



Gender Roles and Socially Constructed Relations in the Bugis–Makassar Cultural Context: A Study of Krishna Pabichara’s Natisha and Lakuna

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Abstract

Literary works function as cultural texts that reflect and negotiate social values, including gender constructions within specific communities. This study examines the gender roles and relations of the Bugis–Makassar community as represented in *Natisha* and *Lakuna* by Krishna Pabichara, focusing on socio-cultural values transmitted across generations as normative frameworks shaping gender identities. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected by categorizing narrative passages and character dialogues that depict male and female roles within the Bugis–Makassar cultural context. The findings reveal that gender roles and relations in both novels are grounded in the socio-cultural value of *siri*’ (self-respect and honor). Traditionally, men are positioned as protectors and breadwinners, while women serve as guardians of family honor and managers of the domestic sphere. Women are regarded as the core embodiment of *siri*’, yet they also hold a central role within the household. The evolving interpretation of *siri*’ promotes greater gender balance, encouraging women to pursue education and independence to uphold family dignity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In discussing the socio-cultural dimension of literary works, Grebstein (as cited in Damono, 1984) argues that literature emerges from a complex reciprocal interaction between social and cultural factors; it is not an isolated phenomenon detached from its surrounding world. As a cultural object, literature cannot be fully understood when separated from the environment that produces it. Furthermore, literary creation constitutes a serious intellectual activity rather than a superficial endeavor. Literary works may also be viewed as moral experiments, offering evaluative responses to the life they portray. Finally, both form and content can reflect shifts in cultural character over time.

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As a cultural practice, literature reflects human life within the framework of social relationships and environmental contexts. The internalization of communal value structures within the author shapes patterns of thought and perspective, thereby influencing the expressions articulated in literary texts (Dewck and Leggett, 1988). Within the Bugis–Makassar ethnic community, social life is governed by a normative system known as *pangngaderreng* in Bugis and *pangngadakkang* in Makassar (Delfiani, 2024).

According to Mattulada (1995), *pangngaderreng* refers to the totality of norms regulating reciprocal conduct among individuals and social institutions, thus sustaining social dynamics. This normative system is embodied in both written manuscripts, commonly known as *lontara*, and oral traditions.

Within the Bugis–Makassar cultural system, several principal values structure social life, including *siri*, *pesse*, *lempu*, *getteng*, *ada tongeng*, and *reso*. Among these, *siri* (self-respect and honor) and *pesse* (compassion or solidarity) function as foundational values from which others derive. These values permeate everyday life and guide individuals toward ideal conduct as prescribed in *pangngaderreng* (Badewi, 2019).

The social values underpinning Bugis–Makassar life contribute to the formation of gender norms that delineate the roles of men and women within society. Gender norms refer to socially constructed expectations regarding how men and women should behave, express themselves, and interact (Ramli and Basri, 2021). In contrast, gender stereotypes involve generalized assumptions about traits and roles based on gender. Such stereotypes are reinforced by gender norms and may result in biased judgments and discrimination against individuals who deviate from prescribed expectations. Media, socialization processes, and cultural institutions play significant roles in shaping these norms, which vary across time and context.

Strict adherence to traditional gender norms may also affect psychological well-being and social development. For instance, boys pressured to conform to dominant ideals of masculinity may be discouraged from seeking emotional support, while girls who internalize restrictive feminine norms may experience diminished self-esteem and limited leadership opportunities. Consequently, gender norms permeate various domains of life—including media, education, and family—and ultimately shape patterns of gender roles and relations within society (Mulyana and Rakhmat, 1996). This study aims to describe the gender roles and relations of the Bugis–Makassar community as grounded in its philosophical foundations and socio-cultural values, which have been transmitted across generations and serve as guiding principles of life. These values function as the normative basis for the construction of gender norms as represented in Krishna Pabichara’s novels *Natisha* and *Lakuna*.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design using a descriptive analytical approach. According to Semi (2012), qualitative research moves beyond mere numerical assessment and seeks to achieve an in-depth understanding of empirically examined concepts and their interrelationships. In this study, the descriptive method is applied to systematically interpret textual data.

The data consist of representations of gender roles, relations, and norms as depicted in *Natisha* and *Lakuna* by Krishna Pabichara. The research focuses on written data in the form of words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses contained within the novels.

