

Kabanti Wa Hadini and Gender Inequality as Depicted in La Niampe's Kabanti Oni Wolio: A Feminist Literary Critique Approach

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260704>

ABSTRACT

This study examines the reinterpretation of traditional literature as a space for producing values, ideologies, and gender power relations in the Wolio-Buton literary heritage text. It aims to reveal embedded gender inequalities, explain the linguistic strategies constructing women's positions, and interpret the intersection of gender discourse, religion, and patriarchal culture. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the study integrates feminist literary criticism, feminist discourse analysis, and literary hermeneutics. Data indicating subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, moral burden, social control, and the silencing of women were collected through comprehensive reading, systematic recording, classification, and contextual analysis. The findings reveal that gender inequality manifests in four major patterns: women as objects of male moral judgment; the association of women with broken promises and religious deviation; the exclusion of women's voices from dialogic space; and male suffering as the legitimacy for condemning women's choices. The study concludes that an asymmetrical gender structure exists, positioning men as interpreters, reminders, and judges, while women function as objects of discussion,

blame, and moral-religious control. This research advances Buton literary studies by positioning the text as a cultural archive of gendered power relations.

Keywords: gender inequality; Kabanti Wa Hadini; Wolio literature; feminist criticism; patriarchy; feminist discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

Traditional literature should not merely be regarded as an artistic remnant of the past. Embedded within it are systems of values, worldviews, collective memory, religious expressions, and social relations that shape how communities understand themselves, others, and the social order. In the context of Buton society, *kabanti* occupies an important position as a literary form combining poetry, songs, moral teachings, spiritual experiences, and ethical instruction. Recent studies on *kabanti* indicate that this tradition functions as a medium for transmitting social, religious, and cultural values within Buton society. *Kabanti* serves as both oral and written literary tradition contributing to social ethics, local literacy, and cultural identity preservation amid globalization and digitalization.^[1] Likewise, *Kabanti* contains local wisdom related to religion, social norms, and character

education, functioning as a medium of value transmission in Buton society.^[2]

As a form of local literature, *kabanti* functions not only as entertainment or aesthetic expression, but also as a mechanism of social education. Through *kabanti*, communities preserve and transmit perspectives concerning religion, family, morality, honor, interpersonal relations, and human relationships with God. Studies conducted over the past decade have largely positioned *kabanti* as a medium for character education, the preservation of local wisdom, and the reinforcement of Islamic values. For instance, *Kabanti Qoburu* tradition records the traces of Islamic values in Buton society.^[3] Research on *kabanti bula malino* further demonstrates that *kabanti* may be interpreted as a form of Islamic education grounded in local culture. Accordingly, *kabanti* fulfills a bifunctional role as literary composition, cultural artifact, and normative framework within society.

Nevertheless, readings of *kabanti* as a moral and religious text should be complemented by critical examinations of gender relations. Traditional texts often contain social constructions perceived as natural within their supporting communities, yet from a critical perspective they may reveal unequal power relations. Gender inequality in literary discourse is not always articulated explicitly through statements of women's inferiority. Instead, it may emerge through the ways women are spoken about, through the positioning of men as narrative centers, through unequal distributions of moral blame, and through the use of religion and custom as instruments of legitimacy. Literary texts as arenas capable of reproducing, negotiating, or challenging inequalities between men and women.^[4]

Within feminist theoretical discourse, women are frequently constructed as "the Other" within social structures that position men as the center of meaning.^[5] Kate conceptualizes patriarchy as a system of sexual politics operating through family, religion, education, language, and culture.^[6] Showalter emphasizes the importance of

feminist criticism in examining representations of women in literary history,^[7] while Moi argues that gender analysis in literature must consider the relationship between text, ideology, and subject formation.^[8] Furthermore, Nadir et al. expands the understanding of gender as a performative construction continuously reproduced through social norms.^[9] Connell conceptualizes gender relations as social structures associated with power, labor division, emotion, and symbolism.^[10] Patriarchy refers to a social system enabling men to dominate and exploit women.^[11] In the domain of discourse, gender ideology operates through language, lexical choices, subject positioning, silencing, and moral constructions,^[12] while Mills highlights how gender bias can be identified through words, metaphors, agency, and discourse structures.^[13]

