



Symbolic Violence of Patriarchy: Forms of Physical and Verbal Bullying Against Alie in Lenn Liu's Novel Rumah Untuk Alie

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms of physical and verbal bullying experienced by the character Alie in the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* by Lenn Liu and analyze the representation of symbolic patriarchal violence in family relations. The study was conducted at the Gorontalo State University Library from January to March 2026. The research population was the entire text of the novel *Rumah untuk Alie*, fifth edition (2024, 262 pages), with samples in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that contain indications of physical and verbal bullying against the character Alie. The main data sources are presented in the form of story excerpts containing bullying. The research instrument was the researcher herself assisted by a bullying classification table based on Coloroso's typology. The data analysis technique used feminist literary criticism with the steps of text identification, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that Alie experienced various forms of physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, hair pulling, grabbing, pushing, dragging, throwing, hitting, and physical harassment. In addition, Alie also experiences verbal bullying in the form of insults such as "murderer", "whore" and "daughter of a servant", threats "JUST DIE!", accusations, shouts, and curses. Most of the bullying comes from her father (Abimanyu) and her four older brothers (Sadipta, Rendra, Samuel, Natta). This physical and verbal bullying represents symbolic patriarchal violence carried out through three simultaneous mechanisms: stigmatization, legitimization, and isolation. Thus, the novel critiques the weak protection of victims of domestic violence in Indonesia.

Keywords: symbolic violence, patriarchy, forms of physical, verbal bullying against, novel

Kekerasan Simbolik Patriarki: Bentuk Perundungan Fisik dan Verbal terhadap Tokoh Alie dalam Novel *Rumah untuk Alie* Karya Lenn Liu

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan bentuk perundungan fisik dan verbal yang dialami tokoh Alie dalam novel *Rumah untuk Alie* karya Lenn Liu serta menganalisis representasi kekerasan simbolik patriarki dalam relasi keluarga. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Perpustakaan Universitas Negeri Gorontalo pada bulan Januari hingga Maret 2026. Populasi penelitian adalah keseluruhan teks novel *Rumah untuk Alie* cetakan kelima (2024, 262 halaman), dengan sampel berupa kata, frasa, kalimat, dan paragraf yang mengandung indikasi perundungan fisik maupun verbal terhadap tokoh Alie. Sumber data utama ditampilkan dalam bentuk kutipan-kutipan cerita yang mengandung perundungan. Instrumen penelitian berupa peneliti sendiri dibantu tabel klasifikasi perundungan berdasarkan tipologi Coloroso. Teknik analisis data menggunakan kritik sastra feminis dengan langkah identifikasi teks, interpretasi, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Alie mengalami beragam perundungan fisik, seperti memukul, menendang, menjambak, mencengkeram, mendorong, menyeret, melempar, membenturkan, hingga pelecehan fisik. Selain itu, Alie juga mengalami perundungan verbal berupa celaan "pembunuh", penghinaan "pelacur" dan "anak pembantu", ancaman "MATI SAJA KAMU!", tuduhan, bentakan, serta makian. Sebagian besar perundungan tersebut berasal dari ayah (Abimanyu) dan keempat kakak laki-lakinya (Sadipta, Rendra, Samuel, Natta). Perundungan fisik dan verbal ini merepresentasikan kekerasan simbolik patriarki yang dijalankan melalui tiga mekanisme simultan: stigmatisasi, legitimasi, dan isolasi. Dengan demikian, novel tersebut mengkritik lemahnya perlindungan korban kekerasan dalam keluarga di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: kekerasan simbolik, patriarki, bentuk perundungan fisik, verbal, film

Submitted
13/05/2026

Accepted
20/05/2026

Published
27/05/2026

Citation	Noho, D., Masie, S. R., & Didipu, H. (2026). Symbolic Violence of Patriarchy: Forms of Physical and Verbal Bullying Against Alie in Lenn Liu's Novel <i>Rumah Untuk Alie</i> . <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra, Volume 5, Nomor 3, Mei 2026</i> , 2525-2536. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v4i3.1478
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Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