Data collection was conducted through several steps: (1) carefully and comprehensively reading both novels; (2) formulating the research problem; (3) selecting textual data relevant to the formulated problem; and (4) describing and analyzing the selected data in accordance with the chosen analytical framework.

Data analysis constitutes a crucial stage of the research process, as it enables the identification of meanings and the formulation of responses to the research questions. Referring to Endraswara (2013),

content analysis is understood as a strategy for capturing the messages conveyed in literary works. Therefore, this study applies qualitative content analysis to interpret how gender roles and relations are constructed within the selected texts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fundamentally, the social structure of the Bugis–Makassar community consists of organized patterns of relationships between individuals and groups. This structure regulates roles, status, norms, and social values in order to maintain social order, including the formation of gender norms. Within this cultural system, both men and women—regardless of noble or non-noble status—are equally bound by prevailing values in carrying out their social responsibilities.

3.1 Gender Roles and Relations in *Natisha* by Krishna Pabichara

Gender roles refer to behaviors learned within a society or community in which certain activities, duties, and responsibilities are socially conditioned as appropriate for both men and women. Gender roles are not static; they may change over time and are influenced by various factors such as age, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, and geographical, economic, and political environments. Within society, both women and men may perform multiple roles. Women are often associated with responsibilities related to reproduction, production, and community activities, whereas men are generally more focused on productive roles and socio-political participation.

Gender roles constitute a social construction that develops over time and is not inherently based on natural human behavior. Historically, these roles evolved as a means of organizing the division of labor required in early human societies. Some argue that because traditional gender roles have been practiced for a long time, they should remain unchanged and are therefore considered a fundamental element in human social development. Nevertheless, in many contemporary societies, traditional gender roles are no longer considered necessary, as both men and women are capable of performing many of the same essential tasks. Consequently, gender-specific behavioral expectations become increasingly irrelevant. In this sense, gender roles refer to the roles performed by women and men according to their status within particular social, cultural, and structural contexts. These roles are socially taught to members of a society, community, or specific social group as part of the expectations associated with being female or male.

The novel *Natisha*, which is set within the socio-cultural context of the Makassarese community—particularly in Jeneponto Regency—depicts a society rich in traditions and customary practices that continue to be upheld and preserved to this day. Within this cultural setting, the family plays a significant role in transmitting gender values and norms. This is evident in the upbringing and education received by the male protagonist, Tutu, who is raised by his father as a single parent.

As a male character who grows up under the sole care of his father, Tutu is educated in accordance with the values traditionally instilled in Makassarese men. He is taught to be courageous and responsible, to remain faithful to one partner, to respect others, to work diligently, and to uphold personal dignity, particularly in relation to maintaining *siri* (a concept of honor and self-respect in Makassarese culture). In addition, he is expected to adhere to social norms and customary laws while living in accordance with the religious values embraced by his community. A man who is able to uphold these values becomes a source of pride and hope for his family.

“You know what makes Tetta most proud, my child?” I shook my head weakly. “Raising and nurturing a man as good as you!” (Natisha, p. 51).

The excerpt above is part of a dialogue between Tutu and his father following a lengthy discussion regarding *Natisha*’s disappearance. For Tutu’s father, *Natisha*’s departure—or disappearance—is understood as part of destiny that should not be blamed on anyone, let alone on God as the ultimate planner of fate.

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The gender norms represented in the novel *Natisha* fundamentally reflect a set of social norms that guide the lives of the Bugis–Makassarese community in South Sulawesi, which forms the socio-cultural background of the narrative. These gender norms are manifested in a cultural value system known as *siri*, a moral code that binds both men and women within the community. The concept of *siri* is regarded as highly valuable and essential, both for individuals and for members of society in shaping themselves as socially responsible human beings. In this context, *siri* functions as a source of inspiration for struggle, as well as a motivating and guiding principle for individuals and the community in the process of personal and social development. Consequently, the greater the degree of *siri* possessed by an individual, the higher the moral quality attributed to that person in the eyes of fellow community members and before the Creator. Within the system of gender norms practiced in Bugis–Makassarese society, *siri* therefore operates as a shared moral guideline applicable to both men and women without distinction.

