

EAST HANDSHAKES WEST: THE STEREOTYPE RESISTANCE THROUGH THE LENS OF TWO FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *PEREMPUAN TANAH JAHANAM* (2019) AND *ENOLA HOLMES* (2020)

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the female resistance presented by two female characters in two different movies, *Enola Holmes* (2020) and *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (2019). The female characters that are observed are Enola Holmes from *Enola Holmes* (2020) and Maya in *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (2019). This research used intersectional feminist theory by Crenshaw (1989), the theory of characterization by Boggs and Petrie (2008), and the theory of Symbolic Interactionism by Mead (1994). The research employs observation theory and uses four techniques for collecting data: watching, note-taking, selecting, and comparing. Further, it used a qualitative method to analyze the data and formal and informal methods to present the findings. The research shows there are principal differences in how female characters in Western and Eastern cultures express their act of stereotype resistance with their masculinity traits through interactions with other characters and with their societies. On the other hand, there is a fine line in seeing the interconnection between them. The research concludes that the society's ideology and boundaries influenced female characters' methods in exposing their resistance to stereotypes. The societal stereotype becomes an influential aspect in how the interaction is built by these female characters with others, as well as their society. All of this effort implemented by women is to achieve gender equality.

Keywords – *feminism, stereotype resistance, female characters, movies*

Introduction

Stereotypes are not merely concepts; they are continuation processes that reflect descriptions and understandable values, cultural practices, and physical appearances. The process underlying the emergence of a new paradigm is established through the assimilation and interaction of cultures (Haft et al., 2023). This change or re-manifestation is a phenomenon that lasts long and has to be embraced by society itself (Yamamoto, 2022). One aspect of society that cannot avoid the effect of the stereotypes is women and their response to it (Bachrin et al., 2024). Society tends to look at women as weak, dependent, and timid; women need to change this stereotype that is labeled by society. Therefore, they need to strengthen themselves, which sometimes involves extending their physical ability to achieve their goals (Jusdalyana et al., 2024). Feminism was then being established, along with the fact that the patriarchal society sometimes weakened women in very cornering stereotypes.

Feminism examines gender inequality and patriarchal structures. Ritzer described it as a movement that addresses injustices faced by women and advocates for equal rights and female empowerment (Ritzer, 2007). This movement advocates for women's emancipation, including the movement that attempts to realize it, as well as the individuals (Xue, 2022). Feminist stories often depict women asserting independence and resisting traditional roles, challenging norms, and shaping representation in media. Building upon this, Crenshaw introduces the concept of intersectional feminism, which expands feminist discourse by recognizing that multiple social factors, including race, class, and gender, shape oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Unlike traditional feminist approaches that focus solely on gender-based discrimination, intersectionality acknowledges the complexity of women's experiences. Crenshaw argues that feminist narratives must account for these intersecting identities to capture the diverse ways women resist oppression fully. This perspective will be particularly important when analysing female representation in movies, as it reveals the layered nature of feminist characterization. However, realizing the fact that feminism movement is starting from the Western part of the world, the relevance of the western feminism ideology emerged. This leads to Western feminism's dominance and urges people to agree with Western feminism. This idealism established that Western women need to save every woman from oppression and that this particular situation happens because of their own culture (Waheed & Cabezas, 2021).

This ideology harms the purity of the Eastern feminism movement. Not because they have a different point of view on gender equality rights, but because Eastern culture does not merely suppress women's identity. In some aspects, Eastern culture sometimes helps Eastern feminism in achieving its goals of equality (Zhou, 2023). This misconception gradually became one of the ways Western feminism erases Eastern culture. The question that arises is, then, to what extent does the Eastern culture effectively accept Western feminism in supporting Eastern feminism? Furthermore, what is the position of Eastern culture that is possibly helpful to Eastern feminism?

There are some previous studies that are related to this research that could be the tools to answer the above question and broaden it. Juliarta and Juniarta stated that the suppression of stereotypes about women in Bali pushed Balinese women to find out and utilize their customs, finding out the extreme way to achieve their claim to body ownership (Komang Rama Juliarta et al., 2026) (Juniarta et al., 2024). Furthermore, Prasetyo and Suryaman echo the above study, stating that women, especially in the novel *Garis Perempuan* by Sanie B. Kuncoro, managed to find their own ways to defend themselves against the suppression of patriarchy (Prasetyo & Suryaman, 2022). Those three studies support this research by providing a ground-breaking concept of how Balinese women find new ways to resist stereotypes in achieving their rights to claim body ownership. However, they are not yet proposing a clear voice on how the culture helps them in achieving their goals.