INTRODUCTION

Literary works serve not only as entertainment but also as reflections of social realities, including various forms of injustice, such as violence against women. As a genre of prose fiction, novels have the ability to depict the psychological and social dynamics of characters in detail, making them an effective means of analyzing and critiquing patriarchal cultural practices that harm women. In many modern Indonesian novels, women are often depicted in subordinate positions, experiencing violence, and lacking full control over their bodies and lives (Nursamsia et al., 2025; Kadir et al., 2026). As a country governed by the rule of law, Indonesia recorded 338,496 cases of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBV) against women, a figure that represents a 50% increase compared to the 327,629 cases recorded in 2021 (Quran, 2022). These figures demonstrate that violence against women is a structural problem that requires serious attention.

Bullying is one of the most common forms of violence, yet it is often overlooked. Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior carried out intentionally and repeatedly by an individual or group against someone perceived as weaker, thus creating a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim (Coloroso in Berliana & Trianton, 2022L:219). Bullying occurs not only in schools or online but also within the family, which is the closest and most fundamental environment for a person. Ironically, the family, which should be the first place of refuge, can actually be the primary source of trauma and violence against girls (Huraerah, 2018). Research on bullying within families is still limited, especially in literary studies, as most studies focus more on bullying in educational settings or friendships.

Lenn Liu's novel *Rumah untuk Alie* (2024) offers a unique and touching narrative about a teenage girl named Alie Ishala Samantha, who is the victim of systemic bullying from her father and four older brothers. This novel went viral on social media platforms like TikTok and X before its publication, and was to be adapted into a feature

film in April 2025. The novel's popularity demonstrates public interest in stories that address the issue of domestic violence, particularly that experienced by girls. Through the character of Alie, Liu depicts how patriarchal structures operate on a micro-scale within the home: men (fathers and older brothers) hold absolute authority, while women (Alie) are positioned as objects to be punished, criticized, controlled, and blamed.

Previous research on the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* has been limited to the analysis of expressive speech acts (Adilla & Wardani, 2025), the main character's inner conflict (Zahrah et al., 2025), and the classification of emotions (Saputra et al., 2025). These three studies have not specifically examined forms of bullying from a feminist perspective, particularly the symbolic violence of patriarchy manifested in physical and verbal bullying. In fact, symbolic violence, a concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu, refers to invisible violence carried out through language, symbols, and cultural practices that are legitimized so that victims accept it as something normal (Didipu, 2024:94). In this novel, the label of "murderer" attached to Alie, the threat of death, and the insult "useless child" are examples of symbolic violence that Alie internalizes as guilt and helplessness.

The feminist approach in literature aims to identify how literary works depict the position of women, gender inequality, and the power dynamics between men and women (Wiyatmi, 2012; Didipu, 2021). Within this framework, the physical and verbal bullying against Alie cannot be separated from the patriarchal system that positions men as dominant subjects and women as objects that must submit. A study of feminism in modern Indonesian literature shows that female characters are often depicted as experiencing marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and double workloads (Maksum et al., 2021; Paneo et al., 2020). The novel *Rumah untuk Alie* is a rich text because almost all forms of gender injustice are experienced by Alie simultaneously. Based on the description above, the formulation of the problem in this study is as follows. (1) What forms of



physical and verbal bullying does the character Alie experience in the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* by Lenn Liu? 2) How do physical and verbal bullying represent symbolic patriarchal violence in family relationships?

The objectives of this study are: first, to describe the forms of physical and verbal bullying experienced by the character Alie in the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* based on Coloroso's typology of bullying (in Berliana & Trianton, 2022); second, to analyze how physical and verbal bullying represent symbolic patriarchal violence in family relationships.

Theoretically, the benefits of this study are to enrich the study of literary feminism, particularly regarding symbolic violence in patriarchal families. Practically, this research is expected to provide critical reflection for society on the dangers of bullying originating from the immediate environment and as material for child protection advocacy.