Gender-oriented studies of Buton local literature have begun to emerge, although relatively few focus specifically on *kabanti wa hadini* (KWH). Hastuti et al. investigate representations of men and women in *kabanti ajonga indaa malusa* and find that women are more frequently articulated than men, yet such articulations burden women with ideal family concepts and domestic morality.^[14] Similarly, Udu et al., through a sociofeminist study of *wolio* folklore, demonstrate that *wolio* women are represented ambivalently: respected on the one hand, yet culturally subordinated on the other. Ecofeminist studies on *kabanti kaluku panda* further indicate that local Buton texts may serve as sites where women, environment, Islamic values, and local wisdom intersect.^[15]

Previous research trends indicate that studies of *kabanti* over the past decade have predominantly focused on local wisdom, character education, Islamic values, social ethics, and cultural preservation. Although gender studies have begun to emerge, they tend to focus on *kabanti ajonga indaa malusa*, *wolio* folklore, or *kabanti kaluku panda*. Consequently, research on gender inequality in KWH addresses a significant

scholarly gap. The *wa hadini* (WH) is particularly important because it contains a strong discursive configuration concerning relations between men and women: a male narrative subject expressing pain, regret, and disappointment; a female figure becoming the target of accusation; family and parents functioning as social witnesses; and religious language employed to judge women's choices.

The research problem formulation in this study is categorized into three research questions (RQs): how are forms of gender inequality represented in the text KWH; how do the linguistic strategies and discourse structures in the text construct the positions of men and women; and how does the relationship between gender, religion, and patriarchal culture work in the text?

The RQ 1 is targeted to look at the content and plot/themes of the Kabanti and at identifying concrete manifestations of gender disparity and the RQ 1 looks for structural barriers imposed on Wa Hadini and checks for signs of marginalization (women pushed to the domestic sphere), subordination (women viewed as secondary to men), stereotyping (women labeled as emotional, weak, or spiritually fragile), and double burdens.

The RQ 2 analyzes the choice of words (diction), metaphors, passive vs. active voice, and pronouns in the original Wolio language (or its direct translation). For instance, are men associated with active, governing verbs (ruling, deciding, protecting) while women/Wa Hadini are associated with passive, receptive verbs (obeying, enduring, serving)? The RQ 3 critiques how religious doctrines and local cultural norms intertwine, for instance, how the text uses religious piety or spiritual rewards to justify the submission of women, or conversely, how Wa Hadini utilizes spiritual devotion as a space for female agency and moral superiority.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical architecture of this study is anchored in the intersection of feminist

literary criticism, feminist discourse analysis, and literary hermeneutics to scrutinize the text as a dynamic apparatus of ideological production. To systematically evaluate the position of women within the narrative matrix, this study utilizes Dhivya's critical framework.^[4] This model provides the analytical leverage necessary to investigate how female subjects are represented, voiced, systematically silenced, or normatively evaluated across the textual landscape.

Complementing this literary critique, feminist discourse analysis is deployed as a micro-analytical tool to deconstruct the linguistic mechanics of the text. By examining specific textual devices—such as patriarchal diction, gendered metaphors, pronoun distributions, explicit moral judgments, and the asymmetric allocation of agentic roles—this approach unmasks the subtle modalities through which language constructs, naturalizes, and reinforces asymmetrical gender power relations.

Furthermore, this study implements literary hermeneutics to transcend mere textual isolation, facilitating an interpretive synthesis that aligns the text's inner meaning with the broader socio-cultural horizon of traditional Buton society and the overarching Islamic value systems that historically conditioned the production of kabanti. By integrating classical feminist paradigms with contemporary textual scholarship, this study refuses to treat women merely as passive thematic objects within the narrative; instead, it critically positions the text itself as a contested site for the production, reproduction, and potential subversion of gender ideology.

To operationalize this tripartite framework, the study adopts an intersectional critique that links linguistic structures to systemic macro-ideologies. This analytical progression is crucial for addressing the discursive and cultural layers of the text, as language does not operate in a cultural vacuum but acts as a primary vehicle for ideological transmission.