While Wisk mentioned that there is a ramification of women stereotypes in the movie industry, which that kind of ramification is not only turns around the movie industry but has extended over the cultural attitude, more to societal norms (Wilk, 2024a). Kumar investigated that the media, in particular Hollywood movie has a very significant role in shaping the gender stereotypes and how they are presented (Kumar et al., 2022). One of the examples is repeated exposure to the orientation of romantic females that gives insight into young girls in their society, and what should be prioritised in their lives. Supporting those, Manzoor stated that the continuous gender-based stereotyping brought in the media does not consider the sensitization of women. This results in the negative portrayal of continuously declining respect for women in society (Manzoor et al., 2016). By looking at the three articles above, they give an insight

that media such as movies undeniably have a big impact on how society labels and creates stereotypes for gender, especially women. On the other hand, these articles never mention how the position of subtle culture and customs could help women in gaining their place in society.

Other research that has been conducted supports this research, coming from Ristiawati, who stated that a female character in *Enola Holmes* (2020) used the traditional symbol as a tool to empowerment. Further, she claimed that the movie creates a new definition of female strength for today's audience (Ristiawati & Juniarta, 2026). While Juniarta mentioned that based on the situation, women characters in the Indonesian novels and movies of the decade 2000-2020 create the protector persona or heroes for other characters in resolving the conflicts faced by them (Juniarta et al, 2025). Finally, Fahrezi claimed that women's dominance and recognition in *Barbie* (2023) could bring about the dependency of men, which results in damage to gender identity (Fahrezi & I Wayan Juniarta, 2026). Those studies reveal how society could have provided a space for women to utilize sensitively to gain their identity and recognition over men in movies and novels. However, these studies only focused on either Western or Eastern culture. They have failed in showing the interrelation between the West and the East in underlining their culture in supporting women to resist the stereotype labelled to them.

This study proposed the interrelatedness of Western and Eastern cultures, and how they could work hand-in-hand in diminishing the stereotypes labelled to women by society. So far, the previous study claimed that Western culture has a wrong ideology in seeing feminism in Eastern culture. By that, they assumed that Western Feminism gained a misdirected understanding of Eastern culture, which became a big obstacle for Eastern women in gaining their voice. The statement above is validated by Vohra, who argued that Western feminism has exploited Eastern women as the victims of their culture to maintain Western superiority (Vohra, 2023). A similar statement came from Karatas, who was focusing especially on the literary context. He said that Western literature in the 19th century often portrayed non-Western women, especially Muslim women, as silenced, oppressed, and spiritually marginalized. This statement further reinforces the cultural superiority of the Western notion and the project of chasing the "civilizing" of Eastern societies (Karatas, 2025). The misconception about Western Feminism in portraying non-Western women and the misconception related to the Eastern culture toward Eastern women created a gap that needs to be filled by this research. Considering that feminism has true goals for women, the feminist comparison has to be conducted to investigate the interrelatedness between them (Flew et al., 1999) (Irshad et al., 2025).

Comparing feminist characterization reveals how female agency is constructed through resistance, from open rebellion to subtle defiance. Wilk shows feminist themes in modern films via power relations and representation, noting that films often show more nuanced roles for women (Wilk, 2024b). These comparisons highlight the diversity of feminist struggles and their evolving portrayal in the media. Through it, women characters in literary works establish multiple acts of resistance as an expression of exposing their identity, regardless of cultural barriers (Cerezo et al., 2020).

In the context of literary works, there are tons of women character as representatives in pushing back against society based on the stereotypes labelled on them. Oka Rusmini's *Tarian Bumi* (2000) emphasized the existence of female masculinity by highlighting the resistance of a female character to the tradition's suppression, which was delivered in a woman's stigmas breaking down, especially among Balinese women (Mahsa, 2022). Regardless of the

measurements used in representing their masculinity, the diction and description are becoming a weapon for the writer in emphasizing the representation of women's resistance to stereotypes (Nurfitrani & Irawan, 2023a).