In some Makassarese perspectives, *siri* is closely associated with violations of marital customs, such as *silariang*—commonly referred to as elopement or marriage by running away. Natisha's actions in the novel constitute a form of violation of customary norms and consequently bring *siri* upon both her extended family and the family of her prospective husband. In the narrative, Rangka and Natisha engage in *silariang*. For Natisha's family, her decision to leave Tutu shortly before their wedding represents a profound affront to family honor, bringing both shame and deep sorrow to her extended family. As members of a highly respected family with a prominent social status, Natisha's parents—Karaeng Liwang and his wife—perceive Natisha's decision to elope with Rangka as a serious disgrace.

“For reasons I could not explain, my heart felt deeply saddened when I saw her mother crying. I remained silent, patiently waiting for a single sentence to come out of her mouth. As on the previous night, perhaps realizing that I was waiting, her sobbing gradually subsided. Wiping away her tears, she said, ‘Enough, my child. Forget Natisha. Do not punish us with regret by continuing to remember her. We have already borne enough siri’, an unending sense of shame, when she chose silariang, precisely at the moment when we had agreed to accept you as our son-in-law.’” (Natisha, p. 123).

The excerpt above illustrates the emotional condition of Natisha's parents following their daughter's departure. Within the cultural context of Makassarese society, elopement (*silariang*) constitutes a form of *siri*—a profound affront to family honor—that is often regarded as unbearable for the woman's family. Consequently, it is understandable that Karaeng Liwang and Karaeng Kanang, Natisha's parents, attempt to atone for their perceived failure by encouraging Tutu to forget their daughter and urging him to stop waiting and hoping for Natisha's return.

Within this social framework, men are expected to demonstrate loyalty, while women are expected to safeguard the honor of their families. The representation of masculine loyalty in the novel is not only reflected in Tutu's devotion to Natisha but also in the figure of his father, whom he affectionately calls Tetta.

“The elderly man who had raised me on his own continued to look at me. There was a flash of pain in his eyes, much like the pain in mine, yet he remained more resilient. After my mother passed away, I had no one except my father. He alone cared for and raised me. He was handsome, with a tall and sturdy build. Not long after my mother died, many women—both widows and unmarried women—tried to win his heart, but his love for my late mother remained irreplaceable. He even sacrificed his career as a ship captain after her death, all for my sake. Could I possibly bring myself to disappoint him?” (Natisha, p. 39).

Meanwhile, gender stereotypes refer to beliefs or assumptions about the characteristics, traits, behaviors, and social roles of individuals based on their gender. These stereotypes are socially constructed and reinforced through prevailing gender norms, often leading to biased judgments and discrimination against individuals who do not conform to such expectations. Gender stereotypes may

appear in both positive and negative forms; however, they generally reinforce rigid conceptions of masculinity and femininity. In many cases, the representation of gender stereotypes also manifests in social expectations that place burdens on men, such as the widely held assumption that men should not display emotional vulnerability, including crying.

In Indonesian society, men are commonly perceived as the primary breadwinners within the household. Consequently, productive roles—referring to activities that generate goods and services for consumption and trade (Kamla, 2000)—are predominantly associated with men. However, in the novel *Natisha*, Krishna Pabichara portrays characters whose productive roles are relatively balanced between men and women. Both male and female characters are depicted as actively performing productive roles within the public sphere. This representation can be observed in the portrayal of the main characters, Tutu, Natisha, and Rangka.

Tutu is described as a medical graduate who works as a physician, while Rangka is a graduate of political science who becomes actively involved in practical politics by joining a political party and participating as a candidate in legislative elections. Both Tutu and Rangka occupy a middle social stratum in Makassarese society, commonly referred to as *daeng*. From the outset, Natisha's family repeatedly rejects Tutu on the grounds of perceived social inequality. These repeated rejections become one of the factors that motivate Tutu to pursue his aspirations by striving to attain the highest possible level of education.

“What if Natisha asked you to engage in silariang?” “Tetta,” I replied as I stood up and then sat down again. “I do not wish to discuss such matters. I still want to study. I want to go to university. I want to become a doctor so that fewer mothers die during childbirth. I have not thought about marriage yet, let alone marrying through silariang.” (Natisha, p. 244).

Tutu's productive role as a physician, as reflected in the excerpt above, is motivated not only by his desire to prove his worth and achieve social equality in the eyes of his beloved's family, but also by a noble intention to help save women who suffer from health complications that may lead to death during pregnancy and childbirth. This motivation is particularly understandable given the numerous cases of maternal mortality occurring in his hometown.