Through the lens of feminist stylistics, the text's discourse structures are evaluated to reveal how syntax, naming practices, and narrative positioning systematically relegate female agency while privileging masculine authority.^[13] This linguistic stratification is then mapped against the unique socio-religious landscape of the Wolio-Buton sultanate, utilizing feminist critical discourse analysis to expose the institutional ways in which text and speech sustain unequal gender hierarchies.^[12]

Because the kabanti genre is deeply integrated into societal and religious actions, its written verses serve as a site where power relations are actively enacted and negotiated.^[16] By examining the dialectical relationship between localized patriarchal culture and Islamic spiritual doctrines, the hermeneutic analysis uncovers how sacred tenets are discursively synthesized within the poetry to either legitimize female subordination or, conversely, afford women a distinct space for spiritual resilience and religious agency.^[17]

Ultimately, this integrated theoretical framework provides a robust, multi-layered methodology capable of dismantling the textual, linguistic, and institutional dimensions of gender inequality embedded within KWH.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive method with approaches derived from feminist literary criticism, feminist discourse analysis, and hermeneutics. A qualitative design was chosen because the object of the research is a literary text requiring in-depth understanding of meaning, symbolism, narrative structure, and ideological relations. The study does not aim to measure phenomena numerically; instead, it seeks to describe and interpret forms of gender inequality manifested within the linguistic and discursive structures of KWH found in *kabanti oni wolio* book.^[18] This design is consistent with recent trends in *kabanti* studies that utilize content analysis, hermeneutics,

semiotics, ethnography, and socio-cultural approaches to interpret values embedded in traditional texts.

The primary data source of this study is the Indonesian translation of KWH available in *kabanti oni wolio*. The research data consist of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, poetic lines, and discourse units that indicate relations between men and women, expressions of disappointment, moral accusations, religious judgment, the invocation of family as social witnesses, and the positioning of women as objects of evaluation. The subject of this study is literature, specifically the KWH from *kabanti oni wolio* text. The data samples were selected purposively, namely lines that explicitly or implicitly contain gender discourse, such as *satotuuna mincuana sajanjiku* 'actually, you are not my soulmate' (p. 147), *umendeumo uudani pojanjimo* 'You do not wish to remember our promise' (p. 150), *asooria kawujuna seelani* 'You have been defeated by Satan's temptation' (p. 151), *ubolimea agamana muumini* 'You have abandoned the religion of the believers' (p. 151), and *unamisimo sarani sampogaumu* 'You prefer Christian companionship' (p. 151).

The primary research instrument is the researcher as reader and interpreter of the text, supported by supplementary instruments such as data-recording sheets, classification cards, and gender-category analysis matrices. The analytical categories were developed based on the concepts of subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, moral burden, control over body/behavior, silencing, and symbolic domination. The research procedure consisted of several sequential stages. First, the text was read comprehensively to obtain a general understanding of its narrative structure and emotional atmosphere. Second, the text was reread to identify lines containing gender relations and judgments toward women. Third, the identified data were classified into analytical categories. Fourth, each data unit was analyzed textually by paying attention to diction,

metaphors, pronouns, modality, subject positioning, and inter-line relations. Fifth, the findings were interpreted through feminist theories and the socio-cultural context of *kabanti*. Finally, the results were compared with previous studies on *kabanti*, Buton literature, and gender in literature.

Data collection employed reading and note-taking techniques. Intensive and repeated readings were conducted to maintain the researcher's close engagement with the text. The note-taking process involved copying significant lines, assigning data codes, and categorizing them into thematic groups.

Data analysis followed the qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting lines relevant to the focus of the study. Data presentation was conducted narratively in accordance with the characteristics of literary research. Interpretation was undertaken by connecting textual findings with feminist theories and previous studies.

Feminist discourse analysis was particularly employed because it is capable of revealing how gender ideology operates through language, especially through subject-object positioning, diction choices, metaphors, evaluative strategies, and the silencing of women's voices.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied theoretical triangulation by comparing interpretations based on feminist literary criticism, feminist discourse analysis, and hermeneutics. In addition, interpretive validity was maintained through contextual readings of the *kabanti* tradition and previous academic studies. Therefore, the findings of this study are not merely grounded in the reader's subjective impressions, but are constructed through systematic and theoretically informed analytical processes.

RESULT

The findings of this study reveal that KWH represents gender inequality through a discourse structure that centralizes the male