On the other hand, the movie uses its visuals as a strength to portray female masculinity and to show women's resistance to stereotypes (Zhang, 2025). The edited scenes could successfully enhance the audience's feeling only through the visuals presented. This became the advantage of the movie in conveying meaning wordlessly. Yet it could be acknowledged from the gesture, facial expression, and the nuance built.

This research examines feminist resistance through the lens of two female characters in two movies, they are: *Perempuan tanah Jahanam* (2019) and *Enola Holmes* (2020). One of them is an Indonesian movie, and the other is a Hollywood movie. These movies are used as the representation of different feminist advocacy, either from the Western and Eastern parts of the world. By examining how each female characters raise their voices as an act of stereotype resistance, it may establish a "handshake" which refigures the understanding of each other's stereotype resistance forms, backgrounded by each social culture, instead of reclaiming each other.

Methodology

The social constructivism point of view is the approach used in this research. Further, the subjective meaning, which comes from the subjects experienced portrayed by two female characters in two movies, is taken in this research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The data source of this research is taken from two movies entitled *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (2019) and *Enola Holmes* (2020). These movies are taken as the data source as a representation of each part of the world. Besides that, the main female character in each of the movies showed a strong personality, portrayed in their physical and non-physical appearances. Another reason these movies were chosen as the data source is that they both produced in consecutive years and have the same ideology; they feature a modern female character, yet the setting is in the past. The observation method was used in collecting the data by implementing five techniques, they were: watching both movies, capturing the scene, taking note of the dialogues, selecting the data that was relevant to stereotype resistance, and comparing the data from both movies. Furthermore, a qualitative method was used to analyze the data based on Crenshaw's theory of intersectional feminism and Mead's theory of symbolic interactional theory (Mead, 2018). These theories were supported by Bem's theory of masculine, feminine, and neutral traits (Bem, 1974), and Boggs and Petrie's theory of characterization (Boggs, 1996). Lastly, the formal and informal methods were implemented in presenting the findings of this research. Formal method was applied with the table of female characters of stereotype resistance in both movies, while the informal method was applied by describing the characterization, the meaning discovered in the interaction, and the kinds of stereotype resistance incorporated within the customs that existed.

Findings and Discussion

The findings showed the similarities in the stereotype resistance of two female characters. They both engaged in resistance through verbal and active means. Moreover, these kinds of resistance are clearly carried out in situations where social control oppresses them excessively, so they have to engage in open resistance through verbal or physical action. Further, their characterization of resisting the stereotype is presented by action and dialogue. Both ways of characterization are presented as closely related to the situation faced by them. The urgency, needs, and impact are becoming aspects to be considered in how the characterization is vividly presented to show resistance to stereotypes (Cantika & Junaedi, 2025). The findings also show that there are differences between Enola Holmes and Maya in accepting the norms and customs nurtured by society, which results in the stereotype labelled to them. While Enola Holmes tends to reject and push the norms, Maya utilizes and uses the customs and norms in showing her stereotype resistance. Shortly, it can be shown in the table below

Table 1. The stereotype resistance of two female characters in two movies

No	Character's Name	Stereotype Resistance Performed	Stereotype Resistance Meaning
1	Enola Holmes	She physically fights some men in the train wearing men's clothes	women could serve as an active defender whose strength and decisions
		She performs an attempt to attack while wearing Victorian dress	women, especially those dressed in traditional feminine attire, must remain passive or compliant in moments of conflict
		She confronts patriarchal authorities through verbal rebellion	women supposed to has their own voice to uprise their mind
2	Maya	She attempts to survive from being attacked by a man	women are independence
		She reveals the truth in front of everyone while she is facing a deadly situation	women are analytical and assertive in gaining a powerful impact

The above table shows the stereotype resistance performed by Enola Holmes and Maya. Further, every action has its meaning in voicing the stereotype resistance. Contextually, each character has their own goals in performing such action, and the meaning could be discovered through the understanding of the situation faced by both characters, what conflict they have faced, what reaction they have gotten from their surroundings, and how they have decided to take particular action in resolute the conflict faced as well as to achieve their goals (Hakim et al., 2025) (Safitri & Shomary, 2024). These pinpoints are supposed to become every aspect that needs to be considered in exposing the stereotype resistance performed by them. A more detailed explanation is provided below.

