older and childless, is implicitly positioned as falling behind, despite her efforts to balance other aspects of her life, such as her career.

Ira's mother further intensifies this pressure by attributing Ira's lack of children to her work habits, suggesting that her late hours and career focus are the reasons she has not conceived. This reflects a broader societal bias that perceives women's professional ambitions as obstacles to fulfilling traditional family roles. The expectation that women should "balance between work and family" often translates into the belief that they should prioritize family, even at the expense of their careers. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's experience is not simply about family dynamics; it is about how gendered expectations, age-related fertility pressures, and cultural norms surrounding work and motherhood intersect, creating layered challenges. These expectations not only shape how women are perceived but also influence their personal choices, often placing them in a difficult position where their ambitions and societal roles are seen as conflicting rather than complementary.

Data 6

Ira's mother-in-law : *"I think, Sel... It's time for you to tell Ira to quit her job."*
 Marsel : *"It's not that easy."*
 Ira's mother-in-law : *"What do you mean? We've been waiting for two years, and she's still not pregnant. That means we need to find a solution, right?"*
 Marsel : *"It's not that we don't try. But maybe it's not yet our time."*
 Ira's mother-in-law : *"That means you're not trying hard enough. Take a look at your Auntie. She used to have a job too. But for the sake of the family, she left it all behind. That's what trying hard is all about."*
 Ira's father-in-law : *"Sel, we just want to ask Ira to stay home for a few years. Once your children don't need constant care, she can go back to work."*
 Marsel : *"I'm sorry, Mom, Dad. It's not that we're doing it half-heartedly, but her job is important for Ira too."*
 Ira's mother-in-law : *"Your family is more important, Sel. If you can't have a son, that will be the end of our family."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 2, 24:27)

The conversation between Marsel and his parents in data 6 reveals the complex dynamics of structural intersectionality, where cultural expectations around gender, marriage, career, and reproductive roles intersect to create compounded pressure on Ira. The mother-in-law's insistence that Ira should quit her job reflects a traditional belief system that prioritizes a woman's role as a wife and mother over her personal and professional ambitions. By framing Ira's career as a barrier to pregnancy, the mother-in-

law reinforces the cultural narrative that equates a woman's worth and success with her ability to bear children while disregarding her autonomy and career goals. The comparison to Untie, who quit her job for the sake of her family, further upholds the expectation that "good" women should be willing to sacrifice their careers for motherhood, positioning reproductive success as a woman's ultimate responsibility.

This conversation also highlights the additional pressure tied to patriarchal lineage, where Ira is expected not only to have a child but specifically a son to continue the family name. The father-in-law's seemingly reasonable suggestion that Ira can return to work "*once the children don't need constant care*" still operates within the same patriarchal framework, implying that a woman's career is secondary and conditional upon her domestic responsibilities. The mother-in-law's final remark, "*If you can't have a son, that will be the end of our family,*" intensifies the weight placed on Ira, framing her not just as a future mother but as the bearer of the family's legacy. This reflects how cultural and familial expectations intersect with gender roles, placing the burden of lineage continuation solely on the woman.

Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's situation demonstrates how overlapping pressures such as cultural norms, gender expectations, and family obligations, limit her agency and subject her to heightened scrutiny. The narrative that ties a woman's value to her reproductive success, especially in producing male heirs, shows how deeply entrenched patriarchal values still shape family dynamics. Ira is not merely navigating the choice between work and family; she is caught within a larger social system that defines her worth based on her ability to fulfill rigid, gendered expectations. This intersection of cultural and familial pressures creates a scenario where Ira's autonomy is overshadowed by the demands placed upon her reproductive role.

Data 7

Marsel : *"Auntie, actually we're not planning to have a baby any time soon. Ira is not ready. Please don't tell my mother. If she knows, she'll be furious."*

Mona : *"I don't want to interfere with your personal life, Sel. That's your private problem. But it will become a problem if you want a baby, Sel. It's not easy. It takes time, Sel. Some women need to have three girls before they can finally get a boy. And one should only postpone pregnancy if they are still in their 20s. Ira is 32. What makes her so sure once she's ready, she'll get pregnant immediately? Is she that confident? It's not easy to get pregnant at her age, Sel."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 4, 18:00)

The conversation between Marsel and Mona in data 7 highlights how structural intersectionality operates within cultural and familial dynamics, particularly in relation to gender, age, and reproductive expectations. Mona's comments reveal deeply ingrained societal beliefs about women's reproductive roles and the pressures placed on them, especially as they age. By emphasizing Ira's age and questioning her confidence in conceiving later, Mona echoes widespread societal anxieties about women's biological clocks, framing fertility as a race against time. This narrative not only reinforces the belief that women should prioritize motherhood early in life but also amplifies the pressure on women in their 30s to conceive quickly, disregarding their personal readiness or life circumstances.