voice as narrator, reminder, interpreter, and judge. From the very beginning of the text, the subject *yaku* 'I' appears as the emotional center, speaking from a position of pain and disappointment. Expressions such as *kuporadomi kuburi kaba-kabanti* 'I deliberately compose these verses' (p. 146),^[18] *tee saangu betena ngangarandaku* 'One emerges from my heart' (p. 146), *kupekantale rahasia incaku* 'I reveal the secrets of my heart' (p. 146), and *kupekantale antona ngonga randaku* 'I expose the contents of my soul' (p. 150), indicate that the entire narrative structure is controlled by the narrator's inner experience. Within this structure, the woman who becomes the target of complaint does not appear as a speaking subject. She is present only through judgments, suspicions, accusations, and reminders articulated by the male *yaku* 'I'. The absence of the female voice constitutes a significant finding because inequality emerges not only through what is said about women, but also through the denial of women's opportunity to explain themselves. The data demonstrate the objectification of women as figures evaluated from a male perspective. Lines such as *totuunamo kusala mea incana* 'Actually, I blame her heart' (p. 146), *simbounamo aipo alikuakumo* 'It seems she has turned away from me' (p.147), *satotuuna mincuana sajanjiku* 'In truth, she is not my soulmate' (p. 147) and *temincuana sampokanaku baana* 'She was never equal to me from the beginning' (p.147) indicate that women are positioned as objects of relational evaluation. Judgments toward women are not constructed through dialogue, but through male monologue. Women are portrayed as changing, abandoning, turning away, and becoming incompatible. In the lines *kumagilamo kutapu manu maila* 'I was foolish to tie up a wild chicken' (p.147) and *kulilahomo kukurunga manu koo* 'I anxiously confined a jungle fowl' (p. 147), women are metaphorically represented through the imagery of *manu maila* 'wild chicken' and *manu koo* 'jungle fowl'. These

metaphors depict women as difficult to control, untamed, and inclined to escape. The data suggest that women's bodies and choices are placed within a framework of ownership and control.

The text also constructs women as sources of broken promises. Discourses of vows, loyalty, and betrayal recur repeatedly throughout the narrative. Lines such as *talū awai janjita amatangkamo* 'For three generations our promise remained strong' (p.146), *talū awai indapo beasimbiti* 'For three generations there had been no dispute' (p.146), *Talū awae janjita amarosomo* 'For three generations our promise has faded' (p. 148), *umendeumo uudani pojanjimo* 'You no longer wish to remember the promise' (p. 150), and *teo itumo sampo janjimo baana* 'That was your very first promise' (p. 151), create the impression that the relationship between the male and female subjects exists within a social bond that is not merely personal, but also genealogical and collective.

However, when the relationship is perceived to fail, the burden of violation is directed primarily toward women. Women are narrated as those who forget promises, become tempted, and turn away. Here, inequality manifests through the unequal distribution of blame: male suffering is extensively narrated, whereas women's reasons are never explained.

The text further reveals the strong moral and religious burden imposed upon women. Lines such as *ubolimea amalamu malapena* 'You abandoned your good deeds' (p. 148), *upeelumo ule ikaafiri* 'You favored the opinions of unbelievers' (p. 148), *asooria kawujuna seetani* 'You were defeated by Satan's temptation' (p.151), *upeelumo kalalesa idunia* 'You desire worldly freedom' (p. 150), *upenunumo kabeloka sabancara* 'You follow temporary worldly paths' (p. 151), *ubolimea agamana muumini* 'You have abandoned the religion of the believers' (p. 151), *ugaamea kampona isilamu* 'You have left the village of Islam' (p. 150), *umandawumo inadalana kofuru* 'You have fallen into unbelief' (p. 151), and

ulapamo iumatia nabi 'You have separated yourself from the Prophet's people' (p. 151) indicate that women's choices are interpreted not merely as changes in personal relationships, but as religious deviations. The text associate women with terms such as *sarani* 'Christianity', *kaafiri* 'infidelity', *seetani* 'satan', *faasiqi* 'wickedness', and *dunia* 'worldliness'.

Within this paradigm, women become objects of strict moral surveillance. Female agency is portrayed as a threat to religious values, communal integrity, and social reputation. The text also employs family and community as agents of social control reinforcing judgment toward women. Lines such as *mai rangoa komiu mancuanaana* 'Let's listen to her parents' (p. 146), *teingkomiu manga wutitiinaina* 'And all of her family' (p. 146), and *mai rangoa komiu kabanti sii* 'Listen to these verses' (p. 148) demonstrate how personal conflict expands into a collective family and social issue.

The male subject *yaku* 'I' does not merely address the woman, but also summons her parents and relatives as listeners. This invocation suggests that women's bodies, choices, and loyalty are placed under collective supervision. Consequently, gender inequality operates not only within interpersonal relations, but also through broader social mechanisms involving family as an institution of moral control.