The main female character, Natisha, is portrayed in the novel as an intelligent student from an early age. During her school years, she frequently participates in speech competitions and even competes at the provincial level. As a young woman endowed with such abilities—combined with her family's noble social status, which is depicted as belonging to the highest social stratum—Natisha grows up with sufficient financial support. This privileged background enables her to pursue and realize the aspirations she has held since childhood.

Reproductive roles can generally be divided into two categories: biological and social reproduction. Biological reproduction refers to the act of giving birth to a new human being—an activity that can only be performed by women. Social reproduction, on the other hand, refers to all forms of caregiving and nurturing activities necessary to ensure the maintenance and survival of human life (Kamla, 2000). In this sense, reproductive activities contribute to the reproduction of human labor power. Tasks such as caring for children, cooking, feeding family members, washing clothes, cleaning, and other forms of domestic labor fall within this category. Although these activities are essential for sustaining human life, they are often not recognized as formal work or economic activities; consequently, they remain largely invisible, undervalued, and unpaid.

Reproductive roles—particularly in the context of knowledge and skills related to domestic labor and household management—are portrayed in *Natisha: Persembahan Terakhir* by Krishna Pabichara as being relatively balanced between male and female characters. Tutu, who grows up living only with his father, witnesses how his father is able to perform reproductive roles typically associated with

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maternal responsibilities, such as caring for and nurturing a child, as well as managing other household duties.

“Father stood up and walked into the house, leaving me standing silently by the window, enjoying the solitude while holding back the sadness and the feelings that pressed heavily upon my chest. Suddenly I imagined how patiently Father had cared for me from infancy until now—changing my diapers, preparing my milk, protecting me from mosquito bites, waking up in the early hours of the morning because of my cries, washing my clothes, and preparing my books and other school supplies when I was still in elementary school.” (Natisha, p. 40).

As a single parent, Tutu’s father is portrayed in the novel as a character who is capable of performing reproductive roles that are traditionally associated with women. Meanwhile, Natisha, the novel’s main female character, is depicted as someone who gradually adapts herself to learning various domestic skills that she had never previously performed.

“What is admirable about Natisha is her determination. She never gives up easily. In fact, no one had ever asked her to sweep the floor, mop, wash dishes and clothes, iron, cook, or make coffee. She did all of these willingly, of her own accord. ‘Only in this house do I truly become a woman,’ she once said.” (Natisha, p. 218).

In Indonesian society, reproductive roles are commonly associated with tasks and responsibilities traditionally assigned to women. Consequently, it is understandable that Natisha—who had never previously engaged in basic household tasks in her own home, as such work had always been performed by domestic servants—feels that she has not fully embodied the role of a woman, as illustrated in the excerpt from the novel. Within Bugis–Makassarese society, traditional gender roles still tend to position domestic household labor primarily as women’s work, while men are expected to occupy productive roles as the main breadwinners. Similarly, social roles within the community refer to various activities required to sustain and organize communal life. These roles involve participation in collective social practices and responsibilities that support the functioning and cohesion of the broader community.

3.2 Gender Roles and Relations in *Lakuna* by Krishna Pabichara

Another novel examined in this study, written by the same author, is *Lakuna*. Both *Natisha* and *Lakuna* foreground male and female protagonists as central figures in their narratives. The novel *Lakuna* revolves around the character of Emir—whose full name is Emir Sulaiman Makkarawa—a young man of Makassarese descent from Jeneponto. Emir is portrayed as a *paraga*, a performer of *sepak raga*, a traditional ball game commonly presented as an attraction during welcoming ceremonies or major communal celebrations. The female protagonist, meanwhile, is Naya, whose full name is Andi Nayanika Marennu, a master’s degree student and an accomplished dancer.

Similar to other novels by Krishna Pabichara, *Lakuna* is rich in representations of local Bugis–Makassarese cultural values. These are expressed through various traditional art forms, such as dance, *sinrilik* (a traditional narrative performance), and *sepak raga*, as well as through references to traditional incantations and myths that have long existed within the community. The novel also addresses the issue of interethnic marriage—particularly between members of the Bugis and Makassarese ethnic groups—which is sometimes regarded by segments of South Sulawesi society as less than ideal, especially when differences in social status and noble lineage become central considerations in determining marital compatibility.

Emir and Naya, as the central characters in the novel *Lakuna*, are depicted as representatives of a contemporary generation raised within educated and relatively moderate families while still upholding traditional cultural values. As a Bugis woman, Nayanika grows up within a moderately progressive family environment. Her father is a surgeon, while her mother is a professor at a university in Samarinda.