Moreover, Mona's reference to the idea that "*some women need to have three girls before they can finally get a boy*" reflects the persistent cultural preference for male children, a bias deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions. This reinforces the notion that in Batak culture, a woman's reproductive role is not fulfilled simply by becoming a mother but by producing

male heirs, tying her value to her ability to contribute to the continuity of the family name. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's situation becomes more complex. She is not only navigating societal expectations tied to age and fertility, but she is also entangled in cultural norms that prioritize male offspring. These overlapping pressures limit her autonomy and subject her to heightened scrutiny, framing her reproductive choices not as personal decisions but as obligations tied to family and cultural legacy.

Data 8

Marsel : *"I swear I don't understand you."*
 Ira : *"That's because you've never really wanted to understand me! Every time you come to me, all you think is how to make me have a child. Have you ever just once come to me and asked what's wrong with me? You're a man, Sel. You will never understand how it feels to be a woman who's expected to have a son. Do you know why my Dad left my Mom back then? It's because she gave birth to me, a daughter. Not a son."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 4, 38:35)

The conversation between Marsel and Ira in data 8 highlights the deep-seated gendered pressures embedded within both structural intersectionality and the cultural framework of Batak society. Ira's experience reflects how multiple forms of social expectations, rooted in gender roles, familial obligations, and cultural traditions, intersect to create layered and compounded pressures on women. Ira's frustration reveals how she is burdened not only by the general societal expectation to have children but also by the specific demand to produce a male heir, a cultural expectation deeply entrenched in Batak patriarchal values. Her statement, *"You will never understand how it feels to be a woman who's expected to have a son,"* underscores the gendered imbalance where the responsibility for upholding the family legacy falls squarely on women, despite men being central beneficiaries of lineage continuation.

In Batak culture, the importance of male descendants is paramount, as they are seen as carriers of the family name and are entitled to inheritance, while female descendants often hold a secondary status (Tantri & Asmarani, 2021). Ira's personal trauma, her father leaving her mother for giving birth to a daughter, exemplifies how this cultural value system enforces rigid gender expectations, leading to real emotional and familial consequences. The pressure Ira now feels to bear a son is not only about fulfilling a family desire but about navigating a cultural framework that devalues women's identities when they fail to meet patriarchal standards. This situation highlights how intersectionality deepens the understanding of Ira's struggle, not merely as an individual issue but as one shaped by intersecting social identities and cultural norms. It also reveals the emotional toll of such systemic pressures, where a woman's worth within her family and community is often measured by her ability to meet deeply rooted gendered expectations.

Data 9

Ira : *"I'm sorry, Mom. All this time I've been delaying to have a baby. I'm scared, Mom. I'm afraid I can't have a son. What if I give birth to a daughter? I don't want her to be abandoned like I was. I don't want to see her grow up feeling like she was never wanted because she's a girl."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 7, 15:35)

Ira's confession in data 9 reveals the deep emotional impact of structural intersectionality and how it operates within the cultural framework of Batak society, where traditional gender roles and family expectations heavily influence women's lives. Ira's fear of giving birth to a daughter, and the potential consequences that might follow, highlights how cultural norms around gender and lineage intersect to create unique forms of pressure on women. In Batak culture, the value placed on male descendants is deeply rooted in the patrilineal system, where sons are seen as carriers of the family name and primary heirs, while daughters are often considered less significant in maintaining family lineage. Ira's anxiety is not only about becoming a mother; it is about meeting the cultural expectation of producing a male heir, a responsibility that weighs heavily on women within such patriarchal systems.

