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Emotional Vulnerability Among Men in *Kompas* Short Stories 2020 Edition: A Study of Masculinity

Lilis Febriani[1], Anas Ahmadi[2], Resdianto Permata Raharjo[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:
Lilis Febriani
24020835009@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to describe the discourse construction of male emotional vulnerability in short stories published in the 2020 edition of Kompas, which is represented as a fixed and dominant identity, as well as a dynamic social construction through the lens of Connell's masculinity studies. The study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-interpretive method. The data sources consisted of ten short stories from the 2020 edition of Kompas, selected using purposive sampling based on the criteria of male characters, the presence of emotional experiences, and the representation of emotional vulnerability in the narrative, dialogue, monologue, and characters' actions. Data were collected through a literature review by reading, taking notes, coding, and classifying the data. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions and verification. The results of the study indicated that men's emotional vulnerability is constructed through three main dimensions: social context, masculine performance, and social relationships. The social context of emotional vulnerability emerges as a response to the pandemic, social conflict, economic pressure, discrimination, illness, and isolation. Masculine performance of emotional vulnerability is negotiated through emotional control, responsibility, anger, and efforts to maintain self-esteem, so it is not always openly expressed. Meanwhile, social relationships including family, partners, close friends, and the community serve as spaces where feelings of loss, longing, sadness, sacrifice, and the need for emotional closeness are formed. The research findings indicate that masculinity in the 2020 edition of Kompas short stories is not represented as a fixed and dominant identity, but rather as a dynamic social construction that is continually negotiated through the emotional experiences of male characters. This study enriches the discourse on masculinity in Indonesian literature by positioning emotional vulnerability as an integral part of the formation of masculine identity.

Keywords: *Connell's Masculinity, Emotional Vulnerability, Kompas Short Stories*

Introduction

The global discourse on masculinity reveals a shift in perspectives regarding male identity. Previous essentialist views positioned masculinity as an identity naturally inherent in men. Subsequent developments in social theory have affirmed that masculinity is a social construct shaped through historical, cultural, political, and economic processes that continually evolve in response to societal dynamics (González-Calvo et al., 2025). This perspective suggests that masculinity is not a single identity applicable to all men, but rather a set of social practices that shape the ways men think, behave, and present themselves in social life (Beckford, 2022).

One influential concept in the study of contemporary masculinity is the concept of hegemonic masculinity proposed by Connell. This concept describes a form of masculinity that enjoys the strongest social legitimacy and is held up as the ideal standard for men. Rationality, courage, independence, self-control, and the ability to fulfill social roles are often associated with this model of masculinity (Connell, 2005). These standards shape social expectations that demand men to always appear strong and capable of controlling their emotions. This results in a tension between social demands and the emotional experiences men face in their daily lives.

Sadness, fear, anxiety, loss, loneliness, and helplessness are an inevitable part of the human experience (Yunanti et al.., 2026). Certain emotional expressions are often viewed as inconsistent with the ideal masculine image, leading men to hide or suppress their emotional experiences. This situation gives rise to the masculinity paradox a situation in which men are expected to always appear resilient, yet simultaneously continue to face complex emotional experiences (Ahmadi, 2022). This study focuses on men's emotional vulnerability, understood as a psychological condition shaped by the interaction between personal experiences and social demands that form masculine identity.

Emotional vulnerability in this study is understood through three main forms. First, emotional vulnerability in a social context that arises due to economic pressures, job loss, changes in social conditions, or limited access to resources. Second, emotional vulnerability in masculine performance, which arises when men face demands to meet ideal standards of masculinity, leading to feelings of shame, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, or fear of being perceived as failing to fulfill masculine roles (Connell, 2005). Third, emotional vulnerability in social relationships relates to experiences of loss, family conflict, alienation, loneliness, and difficulties in forming emotional closeness with others (Fyfe et al., 2021). Adherence to traditional masculinity norms encourages men to restrict their emotional expression, so that various forms of emotional vulnerability often do not have the space to be expressed openly (Myrttinen et al., 2025).

The dominance of masculinity standards that idealize men as strong, rational, and emotionally in control often leads to men's emotional experiences being marginalized in social life. As a result, emotional vulnerability is often viewed as a deviation from the ideal masculine image, even though such experiences are an integral part of men's lives. This situation highlights the importance of research that can uncover how emotional vulnerability is represented and interpreted in literary works as part of the construction of masculine identity.