The novelty of this study lies in combining the concept of bullying with literary feminist theory to uncover the mechanisms of symbolic violence legitimized by patriarchal family structures. This research is relevant to several previous articles, including Berliana & Trianton (2022) on the representation of bullying in novels; Fitriana & Mulyono (2025) on domestic violence against female characters; and Anggara & Pangesti (2026) on power relations in contemporary novels.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analytical methods to understand and interpret the phenomenon of physical and verbal bullying as a form of symbolic patriarchal violence in Lenn Liu's novel *Rumah untuk Alie* (Home for Alie) (Endraswara, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design used is descriptive qualitative with a literary feminist approach.

The primary data source was the fifth edition of the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* (2024), while secondary sources included journal articles, theory books, and relevant research on bullying and

literary feminism. The research data consisted of story excerpts indicating physical and verbal bullying against Alie and the context of patriarchal power relations within the family.

The data collection technique used library research with the reading and note-taking method (Sari & Asmendri, 2020:44), including: carefully reading the novel, identifying and marking bullying texts, noting relevant quotations, classifying data based on Coloroso's typology (in Berliana & Trianton, 2022), and documenting the data with codes.

The data analysis technique refers to the steps of literary feminist analysis by Sugihastuti and Suharto (2010), Afifuddin & Saebani (2002), Razak (2107) namely: (1) identifying the text structure related to Alie and her interactions with her father and four older brothers; (2) analyzing the data using feminist literary criticism by categorizing forms of physical and verbal bullying, interpreting them as manifestations of patriarchal symbolic violence (power relations, subordination, and control over women's bodies), and linking them to critiques of patriarchal family structures; (3) drawing conclusions about the representation of symbolic violence legitimized by the patriarchal system. The frequency of bullying was not calculated due to the qualitative, interpretive nature of this research.

RESULTS

This study found that the character Alie Ishala Samantha in Lenn Liu's novel *Rumah untuk Alie* experiences two main forms of bullying: physical bullying and verbal bullying. These two forms are not isolated but interconnected and reinforce the patriarchal dominance perpetrated by her father and four older brothers. The following is a presentation of the findings based on the research focus.

1. Forms of Physical Bullying Experienced by Alie

The physical bullying experienced by Alie included hitting (slapping and hitting with a belt), kicking, hair pulling, grabbing (wrists and jaw),

pushing, dragging, throwing (body and objects), hitting, and physical harassment. All of these acts were perpetrated by her father (Abimanyu), her four older brothers (Sadipta, Rendra, Samuel, Natta), and her schoolmate (Nazwa).

1) Hitting

Hitting is the act of striking another person or object with the hand or a specific tool through a swinging or pushing motion that uses physical force. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, hitting is considered physical bullying because it involves direct contact that can cause pain, injury, or fear to the victim, with the degree of impact depending on the force of the blow, the part of the body hit, and the condition of the perpetrator and victim. The hitting experienced by Alie is seen in the form of slaps and hitting with an object, namely a belt:

a. Slap

"Plakkk..." Before Alie could say a word, a hard slap flew from Abimanyu, leaving her cheek feeling numb and painful at the same time. The girl immediately held her cheek. From the intense heat, Alie was pretty sure there were red marks on her skin now. (Liu, 2024: 56)

This quote demonstrates physical bullying through direct violence perpetrated by a powerful figure against the victim. The situation builds on psychological tension first. Abimanyu waits with a dark expression like a "hunting animal," creating fear in Alie before the violence occurs. The slap lands before Alie can utter a word, indicating that the perpetrator is not giving the victim any room to explain or defend herself. Alie's physical response, holding her cheek and feeling the intense heat, demonstrates the immediate impact. From a patriarchal perspective, this action affirms that the father, as the highest authority in the family, has the absolute right to punish a daughter at any time, without further clarification.

b. Beating with a Belt

"After saying that, Abimanyu took off his belt and immediately whipped it at Alie's body." (Liu, 2024)

Beating with an object (a belt) demonstrates a more brutal escalation of violence because the object serves as an extension of his arm to increase the pain. Before hitting, Abimanyu utters insulting words: "WANT TO BE A WHORE?!" The verbal violence that accompanies this physical violence reinforces the perpetrator's dominance while degrading the victim's dignity. The belt, a symbol of authority and discipline in patriarchal culture, has been transformed into a tool of torture. This illustrates how an instrument that should symbolize "legitimate" control has instead become a legitimate means of violence in the name of "educating" girls.