Her emotional turmoil also reflects the generational trauma caused by these cultural norms. Ira's fear of her child being abandoned mirrors her own childhood experience, where she felt unwanted simply because she was a girl. This highlights how intersectionality is not only about current social pressures but also about how past experiences continue to influence present fears and decisions. In Batak society, where the pressure to bear sons is often seen as a duty to preserve the family legacy, women carry cultural burdens. Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's situation illustrates how deeply ingrained cultural expectations intersect with personal identity, leading to emotional struggles that go beyond simple family planning decisions. It shows how societal values can perpetuate cycles of trauma, especially when women are judged not for who they are but for their ability to fulfill gendered family roles.

Data 10

Marsel : *"It's not that Ira doesn't want to have children, Dad. She just needs time. That's all."*

Marsel's father : *"Until when? Women have a biological clock. The older she gets, the more dangerous it is to get pregnant."*

Marsel's mother : *"That's if she still can get pregnant. What if she can't anymore?"*

Marsel : *"But we also have to understand Ira's fears. Ira was abandoned by her father. Just because she's a girl. It's easy for us, Dad. Being men in Batak families. Everyone looks forward to our presence. But her? Honestly, now I'm curious. What if you had me as your only child, and I was a girl? Would your love for me still be the same?"*

(Acho, 2024, episode 8, 05:28)

The conversation between Marsel and his parents in data 10 reflects the layers of structural intersectionality, particularly when examined within the context of Batak culture, which holds strong patriarchal values. Ira faces compounded pressures due to the intersection of her gender, age, and cultural expectations surrounding reproduction. The father's comment about the "biological clock" reflects a common societal narrative that frames a woman's fertility as time-sensitive, often leading to added pressure for women to prioritize motherhood over personal readiness or career ambitions. This concern intensifies when Marsel's mother raises the fear of infertility, framing it as a potential failure on Ira's part, which aligns with the cultural belief in Batak society that a woman's primary role is to bear children, preferably sons, to continue the family line.

Marsel's response shifts the conversation to the deeper emotional and cultural biases that underpin these expectations. By acknowledging Ira's trauma, being abandoned by her father for being a girl, Marsel highlights how Batak patriarchal norms do not only

value motherhood but prioritize the birth of male heirs. In Batak families, lineage is patrilineal, meaning that only sons can carry on the family name and inherit property, which places immense pressure on women to give birth to boys. Marsel's reflective question, *"What if you had me as your only child, and I was a girl? Would your love for me still be the same?"* directly challenges these cultural norms, forcing his father to confront the gender bias that shapes familial expectations.

Through the lens of intersectionality, Ira's experience is not simply about reproductive choices or age-related concerns; it is deeply rooted in a cultural system that intertwines gender and familial duty. Batak society's emphasis on male lineage creates an environment where women's worth is often measured by their ability to produce sons, leading to emotional burdens and fears of rejection. This analysis highlights how cultural norms and gendered expectations overlap, placing women like Ira at the center of complex, interwoven pressures that affect both their personal choices and emotional well-being.

Data 11

Marsel's mother : *"You also struggled to have a son in the beginning. But you never gave up. And finally, you got one."*

Marsel's uncle : *"No, Ito. Mona never gave birth to a son."*

Marsel's mother : *"You're all crazy! Why did you end up adopting?"*

Marsel's uncle : *"What else could we do, Ito? You know it yourself. How hard Grandpa pushed Mona to get pregnant again. I've explained it many times. The doctor recommended Mona to have a hysterectomy so her condition wouldn't get worse. But what happened? No one agreed, right? 'Don't embarrass the family,' they said. I had to take her for the operation secretly."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 8, 14:05)

The conversation between Marsel's mother and uncle in data 11 highlights the complex dynamics of intersectionality, where gender, family expectations, and health intersect, placing women in vulnerable positions. In this context, the intersection of gendered expectations and cultural values prioritizes family lineage and social reputation over a woman's health and well-being. Mona's struggle to conceive a son, despite medical risks, reflects how cultural narratives position women as primary bearers of familial legacy, often at the expense of their own health. In this case, the family's refusal to support Mona's hysterectomy, despite clear medical advice, demonstrates how patriarchal values can override women's bodily autonomy when those values are tied to cultural priorities such as lineage preservation and maintaining family honor.