Moreover, the text positions male suffering as the center of moral legitimacy. Lines such as *waro-warō apasaki ngangaranda* 'The drizzle shattered my heart' (p. 145), *kumolimina apahancuru penami* 'Pleasure destroyed my feelings' (p. 145), *kulilahomo kusaala posaronaaka* 'I am restless for expecting wrongly' (p. 146), *amandawumo adaiku mangengena* 'My dignity has fallen forever' (p. 146), *wairone kusosoakea mpuu. tomi ngkapera kaasi ncia-nciana* 'I deeply regret Wairone. The red sparrow's pity was meaningless' (p. 148), *kusosoaka gorakamu moiapasina* 'I regret your request' (p. 151), and *aharamu incaku kuudani* 'It is forbidden for my heart to remember anymore' (p. 151) demonstrate

that narratives of male suffering function as the foundation for judging women.

Disappointment, loss of dignity, and feelings of futility are developed as reasons for constructing women as guilty parties. In this sense, male suffering is not merely emotional experience, but also a discursive mechanism legitimizing moral judgment.

The text additionally portrays women's freedom negatively. Lines such as *upeelumo kalalesa idunia* 'You desire worldly freedom' (p. 150) and *upenunumo kabeloka sabancara* 'You follow temporary worldly paths' (p. 150) frame freedom as suspicious and dangerous. Women's freedom is associated with worldliness, temptation, Satan, and deviation. Within this textual structure, women who choose paths outside the expectations of men and society are not interpreted as autonomous subjects, but rather as fallen, misguided, or seduced individuals. These findings indicate that gender inequality in KWH operates through the delegitimization of female agency.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that KWH may be interpreted as a text containing tensions between personal expression, religious morality, and patriarchal structures. On the one hand, the text represents the emotional outpouring of a wounded subject; on the other hand, such emotional expression is constructed through discursive patterns positioning women as objects of blame. From the perspective of feminist literary criticism, this position indicates that the text not only communicates romantic suffering, but also produces power relations. The male subject speaks, evaluates, reminds, and judges, while women appear merely as figures being spoken about.

When interpreted through the framework of de Beauvoir^[5], women in KWH emerge as "the Other." They are not defined through their own experiences or desires, but through male pain, expectations, and disappointment. Women become objects whose meanings are constructed by men.

When the narrator claims that the woman *alikuakumo* 'turned away from me' (p. 147), and, *uudani pojanjimo* 'forgot the promise' (p. 150), or *bolimea agamana muumini* 'abandoned the religion of the believers' (p. 151), she constructs female identity from a male perspective. Such identity is not autonomous, but shaped through women's failure to fulfill relational and moral expectations imposed externally. Here, gender inequality operates symbolically: women are not only judged guilty, but are also deprived of the right to define their own motives, desires, and choices.

The metaphors of *manu maila* 'wild chicken' and *mmanu koo* 'jungle fowl' strengthen the interpretation that women are positioned within a framework of control. According to Mills^[13] metaphors are not merely linguistic ornaments, but part of discursive strategies capable of containing gender bias. Women who do not conform to male expectations are portrayed as wild, difficult to confine, and prone to escape once restraints are broken. These metaphors suggest that gender relations are imagined as relations between the controller and the controlled. Men occupy the position of authority, while women become objects requiring supervision. Thus, gender inequality in the text is manifested not only through explicit accusations, but also through linguistic imagery normalizing ownership and control over women.

The findings concerning the *talū awae* 'three-generation promise' indicate that gender relations in the text are not merely individual, but connected to family structure, genealogy, and collective honor. This supports the perspective of Connell^[10] who argues that gender operates within broader social structures rather than solely through personal relationships. When the text calls upon parents and family members to listen, romantic conflict transforms into a communal matter.

Women's choices cease to belong to themselves and instead become matters of family and social concern. Within patriarchal societies, such mechanisms

frequently position women as symbols of family honor. Women are expected to preserve promises, loyalty, religion, and reputation, while their voices and explanations remain marginalized.

The use of religious language in KWH illustrates the complexity of the relationship between gender and religion. The text not only claims that women abandon men, but also asserts that women leave *kampona isilamu* 'the village of Islam', *mandawumo inadalana kofuru* 'fall into infidelity', *tanggalamo ironina faasiqi* 'drowning in wickedness, and *lapamo iumatia nabi* 'separated from the people of the prophet'.