As the only daughter in her family, Nayanika is granted considerable freedom to pursue the highest possible level of education, to cultivate her talents and interests in the arts, and to live independently away from her parents while completing her studies. In this respect, women in the novel *Lakuna* are portrayed quite explicitly as autonomous individuals who are not burdened by restrictive social norms that regulate unequal gender relations. Such a depiction is largely made possible by the educational background of Nayanika's parents, who provide a supportive environment that does not perpetuate gender ideology containing elements of injustice toward daughters, nor does it reinforce patriarchal dominance within the family.

In contrast to the earlier novel *Natisha*, the novel *Lakuna* tends to depict a socio-cultural environment that is highly responsive to the principle of equality. Gender norms in the form of prescriptive rules that strictly dictate differentiated roles for women and men are not prominently represented in the narrative. Instead, Krishna Pabichara presents male protagonists in both novels as figures who embody responsibility, courage, education, respect for women, and adherence to the prevailing religious and social norms within society.

The presence of Tutu in *Natisha* and Emir in *Lakuna* represents how men are socially expected to conduct their lives within the cultural context of Bugis–Makassarese society. Both characters are portrayed as men who show profound respect and appreciation for women while also possessing a strong sense of courage. The courage referred to here implies a steadfast determination not to retreat under any circumstances, including engaging in physical confrontation when necessary to defend personal honor and uphold what is believed to be morally right.

Siri' na pacce constitutes a significant cultural identity of the Bugis–Makassarese people, as it reflects distinctive cultural characteristics that differentiate this community from other cultural traditions. Across generations, the values of *siri' na pacce* are expected to be continuously upheld and practiced by the Bugis–Makassarese community, as this cultural principle encompasses various aspects of life, ranging from individual conduct to broader social relations. From a cultural perspective, *siri' na pacce* may also be understood as part of the cultural system through which individuals and communities strive to survive and develop within their particular social environment.

“I already know your character. You are not the kind of man who easily gives in, even though you are intelligent and highly educated.” Naya paused and took a breath. “You are still a man from Turatea. Do not be offended,” she added when she saw Emir about to challenge her statement. “As far as I remember, men from Turatea are often associated with the saying, ‘If something is offered, it must be taken.’” (Lakuna, p. 241).

Therefore, while *Natisha* presents a representation of gender relations that remains strongly influenced by customary norms, the novel *Lakuna* offers a portrayal of gender relations that is more dynamic and reflective of ongoing social change. The female protagonist, Naya, is depicted as an educated woman who grows up within a moderate and highly educated family environment.

Conflict in the narrative emerges through Naya's relationship with Tata, who represents a form of hegemonic masculinity. This concept refers to a dominant form of masculinity that maintains male power over women (Connell, 2005). Tata perceives relationships with women as a form of possession that entitles him to control the life of his partner. His attitude illustrates how the ideology of masculinity can shape unequal power relations between men and women.

However, unlike the representation of women in many traditional narratives, Naya firmly rejects such domination. Her refusal demonstrates that women in the novel *Lakuna* are not passive recipients of gender norms that confine them to domestic roles. Instead, Naya's character reveals the capacity of women to negotiate their position within gender relations and to assert their agency in confronting unequal structures of power.

3.3 Masculinity, *Siri' na Pacce*, and the Ethics of Gender Relations

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Both novels by Krishna Pabichara not only portray gender conflicts but also present various models of masculinity through their male characters. The characters Tutu in *Natisha* and Emir in *Lakuna* represent forms of masculinity grounded in Bugis–Makassarese cultural values, particularly the concept of *siri' na pacce*. This concept constitutes a central philosophical principle in Bugis–Makassarese society, combining the value of personal honor (*siri'*) with social empathy (*pacce*). It emphasizes the importance of maintaining personal dignity while simultaneously demonstrating concern for others (Moein, 1990).

These values are closely related to ethical principles within Makassarese culture, such as *sipakatau* (humanizing one another), *sipakalebbi* (mutual respect), and *sipakainge* (mutual reminder or moral admonition). Together, these principles form a moral framework that regulates social relationships within the community. In the context of gender relations, these values encourage men to treat women with respect and dignity. This ethical stance is reflected in the admonition given by Tata's grandfather to his grandson:

"You are a nobleman. You should realize that nobility lies not only in one's title, but also in one's conduct." (*Lakuna*, p. 199)

This statement illustrates that within Bugis–Makassarese culture, social status is not determined solely by lineage but also by behavior that reflects moral and ethical values. Accordingly, ideal masculinity is not measured by domination over women but by a man's ability to preserve personal honor while respecting others.