Men's emotional vulnerability is given significant representation in literary works because literature is able to convey subjective experiences that are often invisible in everyday life. Through characters, conflicts, and plotlines, literary works depict the experiences of loss, failure, loneliness, family conflicts, and trauma experienced by men (Raharjo et al., 2022). One literary medium that consistently addresses human issues in Indonesia is the *Kompas* short story section, which is regarded as a barometer of Indonesian literature. The 2020 edition was chosen because it was published during the early phase of the *COVID-19* pandemic, which brought about major changes to the social, economic, and psychological lives of the public. This situation had the potential to influence how authors represented the emotional experiences of male characters, making this period a relevant context for examining the construction of the discourse on emotional vulnerability in literary works.

Studies of the short stories in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* have been conducted using various approaches. Pratama et al., (2023), employed a sociological approach to literature to uncover social criticism in *the Kompas 2020 Macan Selected Short Story Anthology* and

identified various social issues represented in the stories. Tsalisa et al.., (2024) examined symbols in *Antologi Cerpen Pilihan Kompas 2020 Macan the* using Northrop Frye's semiotic theory and demonstrated the presence of symbols such as *images*, archetypes, and monads that represent social, cultural, and religious values. Agustina et al.., (2024) examined the characters in *the* 2020 Kompas Selected Short Story Collection *Macan* through a psychological approach and identified various traits, such as courage, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and patience.

These various studies indicate that analyses of the 2020 *Kompas* Short Stories still focus on aspects of social criticism, symbolism, and character development. Consequently, the various social, cultural, and psychological issues addressed in the short stories have not yet placed men's emotional experiences at the center of analysis. Furthermore, the discursive construction of men's emotional vulnerability has not yet been examined through Connell's perspective on masculinity, which views vulnerability as part of the dynamics of power relations and the formation of masculine identity. This gap highlights the need for research that uncovers how men's emotional vulnerability is constructed in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories through the dimensions of social context, masculine performance, and social relationships.

Based on this gap, this study aims to describe the construction of the discourse on male emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories through the lens of Connell's masculinity studies. The research focuses on identifying the forms of emotional vulnerability represented through male characters. The results of this study are expected to enrich the study of masculinity in Indonesian literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of men's emotional experiences.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the descriptive-interpretive method (Creswell. 2023). This method interprets a phenomenon by constructing verbal descriptions based on the natural context, thereby presenting the informants' perspectives in depth. This approach is used to both describe and interpret the discursive construction of male emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories through Connell's theory of masculinity.

The primary data source for this study consists of short stories published in *Kompas* in 2020. Accordingly, not all short stories will be analyzed; a sample will be drawn from that period. The research sample was determined using *purposive* sampling, specifically short stories that met the following criteria: (1) male protagonists; (2) depictions of experiences, expressions, or emotional conflicts; and (3) narratives that construct male emotional vulnerability through storytelling, dialogue, monologues, or the characters' actions. Based on these criteria, 10 relevant short stories were selected as the research sample, as follows:

Table 1. Data Sources

No.	Year	Month	Title	Author
1	2020	December	*Gus*	Komang Adyana
2			*Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama*	Maya Sandhita
3			*Vigili*	Windhu Wee
4			*Penyesalan*	Daisy Rahmi
5		October	*Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua*	Damhuri Muhammad
6			*Rumah untuk Istriku*	Kanya Ahayu Ning Yatika
7		September	*Hari Itu, Laut Sedang Pasang*	Rizky Alvian
8			*Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru*	Akasawakya
9		August	*Lelaki Dua Babak*	Martin Aleida
10		June	*Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati*	Radja Sinaga

The data collection method employed a literature review approach (Suwartono, 2023). The data collection phase began with an intensive reading of all the short stories included in the research sample to identify text segments related to the construction of the discourse on male emotional vulnerability. Next, relevant data including words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, monologues, and narratives were recorded and classified according to the research focus. Each data point was then coded to facilitate the process of identifying, grouping, and analyzing the discourse constructions of male emotional vulnerability represented in the short stories.