From the perspective of Lazar,^[12] gender discourse is often legitimized through stronger moral and institutional discourses, including religion and custom. At this point, women are not merely positioned as unfaithful partners, but as figures deviating from religious order. Judgment becomes multilayered: women are considered wrong as partners, wrong as members of the community, and wrong as religious subjects. These layers of judgment reveal deeper forms of inequality because women's morality is monitored more strictly and symbolically punished more severely.

These findings align with broader tendencies in gender studies of Buton local literature, which indicate that women are frequently positioned as bearers of moral burden. Previous studies^[14] demonstrate that women in *kabanti ajonga indaa malusa* are more frequently mentioned than men, yet such references are associated with ideals of shame, affection, caregiving, patience, and domestic responsibility.

A similar pattern appears in KWH, although in a more conflictual form. Women are not only burdened with morality, but are also portrayed as violators of promises, deserters of religion, and followers of worldly temptation. Thus, WA represents a stronger form of gender inequality because women are constructed not merely as guardians of morality, but also as figures accused of destroying moral order when choosing different paths.

This interpretation expands previous studies on *kabanti*, which have largely emphasized ethical and educational functions. Earlier scholarship by Sahlan^[2] and Hidayat et al.^[11] highlighted the religious, moral, and educational values of *kabanti*. However, this study demonstrates that religious and social values within *kabanti* must also be critically examined because they may function simultaneously as sources of collective ethics and as instruments of control over women. In *wa hadini*, religious language is used not only to provide moral advice, but also to condemn women's choices through terms such as *kaafiri* 'infidel', *sarani* 'Christian', *seetani* 'satan', *faasiqi* 'wicked', and *bolimea agamana muumini* 'abandoning the believers' religion'.

The academic implication of this study lies in the need to develop Buton literary studies toward interdisciplinary approaches connecting philology, literary studies, gender studies, anthropology, and local Islamic studies. Thus, *kabanti* has largely been approached through frameworks of cultural preservation and character education. While such approaches remain important, they are insufficient to explain how traditional texts construct power relations. This study demonstrates that *kabanti* can serve as a significant source for understanding gender constructions in Buton society. Consequently, *kabanti* studies contribute not only to the documentation of regional literature, but also to the development of Indonesian literary theory grounded in locality and gender perspectives.

Practically, readings of WH may contribute to literary and cultural education by promoting critical literacy. Students are encouraged not only to appreciate the beauty and religious values of the text, but also to critically examine how language can produce stereotypes, subordination, and inequality. In this way, the preservation of regional literature does not merely romanticize the past, but becomes a space for ethical reflection within contemporary society. Traditional texts may continue to be

respected as cultural heritage while simultaneously being interpreted critically so that inherited values can engage in dialogue with contemporary principles of gender justice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that KWH represents gender inequality through a discourse structure positioning, men as narrators, interpreters, and judges, while women are placed as objects of discussion, blame, and moral control. Such inequality is manifested through the objectification of women, metaphors of control, unequal distributions of blame, the silencing of women's voices, the invocation of family as social witnesses, and the use of religious language to judge women's choices. The text therefore reflects not only personal emotional suffering, but also the operation of patriarchy through language, religion, family, and social norms. The relationship between the research questions and findings demonstrates that gender inequality in WH does not appear through direct statements of female inferiority, but operates discursively through narrative structures and linguistic choices. Women are portrayed as promise-breakers, deserters of the community, and deviants from religion, while their explanations and voices are excluded. This finding suggests that gender inequality in traditional texts often functions subtly and symbolically, legitimized through seemingly noble moral values. Therefore, feminist readings are necessary to uncover the ideological layers hidden beneath aesthetic and religious expressions. Theoretically, this study expands *kabanti* scholarship by positioning WH as a text that may be interpreted through feminist literary criticism and feminist discourse analysis. Methodologically, the study demonstrates that regional literary texts can be analyzed through the integration of hermeneutics, discourse analysis, and gender theory. Practically, the study contributes to literary education, cultural preservation, and the development of critical literacy grounded in

local wisdom. Future research may expand this inquiry by comparing WH with other *kabanti* texts, examining its original Wolio-language version, or investigating contemporary Buton society's reception of women's representation in the text.

Declaration by Authors

Acknowledgement: None

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: No conflicts of interest declared.

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- How to cite this article: La Ode Syukur, Marwati, La Aso, La Yani Konisi, Muhammad Ali Pawiro. *Kabanti Wa Hadini and gender inequality as depicted in La Niampe's Kabanti Oni Wolio: a feminist literary critique approach*. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2026; 13(7): 25-34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260704>