There is a scene in which Enola Holmes physically confronts an assassin aboard a moving train to protect the young Viscount Tewkesbury. Disguised in men's clothing, she takes a position between Tewkesbury and the attacker, using her body strength, agility, and determination to keep him safe. The carriage lurches forward as she blocks the assassin's strikes, engaging in a

fast-paced struggle despite being smaller, younger, and seemingly weaker than her opponent. The screen capture of this scene is represented by the figure below.



Figure 1 Enola Holmes is fighting the assassin on the train to protect Viscount Tewkesbury.

Although there is no verbal exchange during the fight, the scene powerfully communicates Enola's agency through movement rather than words. This type of defensive action reflects a documented pattern of women resisting patriarchal structures through physical assertiveness. Her action sharply challenges gender expectations created by society by confronting threats directly. It demonstrates that assertiveness can be performed beyond verbal protest but can be achieved by body strength through self-defense (Ramandhani & Nugraha, 2024). Characterization-wise, her character is constructed through external action. Her willingness to fight instead of retreat reveals bravery, independence, and strategic thinking, challenging the stereotypes that confined women to fragility and obedience. Her men's disguise strengthens this portrayal, symbolizing liberation from restrictive dress norms and enabling her to occupy a space socially reserved for men, one in which physical movement and autonomy are possible (Boggs, 1996) (Bem, 1974).

Further, Enola's resistance pushes against overlapping systems of subordination tied to gender, age, and class. As a young woman under guardianship in Victorian England, she is expected to remain passive and protected (Crenshaw, 1991). By defending Tewkesbury, she subverts these expectations, showing that agency can emerge from individuals positioned at the margins of patriarchal authority. The absence of verbal negotiation emphasizes that Enola's agency emerges through bodily control and strategic action. Power relations do not shift because of social authority, but because action replaces language as the dominant form of meaning-making (Abizadeh, 2023). This situational configuration frames feminist resistance as something enacted through the body rather than articulated through dialogue.

In this confrontation, Enola is presented not as a figure in need of protection but as an active defender whose strength and decisions challenge traditional gender expectations. Her physical resistance redefines the moment as a clear manifestation of feminist agency, expressed through competence, bravery, and decisive action.

Another scene in *Enola Holmes* (2020) echoes the same voice as Enola fights back against Edith, right when Edith attempts to confront her. In this scene, Enola Holmes fights back against Edith when Edith attempts to strike her during a confrontation in London. What makes the moment striking is that Enola is wearing a Victorian red puff dress, a garment designed to

restrict her movement. Despite the constraints of the dress, she blocks and counters Edith's attack, using her agility and strength to defend herself in a confined space. Figure 2 below shows Enola's physical attempt from Edith.



Figure 2 Enola Holmes resists Edith in a physical confrontation while dressed in a Victorian red gown.

There is no verbal exchange, but the scene clearly communicates Enola's refusal to be overpowered. This form of confrontation argues that female characters in patriarchal settings resist oppression not only through speech or ideology but also through physical action that contradicts culturally assigned roles (Apituley, 2026). Enola's response visually disrupts the expectation that women, especially those dressed in traditional feminine attire, must remain passive or compliant in moments of conflict. Further, Enola's identity is shaped through external physical action. Rather than speaking or stepping back, she asserts herself through movement, showing fortitude, bravery, and capability. Her red dress becomes a visual counterpoint: instead of limiting her, the garment becomes the setting in which strength and femininity coexist. Enola demonstrates that power does not require abandoning feminine identity; instead, she redefines it from within.

Physical resistance in this moment becomes a symbolic refusal to occupy the subordinate roles imposed on her. By fighting back against Edith, a more experienced adult woman, Enola challenges not only patriarchy but also systems of internalized constraint enforced across generations. Although Enola is socially and physically positioned as vulnerable, the interaction does not remain fixed within that hierarchy. Through direct physical response, she disrupts the expected power alignment between attacker and victim. This shifting relational dynamic reveals how authority in the scene is negotiated moment by moment rather than predetermined by gender or appearance. Through this scene, Enola challenges the assumption that femininity equates to fragility. Her resistance underscores the film's message that feminist assertion can emerge through embodiment, even when external presentation conforms to expected norms.

In *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (2019), Maya's physical attempts to defend herself are also established in one scene.



Figure 3. Maya attempts to survive the risk in her workplace using resources she has

In this scene, Maya attempts to survive from a man who suddenly attacked her in a narrow space where she works. Realizing she is not as tough as the attacker, Maya has to defend herself by using every resource available to her, as well as her physical abilities. A very thoughtful attempt by utilizing both her body and the resources around her to help her survive from murdering attempts. Using her legs, the locking door, a radio, and a small gap to finally escape, she did everything she could think of to survive.