2) Kicking

Kicking is the act of striking someone or something with the foot through a push or swing, either with the sole or the tip of the foot, with the aim of knocking them down, distancing them, or causing harm. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, kicking constitutes physical oppression because it involves direct contact and the use of bodily force that has the potential to cause pain, injury, or fear, with the level of danger depending on the strength of the kick, the body part hit, and the difference in strength between the perpetrator and the victim. The following is an example of a kick experienced by Alie:

"A-yeah..." Alie winced in pain. Tears welled up in her eyes as her father repeatedly kicked her, who was still prone on the floor. (Liu, 2024)

The act of kicking while the victim is already down and helpless demonstrates a genuine intention to harm, not simply to "punish." The word "repeatedly" indicates systematic repetition, a hallmark of bullying. Alie's position on the floor left her unable to protect herself or escape. In a



patriarchal power relationship, this action demonstrates how men (fathers) use their superior physical strength to vent their anger without restraint. Alie's cries and groans do not stop the violence, meaning the victim's suffering is not perceived as a signal to stop. On the contrary, it may actually be a source of satisfaction for the perpetrator.

3) Hair Pulling

Hair pulling is the act of forcibly pulling someone's hair with the hands to cause pain or discomfort. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, hair pulling is considered physical bullying because it involves direct contact and the use of physical force that can cause pain, scalp injury, and instill fear or intimidation in the victim. The following depicts the hair-pulling experienced by Alie:

"Sadiptta's harsh breath filled the air. His hand roughly slapped Alie's fingers away... He then brought his hand to Alie's hair and pulled hard, turning her innocent face toward him." (Liu, 2024)

Hair-pulling is a form of physical violence that attacks a sensitive and symbolic part of the body: hair, often associated with beauty and feminine identity. By pulling hair, Sadipta forcibly controls Alie's head movement and gaze, forcing her to face the perpetrator. This action demonstrates an attempt to subdue the victim both physically and psychologically: Alie is forced to "see" and "face" her angry older sibling. The harsh breath before the act indicates the accumulation of negative emotions being vented on her younger sister. In a family structure, older brothers have authority over younger sisters, and this violence serves as a means of asserting that hierarchy.

4) Grabbing

Grabbing is the act of grabbing or holding another person's body part tightly with the hands to the point of restricting movement or causing discomfort. In the context of aggressive behavior

or bullying, grabbing is considered physical abuse because it involves direct contact and the use of physical force that can cause pain, pressure, or fear to the victim, depending on the strength of the grip and the body part being grabbed. The following illustrates the action of grabbing Alie's wrist and grabbing her jaw:

"Rendra's hand gripped Alie's wrist very tightly." (Liu, 2024)

A strong grip on the wrist restricts the victim's movement and causes physical pain. The wrist is a body part that allows a person to move freely; by grabbing it, the perpetrator disables the victim's ability to escape or defend themselves. The description "very tightly" indicates the intensity of the deliberate violence. In this context, Rendra accuses Alie of hiding the music box her mother gave him, an unfounded accusation. Physical violence is used as a tool of interrogation and intimidation, not as a proportionate response to proven wrongdoing.

5) Pushing

Pushing is the act of applying pressure or pushing another person's body with the hands or any other body part to the point that the person shifts, loses balance, or moves away. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, pushing is considered physical bullying because it involves direct contact and the use of physical force, which can cause discomfort, risk of falling, or fear in the victim, depending on the strength of the push and the situation. Here's an example of pushing experienced by Alie:

"Nazwa looked alternately at Julia and Sella, then nodded. This signal was immediately understood by her two friends, who then pushed Alie until she hit the wall." (Liu, 2024)

This physical bullying was carried out collectively by a group, demonstrating coordination and solidarity among the perpetrators. The push

that caused Alie's body to hit the wall created a risk of impact injury. The use of nonverbal cues (nodding) as a command indicates that this violence was planned, not spontaneous. Alie was physically cornered and had no room to escape. From a feminist perspective, collective violence against an individual woman demonstrates how groups (even those consisting of women) can perpetuate domination and oppression.