The pressure Mona faced aligns with broader cultural norms that value male descendants as carriers of the family name, often leading to extreme measures to ensure the continuation of the bloodline. Marsel's uncle reveals how the family's primary concern was not Mona's deteriorating health but the potential embarrassment of having a woman who could no longer bear children, particularly a son. The fact that the hysterectomy had to be performed in secret further highlights how patriarchal systems can silence women's health needs in favor of upholding family pride. Through the lens of intersectionality, this scenario exposes how women's bodies become sites of cultural expectation and control, where health considerations are secondary to the fulfillment of deeply ingrained gendered roles.

This analysis also underscores how intersectionality not only affects individual women but shapes broader family dynamics. The uncle's eventual decision to prioritize Mona's health reflects a break from the traditional narrative but also highlights the extent to which cultural pressures can force individuals into morally complex situations. In patriarchal systems such as this, women's health decisions are often not their own, but rather collective decisions influenced by family honor, gender roles, and societal expectations, leading to situations where personal well-being is sacrificed for cultural ideals.

Data 12

Marsel : *"Ira is struggling to make peace with her past. A past that perhaps none of us will ever be able to understand how painful it is. Forgive me, Mom, Dad... Please give us time. I know continuing the family name is important. But continuing to do what makes Ira happy is far more important."*

(Acho, 2024, episode 8, 22:35)

In this emotional moment as depicted in data 12, Marsel, Ira's husband, steps into a powerful position of resistance against his own parents' patriarchal expectations. His words are not only protective, but also reflective of an intersectional awareness. Through Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) lens of intersectionality, we can see how Marsel recognizes that Ira's struggles are shaped by more than just gender. They are the result of overlapping social pressures: her role as a Batak woman, the trauma of past rejection, and the deep-rooted expectation to bear a son and continue the family name.

When Marsel says, *"I know continuing the family name is important. But continuing to do what makes Ira happy is far more important,"* he does not only challenge the notion of male lineage as sacred, but he also redefines what matters most within the family: emotional well-being over tradition, and empathy over legacy. This is significant because, in Batak patriarchal culture, sons are expected not only to inherit but to comply. By asking for time and understanding, and placing Ira's happiness above cultural duty, Marsel interrupts the cycle of intergenerational pressure. His plea can be seen as an act of subtle resistance to patriarchy.

Rather than confronting his parents with hostility, he uses empathy and personal insight to shift the conversation. This approach reveals how intersectional resistance does not always appear as open rebellion, but it can also emerge in quiet but meaningful moments where someone with social privilege, in this context, Marsel as a son and husband, chooses to support someone marginalized by layered expectations. Marsel's voice, in this scene, becomes an act of care and advocacy, reinforcing that resisting patriarchal norms can also come from within the system, through love, understanding, and a refusal to conform.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals how structural intersectionality operates within cultural frameworks that prioritize family lineage and social reputation over individual well-being, particularly for women. The findings highlight how deeply ingrained patriarchal norms intersect with health, gender expectations, and familial obligations, often leading to the marginalization of women's autonomy and needs. In contexts where the continuation of the family name is seen as a cultural priority, women face compounded pressures that can compromise their physical health and emotional well-being.

These findings emphasize the urgent need to challenge cultural narratives that place women's value solely in their reproductive roles and to advocate for a more inclusive

approach that prioritizes women's autonomy and health. In patriarchal systems, the preservation of family legacy should not come at the expense of individual rights and well-being. Recognizing how intersectionality functions within such cultural settings allows for a deeper understanding of the systemic changes needed to promote gender equity and protect women's health and agency. Fictional media such as the TV Series *Induk Gajah Season 2* can serve as a powerful space for feminist intervention, sparking public reflection and critical dialogue around gender roles and cultural expectations. Such representations also have practical implications for gender-sensitive storytelling and feminist pedagogy, offering new pathways for inclusive narratives in media and education.

RECOMMENDATION

Future research on intersectionality could explore how overlapping social identities, such as gender, class, and culture, shape individual experiences and influence decision-making in different social contexts. Examining how cultural norms, family expectations, and societal pressures intersect with gender roles can provide a broader understanding of how systemic inequalities impact women's autonomy and well-being. Researchers should also consider the role of power dynamics within family and community structures and how they affect access to resources, healthcare, and education.

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