The resistance Maya carried out against the man was not initiated by her. Her actions were a form of self-defence in response to an attempt by another person that threatened her life. At first, she did not launch an open attack, even though she was aware of the life-threatening situation. However, as the threat became more apparent, she did not directly confront the attacker. Instead, her first response was to use everything around her to help protect herself. The feminism demonstrated by Maya is a form of courage (Bem, 1974). This courage is expressed in an adaptive and resourceful way, making use of the resources available in her surroundings. This shows that resistance to female stereotypes can be manifested not only through direct aggression but also through the strategic use of tools and elements in one's environment as a means of resistance (Sikka, 2021).

There is only one verbal shout by Maya in this scene. After getting out of her narrow workspace, she ran away from the attacker and screamed, "Help...Help" while she was also trying to defend herself physically. Instead of being dependent, as society labelled women, asking for help is an assertive trait rather than being passive and hopeless (Nurfitriani & Irawan, 2023b). This also serves as a signal from Maya to any potential help nearby. It is a careful strategy she employs to maximize her chances of survival. The resistance to stereotypes in this situation is evident: as a woman trapped in a disadvantageous position, Maya does not surrender or resign herself to fate. Instead, with clear reasoning, she strives with all her strength, using both her own abilities and the resources available in her surroundings to help herself escape the threat of death.

From the analysis above, it is evident that the female characters in both movies articulate stereotype resistance through acts of physical opposition when confronted with disadvantageous circumstances. Both Eastern and Western feminist perspectives converge in recognizing courage, independence, and critical reasoning as qualities that women mobilize in nuanced and strategic ways to challenge entrenched stereotypes that portray them as weak, powerless, and dependent. This shows that women's resistance to stereotypes is situated, embodied, and strategic, not merely the imitation of masculine aggression (Mrovlje & Kirkpatrick, 2023). They utilize the condition, context, and intelligence to resist oppression.

George Herbert Mead states that when an individual's action generates a response within themselves, that action produces meaning. Based on the analysis above, it can be argued that

the actions carried out by Maya and Enola in defending themselves, although performed through different forms of treatment, are responses to the actions of other characters. The actions of these two female characters signify resistance against the stereotype of women as weak and incapable of fighting back (Mead, 2018).

However, a significant distinction can be observed between Enola and Maya in their respective responses to confrontation within disadvantageous circumstances. Enola engages her opponent directly, relying primarily on her physical capabilities to resist the threat. In contrast, Maya adopts an alternative strategy: rather than initiating a direct attack, she mobilizes the resources available in her immediate environment to support her resistance against the assailant.

These divergent approaches can be understood as being shaped by the cultural frameworks within which each character is situated. Western cultural paradigms tend to privilege individualism, emphasizing autonomy, self-reliance, and direct engagement, as reflected in Enola's open, assertive, and independent mode of confronting conflict. Conversely, Eastern cultural orientations, which are more communally grounded, prioritize interdependence and collective support (Cheong, 2021). This orientation is reflected in Maya's strategy, wherein she draws upon surrounding resources as a form of mediated resistance. Thus, the contrast between the two characters illustrates how culturally embedded values inform distinct modes of resistance.

Those analysis above clearly compare how does Enola Holme, as a representation of female character in Western society compare to Maya, the representative of female character from Eastern society exposing their physical ability contextually different toward the situation faced. Clearly the bold and more open resistance and exposing their physical ability is initiated by Western women compared to Easter ones. Eastern women tend to unlock their physical ability by utilizing the resources around them. The urge in achieving their goals is conducted not with open resistance as well. Another scene from each movie presents that women's assertiveness serves as an act of stereotype resistance, shown below.

In the scene, Enola Holmes openly challenges Mycroft Holmes's authority during a heated confrontation inside a carriage. Mycroft insists that marriage and obedience are natural destinations for women, stating, *"Even your blessed mother was a bride,"* and later declaring, *"YOU ARE MY WARD! AND YOU WILL DO AS YOU ARE TOLD!"* His words position him as the lawful male guardian whose authority must be obeyed. Enola responds assertively, rejecting both his authority and his intentions: *"No. You want you to be happy. You want me controlled,"* and later, *"I will deny I am your sister to whoever asks, and I will do it with pleasure."* Her refusal to comply transforms a domestic conversation into a confrontation with patriarchal ideology.