6) Dragging

Dragging is the act of forcibly pulling another person's body across a surface using the hands or a tool until the person moves against their will. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, dragging is considered physical abuse because it involves the use of physical force and direct contact that can cause pain, injury, or fear to the victim, depending on the strength of the pull and the condition of the surface being dragged. The following depicts the dragging of Alie's body:

"Sadipta, of course, didn't stop there. He dragged Alie's helpless body back to the bathroom." (Liu, 2024)

The word "again" indicates that the dragging has been repeated several times, indicating a systematic pattern of bullying. The phrase "helpless body" emphasizes the victim's loss of all ability to resist. Dragging a body across the floor has the potential to cause abrasions and friction wounds. The purpose of the dragging is to move the victim to a more private location (the bathroom), indicating the perpetrator's desire to continue the violence without witnesses. The narrative, "the younger sibling's moans sounded like a melodious melody to his ears," demonstrates the perpetrator's level of sadism, which revels in the victim's suffering.

7) Throwing

Throwing is the act of swinging and releasing the hand to direct an object or something in a specific direction using force. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, throwing is

considered physical bullying because it involves the use of force that can cause pain, injury, or fear to the victim, especially if the thrown object is hard, heavy, or hits a vulnerable part of the body. The following shows the action of throwing the body of the character Alie and throwing an object, namely a flower vase, at Alie:

"Abimanyu had just thrown a nearby flower vase, hitting him squarely in the forehead before it missed and hit the floor." (Liu, 2024)

Throwing a hard object (a flower vase) at a victim's head is a very dangerous and life-threatening form of violence. The broken vase hitting the forehead caused blood, a serious physical injury that left permanent scars. This action demonstrates that Abimanyu's violence no longer has limits; any object around him can be used as a weapon. In the context of a family, household objects that should serve as comfort and beauty are instead transformed into instruments of torture. This perfectly symbolizes "a home that is no longer safe."

8) Smashing

Smashing is the act of intentionally striking or directing a person's body or body part against a hard surface or object, resulting in an impact. In the context of aggressive behavior or bullying, smashing is considered physical bullying because it involves the use of physical force and direct contact that can cause pain, injury, or fear to the victim, depending on the force of the impact and the body part hit. The following is an example of Alie's body being slammed:

"Abimanyu grabbed Alie by the collar, then slammed his only daughter's body against the wall, and then pushed her to the floor." (Liu, 2024)

Slamming the body against the wall is a continuous chain of violence: after grabbing, then smashing, then pushing to the floor. The wall, which should have been a protective barrier and a



safe space, becomes a hard, injurious surface. This action demonstrates that the perpetrator has completely lost control of his emotions (or is controlling them intentionally to cause harm). Alie is treated like a doll to be thrown and thrown at will. This is a form of total dehumanization of the victim.

9) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act involving inappropriate or unwanted bodily contact intended to demean, annoy, or harm another person. This behavior can take the form of touching, pushing, or other physical treatment that violates an individual's comfort level and right to bodily safety. In the context of violence or bullying, physical abuse causes pain, fear, and reduces the victim's sense of security and self-esteem. The following describes the physical harassment experienced by Alie, including touching Alie's thigh, which was covered by her skirt, and poking her chin. Alie's hand was forcibly pulled and grabbed her shoulder:

"He boldly placed his hand on Alie's uniform skirt." (Liu, 2024)

This physical harassment occurred in a public space (the street) by a stranger, adding another layer of insecurity for Alie. The uniform skirt is a piece of clothing that covers private areas; touching it violates the victim's bodily boundaries. The word "bold" indicates the perpetrator's rudeness and audacity in violating norms. Alie, terrified and on the verge of tears, is depicted as unable to fight back effectively. This harassment, while not as severe as domestic violence, still leaves additional trauma and demonstrates that bullying of women can happen anywhere, by anyone.

2. Forms of Verbal Bullying Experienced by Alie

The verbal bullying experienced by Alie included insults, humiliation, threats, accusations, yelling, belittling, and cursing. Most of the perpetrators of verbal bullying were her father and older siblings.