Through the representation of the characters Tutu, Emir, and Tata, the two novels present competing forms of masculinity. Tata represents a form of hegemonic masculinity oriented toward control and domination, whereas Tutu and Emir embody a more ethical model of masculinity grounded in cultural values. In this sense, *Natisha* and *Lakuna* do not merely depict gender relations within Bugis–Makassarese society but also illustrate the negotiation of cultural values in shaping male and female identities.

The character Naya in the novel *Lakuna* is portrayed as a woman who firmly opposes male domination over women. For Naya, there is no place in her life for a man who tends to treat women arbitrarily, reducing them to objects that can be possessed and controlled based on claims of ownership, whether as a lover or a husband.

"All this time, Tata's senses have only absorbed what happens around him—the world of modeling, glamorous lifestyles, camera flashes, celebrity gossip, and the same routines every day. Naya does not want to force Tata to enter a new world, especially one that stands in stark contrast to his own, such as the world of gender equality, power relations, and the dismantling of domination." (*Lakuna*, p. 76)

The character of Tata in the novel demonstrates a strong sense of male ego, which he frames as an expression of love and affection for the woman he claims to care for. However, beneath this justification lies a relationship of power in which he assumes superiority based on the perception that men possess greater authority or strength. In this sense, Tata's behavior reflects the workings of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity itself is not static; rather, it evolves according to historical periods, cultural contexts, and social conditions.

"Stop your nonsense, Tata. I am tired of hearing your cheap talk about women's place. If you truly loved me, you would care about my feelings. If all you want is someone to cook, then open a restaurant. If all you need is someone to wash your clothes, you do not need to marry me." (*Lakuna*, p. 91).

Although Tata is portrayed as a male character who comes from a noble family, his grandfather raises him with the expectation that true nobility is reflected in the way one respects and treats women.

“You are a nobleman. You should realize that a person’s nobility does not lie merely in titles such as Andi or Karaeng, but also in one’s behavior and character. Playing with a woman’s feelings is not the conduct of a nobleman, Tata.” (Lakuna, p. 199).

The relationship between Emir and Naya represents a model of egalitarian gender relations characterized by mutual respect, the absence of domination, openness to differing opinions, and the recognition of each other’s autonomy. Through the character of Tata, the author introduces a more diverse representation of male characters in the narrative. Tata represents a form of excessive masculinity that manifests as male ego and entitlement, leading him to treat women according to his own will. The presence of this character demonstrates that ideological perspectives within the novel are conveyed through the construction of particular character traits as well as through the interactions among characters in the narrative.

4. CONCLUSION

The pervasive force of gender categorization in society has shaped the lives of both women and men within frameworks often constrained by rigid gender norms; in this sense, social life may be described as deeply gendered. In everyday interactions, individuals inevitably reproduce behaviors structured by these norms, which originate from socially constructed divisions of roles based on biological sex.

Social structures that allocate responsibilities along gendered lines frequently disadvantage women. Women are commonly expected to manage domestic duties and childcare even when they participate in paid labor outside the home, while men’s involvement in household responsibilities remains comparatively limited. Such divisions restrict women’s opportunities for self-development and reinforce assumptions regarding what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior for each gender.

However, the cultural philosophy of the Bugis–Makassar community contains universal ethical values that transcend rigid gender hierarchies. At the heart of this worldview lies the concept of *tau* (human being), which places profound respect on human dignity within social relations. This foundational principle undergirds the Bugis–Makassar perspective on interpersonal conduct, including relations between men and women.

The representation of gender roles and relations in *Natisha* and *Lakuna* demonstrates that gender norms are constructed upon enduring socio-cultural values transmitted across generations. While novels depict the persistence of certain gendered expectations, they also reveal the possibility of reinterpretation and negotiation within contemporary contexts. Through contrasting character portrayals—ranging from ethically grounded masculinity to hegemonic dominance—Krishna Pabichara illustrates that Bugis–Makassar cultural philosophy does not inherently legitimize inequality; rather, it provides a moral framework within which gender relations may evolve toward greater balance and mutual respect.

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