This moment constructs characterization through dialogue and conflict. Mycroft's language frames him as the enforcer of Victorian norms, the individual responsible for disciplining women and securing family reputation. His reliance on commands and references to duty reveals his rigid worldview. Conversely, Enola's character is built through her strong verbal resistance. Her refusal to accept his authority, her rejection of marriage expectations, and her willingness to sever familial identity mark her as an active agent challenging the ideological framework imposed on her. As highlighted by Timperley, feminist resistance within narrative

spaces often emerges through verbal confrontation in which women challenge dominant values by refusing expected roles (Timperley, 2024). Enola's struggle is not only gendered but bound by class and familial hierarchy. Mycroft's concern that Enola might "affect [his] standing" underscores how upper-class women's bodies and choices are policed to protect male reputation and uphold elite social order. Enola, as a high-born yet unmarried girl, occupies a constrained position defined by expectations of decorum, silence, and obedience. Above analysis is emphasized by the figure below.



Figure 4. Enola Holmes asserts autonomy by resisting Mycroft Holmes's guardianship and social control

This scene reveals how patriarchal authority operates through language and social roles. The situation centers on Mycroft's attempt to control Enola's future through marriage and obedience. Through speech rather than physical action, Enola asserts her autonomy, demonstrating that feminist resistance can be enacted through refusal and ideological challenge within restrictive social structures. This exchange demonstrates that feminist resistance is not limited to physical action; it is also enacted through speech. Enola's refusal to obey, her critique of Mycroft's motives, and her rejection of prescribed identity collectively undermine patriarchal authority and redefine her as a self-determining subject rather than a controlled ward.

The same assertiveness is evident in Maya. When she was trapped in a powerless, disadvantageous situation before the villagers, Maya employed her strategy by asserting herself to save herself. In a situation that threatened her life, Maya revealed her true identity to Ki Saptadi, the village head, and also her biological father. Maya's assertiveness was a deliberate decision she made while confronting the conflict between herself and the villagers. Believing that the truth, that she was Ki Saptadi's daughter, who also held the highest authority in the village, had to be revealed, Maya expressed the fact in a short, firm, and direct statement: *"I AM ACTUALLY YOUR DAUGHTER... I KNOW EVERYTHING. I AM YOUR DAUGHTER. THE DAUGHTER OF YOU AND NYAI SINTA. YOU WERE MADE TO FORGET BY MBAH."*

Maya's characterization as thoughtful, sharp, and assertive was established through the conflict she faced with the villagers around her (Bem, 1974). Realizing that Ki Saptadi was under the influence of Nyi Misni, who harbored malicious intentions, while simultaneously finding herself in a life-threatening situation, gives rise to her inner resistance. Her desire to save the villagers from the curse cast by Nyi Misni, while also prompting Ki Saptadi to recognize their

relationship as that of a biological parent and child, emboldens Maya to assertively and openly reveal the truth.

Maya's interaction represents a distinct and effective form of resistance. As a victim, Maya challenges the norms established by the villagers through her boldness in speaking firmly despite unfavorable circumstances. Even while physically restrained, Maya realizes that her blood relation to Ki Saptadi, the village head, becomes an exceptionally effective means not only to save herself but also to rescue the entire village community. She utilizes a trusted and highly influential source, namely Ki Saptadi, to ensure the achievement of her objective. In addition, Maya demonstrates sharp critical thinking. She realizes that she only needs to convince one person, the village head, who can subsequently persuade the entire village community. Once the villagers place their trust in her, Nyi Misni consequently loses her power and influence. The analysis is shown as figure below.



Figure 5. Maya's assertiveness to reveal the truth and utilizes resources to end the curse

The accommodation assessment used by Maya in resolving the conflict she had faced initiated the stereotype resistance performed by her (Kilmann, 2023). Despite being restrained, she fights it not physically, but by her critical thought, with her assertiveness, and being thoughtful. The fact that she challenges the women's stereotype of being weak, dependent, shy, and yielding (Bem, 1974) is not only that she implements the stereotype resistance, challenges the society hierarchy, but also to achieve her aims to be saved and to save the entire village.