1) Insults

Insults are expressions or statements containing ridicule, insults, or demeaning words directed at someone to hurt their feelings or lower their self-esteem. In the context of bullying, insults are considered verbal abuse because they are delivered through words that can cause shame, sadness, fear, or loss of self-confidence in the victim. The following insults demean and negatively label Alie:

"You're a real mood-spoiler. Your presence only ruins everyone's mood." (Liu, 2024)

These insults attack Alie's fundamental existence as a family member. Alie is labeled a "mood-spoiler," someone whose presence destroys the happiness of others. This is a form of verbal abuse aimed at isolating the victim socially and emotionally. By saying that "they don't want to see a murderer," Rendra permanently labeled Alie as a monster, not a human being deserving of acceptance. The repeated use of the word "murderer" had an internalizing effect: Alie began to believe that she was evil and deserved punishment.

2) Insults

Insults are actions or statements that demean, belittle, or attack a person's dignity and self-esteem, either directly or indirectly. In the context of bullying, insults include verbal bullying because they are carried out through words, names, or statements intended to degrade, humiliate, or hurt the victim's feelings, resulting in emotional impacts such as shame, sadness, fear, or loss of self-confidence. The following insults demean Alie's self-esteem and social status:

"COMING HOME AT NIGHT WITH A BOY? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE, HUH?! DO YOU WANT TO BE A PROSTITUTE?!" (Liu, 2024)

This insult is a form of patriarchal control over women's sexuality. The term "whore" is a highly

derogatory label intended to intimidate Alie into breaking the boundaries set by her father. Women who come home late or interact with men outside the family's control are immediately stigmatized. This reflects a double standard: Alie's older brother may be free to return home at any time without similar consequences. This insult also serves to "remind" Alie of her lowly position and the need for constant supervision.

"Don't kiss my hand. You're the maid's daughter. Your place is in the kitchen. Go help out in the back!" (Liu, 2024)

This insult from her grandmother combines class and gender debasement. Alie is not recognized as a granddaughter, but rather as a "maid's daughter," a status inherited from her mother. Grandmother uses the phrase "your place is in the kitchen" to emphasize Alie's inferior position within the extended family hierarchy. The kitchen is a domestic space traditionally associated with the work of lower-class women. This insult has a double impact: Alie is not only rejected as a member of the family but is also forced to serve her own family.

3) Threats

A threat is a statement or action that expresses the intention to harm, harm, or instill fear in another person, either directly or indirectly. In the context of bullying, threats include verbal or psychological abuse because they are used to pressure, intimidate, or control the victim, thus creating feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity. Here, there is a threat that Alie must die and that Alie must suffer harm equal to their own:

"YOU JUST DIE! DIE!" (Liu, 2024)

A death threat uttered by a father to his own child is the most extreme form of verbal abuse. These words are not simply an emotional outburst, but contain the intention to frighten the victim to the point of losing their most basic sense of

security. In a culture that values "filial piety," a father's threats have tremendous destructive power because the victim cannot resist or refute them. Alie, hearing "YOU JUST DIE" repeatedly, begins to internalize the idea that he is unworthy of life, which is then reflected in his suicide attempt.

4) Accusations

An accusation is a statement or claim that someone has committed a specific wrong or action, whether true or false, that could harm their good name or reputation. In the context of bullying, accusations constitute verbal or social bullying if made without clear basis with the aim of degrading, humiliating, or isolating the victim, which can cause emotional distress and loss of self-confidence. The following example illustrates the accusation that the mother suffered because of Alie and that Alie is a bully:

"I believe you're a bully. From the video, it's clear that you did all that. YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP DENIALING!" (Liu, 2024)

This accusation demonstrates the family's injustice and failure to provide protection. Samuel believed the edited video more than his own sister. The word "denial" indicates that Samuel believes Alie is always lying, so anything she says in her defense is perceived as manipulation. This accusation, without solid evidence, emphasizes that within the family's patriarchal structure, the woman's voice (Alie) is never heard and never trusted. The man (Samuel) and visual evidence (video) were more credible than the woman's words.

5) Yelling

Yelling is the act of speaking to someone in a loud, high-pitched voice and in a harsh manner, causing pressure or fear. In the context of bullying, yelling is considered verbal bullying because it is used to intimidate, demean, or control others through aggressive words and intonation, which can lead to feelings of insecurity and reduced self-



confidence in the victim. The following example shows yelling, commanding Alie to be quiet and yelling, stating that Alie can only say sorry:

"All this time, you've only been able to say sorry, sorry, sorry, and sorry! DO YOU THINK SORRY CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING?!" (Liu, 2024)

This yelling carries a tragic irony. Alie has been taught (through repeated abuse) that the only safe response is to apologize. However, when she does, she is still yelled at for "only being able to say sorry." This is a double bind, a double trap of patriarchal violence: if Alie resists, she is punished for disobedience; if she complies (apologizes), she is still punished for being weak and useless. Abimanyu uses this yelling to corner Alie, ensuring that whatever she does is wrong. There is no way out of this situation.

6) Demeaning

Demeaning is an action or statement intended to diminish, belittle, or lower a person's worth, abilities, or self-esteem. In the context of bullying, demeaning includes verbal or psychological bullying because it is carried out through words or actions that make the victim feel worthless, embarrassed, or lose self-confidence. The following is an act of belittling, comparing her brother's grades to those of Alie and undermining Alie's self-esteem and social status:

"ONLY EIGHTY? Your brothers can even get better grades than eighty!" (Liu, 2024)

This belittling is done by comparing Alie's grades to those of her brother. This type of comparison is unfair because the test material may be different or each child's abilities may be different. However, the goal is not to motivate, but rather to emphasize that Alie is always "less" than her brother. The word "ONLY" (only) belittles Alie's achievements, which may actually be quite good. In a patriarchal context, girls are often compared negatively to boys to maintain masculine superiority.

7) Swearing

Swearing is the use of harsh words or insults directed at someone to vent anger or demean them. In the context of bullying, swearing is considered verbal bullying because it is delivered through hurtful words and can cause shame, sadness, fear, or a decrease in self-confidence in the victim. Below there are insults, namely the word "Bastard" which is directed at the character Alie and insults that lower the self-esteem of the character Alie:

"I DON'T KNOW BEING BENEFITTED!... YOU ARE USELESS CHILD!" (Liu, 2024)

The invective "useless child" attacks the fundamental value of Alie's existence. In Asian culture, being "useful" to one's family is a measure of one's self-worth. By calling Alie useless, Abimanyu effectively decided that Alie had no value in his eyes. This insult, uttered while wielding a belt, combined with verbal and physical violence, reinforces each other. The phrase "tidak tahu diuntung" (unfortunate) implies that Alie should be grateful for being cared for (despite the abuse), and therefore has no right to complain. This is a subtle yet cruel form of silencing.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, it was found that the character Alie in the novel *Rumah untuk Alie* experiences systemic physical and verbal bullying, with her father and four older brothers as the primary perpetrators. These findings indicate that bullying occurs not only in school or community settings, but is most intense in the most private space, namely the family. As a relevant socio-political context, the National Commission on Violence Against Women's 2025 Annual Report recorded 376,529 cases of gender-based violence against women throughout 2025, a 14.07 percent increase compared to the previous year, with the personal sphere (family and intimate relationships) being the most dominant area of violence. This data confirms that the depiction of violence against Alie in the novel is not merely melodramatic

fiction, but rather a reflection of a social reality that remains acute in Indonesia until the mid-2020s.

Family as a Locus of Patriarchal Symbolic Violence

This study found that most of the bullying against Alie came from male authority figures in her family: Abimanyu (her father) and Sadipta, Rendra, Samuel, and Natta (her four older brothers). This finding debunks the myth that family is the "safest place" for children; in the novel, the home, which should be a fortress of protection, is instead transformed into a space of physical and mental torture. This drastic change occurred after Alie was accused of causing her mother's death, with the label "murderer" permanently attached to her, an instrumentalization of women as scapegoats to justify patriarchal structural violence. As Fitriana and Mulyono (2025) identified, gender inequality and patriarchal domination are the primary sources of domestic violence against female characters.