The form of stereotype resistance performed by Maya once again presents the distinct ways in which women in Eastern countries strategically utilize their available resources to achieve their goals. The deeply rooted norms and customs that place women in disadvantaged and less strategic positions require them to employ the resources around them intelligently in order to accomplish their objectives. Forms of open resistance that may be more easily exercised by Western women cannot be carried out as freely or as easily by women in Eastern societies. Stronger cultural values and social expectations impose greater constraints on women and, therefore, become significant considerations in their actions (Salehuddin et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these circumstances encourage women in Eastern societies to become more thoughtful and strategic in analyzing situations and utilizing them as means of enacting resistance.

The assertive actions carried out by both Enola and Maya are responses to the stimuli they receive from Holmes, as well as from Nyi Misni and the villagers. In this context, the assertiveness of these two female characters constructs them as female personas who resist

stereotypes that label women as individuals who tend to suppress their thoughts and feel ashamed to express their opinions. Furthermore, the responses demonstrated by these two women can also be interpreted as acts of self-preservation and efforts to protect the people around them.

Furthermore, the assertiveness of Western and Eastern women in carrying out resistance against stereotypes is expressed openly, and this is clearly reflected in the two films above through the characters of Enola Holmes and Maya. Enola, as a representation of Western women, manifests her resistance through open assertiveness in the situations she faces. Her awareness of the power she possesses does not lead her to restrain herself from resisting in conflicts. This openness reflects how Western feminism provides greater opportunities and stronger empowerment for Enola to argue through her assertiveness without being heavily constrained by norms and cultural expectations that generate stereotypes toward women.

On the other hand, Maya, as a representation of women from Eastern societies, must carefully consider the support system available to her in expressing her assertiveness as a form of resistance against the societal stereotypes imposed upon women. Eastern feminism acknowledges the continuing strength of social systems, norms, and customs that shape stereotypes toward women, requiring them to subtly redirect these structures by utilizing the very social systems, norms, and customs that exist within society. These support systems are then strategically employed by Eastern women as instruments in resisting the stereotypes imposed upon them.

As films serve as reflections of social life and the phenomena that emerge from it, the forms of stereotype resistance demonstrated by the two female characters in the films above are likewise rooted in social realities. The forms of stereotype resistance enacted by Western and Eastern women are grounded in different foundations. This phenomenon is explained by S.A. Ghobadzadeh on Medium, who argues that the values and beliefs embraced by women in Western societies are based on “self-expression values,” which prioritize individual choice, gender equality, and women’s participation in the public sphere. In contrast, many societies in Asia and the Middle East continue to rely on “survival values,” in which security, stability, and social order sometimes outweigh personal autonomy (Ghobadzadeh, 2025). Nevertheless, this condition does not necessarily indicate that Eastern women are unconcerned with their own freedom. Rather, they are often required to negotiate in order to obtain the rights they seek, instead of engaging in direct rebellion. This difference in perspective remains insufficiently understood by many Western women, who consequently perceive stereotype resistance in Eastern societies as being suppressed by culture itself. In reality, however, women’s resistance in Eastern contexts is often achieved through strategies of negotiation and through a deep understanding of the social context they face (M. Aldossari. 2024).

Observing Maya, the female protagonist in *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam*, who consistently utilizes the resources available around her to resist stereotypes, it becomes evident that the strength of Eastern feminism is implemented in a manner distinct from that of Western feminism. This is further supported by a statement made by Ummah in an article published

by [ANTARA Jatim](#), which explains that women's resistance within traditional communities in Madura must take cultural norms into careful consideration (Ummah, 2026).

Conclusion

The feminist movement did, in fact, originate in Western countries. Therefore, it is understandable that Western cultural values form the foundation of feminism. However, considering the fundamental differences between Western and Eastern societies, the direct implementation of Western feminism in Eastern contexts may not be entirely appropriate. The way Enola openly displays aggression toward others, for instance, would not be possible for Maya within a similar situation. Maya resists in an Eastern manner, namely by utilizing the resources and support systems around her to help herself. Nevertheless, despite these differences, both women share the same goal: resisting societal stereotypes imposed upon women.

These differences should instead be respected by both sides without attempting to dominate one another. Claims that feminist movements cannot exist in Eastern countries are unfounded. Different values and norms have long existed within each society and should be preserved by women in their respective parts of the world. Regardless of these differences, the West and the East should join hands in one shared purpose: resisting patriarchal stereotypes that negatively label and oppress women to achieve gender equality.

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