Anggara & Pangesti's (2026) research on power relations in contemporary Indonesian novels reinforces this finding by showing that gender inequality creates power relations against women through violence and patriarchal systems. In *Rumah untuk Alie* (Home for Alie), the violence against Alie is perpetrated by figures holding absolute authority in the home—adult men and adolescent boys. The stigma of "murderer" creates a self-justifying cycle of violence: because she is considered a murderer, she deserves punishment; because she is punished, she is further confirmed as a "murderer" in the eyes of her family.

Physical Abuse as Control over Women's Bodies

The physical abuse experienced by Alie demonstrates that Alie's body becomes a battleground for patriarchal power, where men in the family have the absolute right to harm, control, and humiliate women's bodies. Most horrifyingly, the physical violence was carried out without any room for dialogue. The slaps landed before Alie could utter a word, and the kicks continued as she

lay prone on the floor. This confirms that the purpose of the violence was not to "educate" or "punish," but rather to vent anger and assert male supremacy over women's bodies. The act of throwing a flower vase, hitting her forehead, and slamming her body against a wall demonstrates that physical violence no longer knows boundaries; household objects become weapons.

Verbal Bullying as Identity Destruction

The constant use of the label "MURDERER" is not simply an insult, but a permanent process of stigmatization that changes Alie's identity. From Bourdieu's perspective of symbolic violence, language not only represents reality but also shapes it; when a family continually calls their daughter "murderer," the child ultimately believes she is. Abimanyu's sexual insult "PROSTITUTE" demonstrates patriarchal control over women's sexuality. The verbal threat of "DIE!" directly contributed to Alie's suicide attempt, in line with Anggara and Pangesti's (2026) findings that symbolic violence can lead to psychological distress, despair, and suicide attempts.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study has the advantage of applying Bourdieu's symbolic violence theoretical framework, rarely used in the analysis of bullying in contemporary Indonesian novels, thus providing a new perspective on how language and physical practices legitimized by the family can become tools of oppression. Furthermore, the use of data from the 2025 National Commission on Violence Against Women Annual Report strengthens the social relevance of the findings.

However, this study has limitations. First, the analysis focuses solely on the character of Alie without comparing her with other female characters in the same novel or with novels with similar themes, so the uniqueness of the findings cannot be tested comparatively. Second, the analysis is not supplemented with data from reader or author interviews, so the interpretation of symbolic violence is entirely based on textual interpretation, which may be subject to the



researcher's subjective bias. Third, there is no statistical analysis or quantification of the frequency of bullying, which could provide a more systematic picture of the pattern of violence. This weakness opens up opportunities for further research using a mixed methods approach or intertextual analysis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion on symbolic patriarchal violence in the form of physical and verbal bullying against the character Alie in Lenn Liu's novel *Rumah untuk Alie*, it is concluded that Alie experiences various forms of physical bullying (hitting, kicking, hair pulling, grabbing, dragging, throwing, hitting, and even physical harassment) and verbal bullying (insults, insults, death threats, accusations of "murderer," sexual insults of "whore," and demeaning) carried out systematically and repeatedly by male authority figures in her family, namely her father (Abimanyu) and her four older brothers (Sadipta, Rendra, Samuel, and Natta). This bullying is a manifestation of symbolic patriarchal violence carried out through three simultaneous mechanisms: stigmatization (the label "murderer"), legitimization (violence is justified as punishment), and isolation (lack of a support system), which results in Alie losing agency, experiencing internalized guilt, and considering suicide. Although Alie displays a moment of resistance in the form of an emotional outburst toward her father, the novel does not offer a transformative resolution, suggesting a critique that protections for victims of domestic violence in Indonesia remain inadequate. Therefore, this novel is not simply a fictional story, but rather a sharp critique of patriarchal family structures that perpetuate gender-based violence against girls.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program, Gorontalo State University, for providing

financial support during this research. Thanks are also extended to Lenn Liu, author of the novel "Rumah untuk Alie," whose work served as a data source for this research.

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