The data analysis technique used in this study employed the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2020), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, grouped, and simplified data in the form of narratives, dialogues, monologues, and text excerpts from the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories that represent the construction of discourse on male emotional vulnerability. The data were then categorized based on the forms of discourse constructions that appeared in the text. The data presentation stage involved organizing the results of the reduction into systematic categories to facilitate the identification of patterns, themes, and trends in the discourse constructions of male emotional vulnerability. Next, the data were interpreted using Connell's theory of masculinity to explain how men's emotional vulnerability is constructed in the short stories. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verification. Conclusions were formulated based on the patterns and themes identified during the analysis process and were then verified through a re-examination of the data and interpretation results to ensure consistency between the research findings, the data, and the theoretical framework used.

Results

The results of this study indicate that the discourse construction of male emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories is built through the representation of various social experiences that place male characters in vulnerable positions. Based on the results of the analysis, this discourse construction is represented through three main dimensions; social context, masculine performance, and social relationships as follows:

A. Emotional Vulnerability in the Social Context

The research findings indicate that men's emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories reflects various social experiences stemming from the *COVID-19* pandemic, social conflict, economic pressure, discrimination, illness, alienation, loneliness in old age, and changes in living conditions beyond the characters' control. These various experiences give rise to emotional responses such as fear, anxiety, sadness, loss, alienation, and helplessness. This discursive construction was found in ten short stories that depict diverse social contexts as triggers for male emotional vulnerability, as follows:

1. *Gus* Karya by Komang Adyana

> *"Gus melakukan itu. Sepupunya baru saja berkabar bahwa sudah seminggu ini Gus tidak menyentuh makanan apa pun. Orang rumah mulai khawatir. Dengan usia yang sudah hampir 55 tahun, apalagi di tengah pandemi, pasti riskan sekali untuk kesehatannya."*

This quote demonstrates that the discourse surrounding male emotional vulnerability is constructed within the social context of the *COVID-19* pandemic, which amplifies the character's vulnerable position. Gus's age now 55 places him in a group with higher health risks, while his decision to continue his hunger strike further increases the threat to his well-being. The inability of his family and those around him to persuade Gus to end his

action reveals the character's alienation from the social relationships that should serve as a source of support. This situation constructs emotional vulnerability not as a personal weakness, but as an experience born of social pressures beyond the character's control. The pandemic has restricted men's social mobility while simultaneously increasing the emotional burden they naturally bear.

2. *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama* by Maya Sandhita

Table 2. Excerpts from the short story *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama*

Title	Excerpt	Social Context Criteria
Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama	"Sepanjang perjalanan kutoleh sekali dua ke belakang. Takut ada tombak atau anak panah yang melayang seperti perang suku yang terjadi dua bulan lalu."	Inter-tribal social conflict creates a sense of fear that constantly haunts the protagonist, affecting his emotional state.
	"Aku tak sadar telah kecolongan kemerdekaan. Aku diajari tulis baca agar bisa menjadi kaki tangan pemilik modal."	The protagonist realizes he has become a tool for corporate exploitation. This realization triggers an inner conflict stemming from social and economic pressures.
	"Sebab, di tanah Papua tak ada lagi tanah mama. Yang ada hanya tambang dan pabrik-pabrik para penguasa.... Air mata mengalir mencoba meredakan sakit yang entah kapan akan berakhir."	The loss of customary land due to exploitation causes deep sorrow that represents emotional vulnerability within a social and political context.

The short story *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama* constructs the male protagonist through his experiences living amid social conflict, the exploitation of natural resources, and the seizure of indigenous communities' living spaces. The fear that constantly haunts the protagonist due to inter-tribal conflict demonstrates that an insecure social situation creates an emotional state filled with anxiety and uncertainty. This vulnerability is further intensified when the protagonist realizes that the education he received has actually made him part of the corporate system exploiting his homeland. This realization triggers an internal conflict because the protagonist finds himself in a position that contradicts the interests of his own community. The loss of ancestral lands, which have been transformed into mining and industrial zones , brings about a profound sense of loss. The protagonist's tears represent an emotional response to the severing of ties with his living space, cultural identity, and the sources of life for the indigenous community. Based on this, the short story constructs the protagonist's emotional vulnerability as a consequence of social, economic, and political power relations that limit his ability to preserve his identity and living space.

3. *Vigili* by Windhu Wee

Table 3. Excerpts from the short story *Vigili*

Title	Excerpt	Criteria Social Context
Vigili	"Diriku, tolong jelaskan padaku, mengapa aku harus merelakan malam ini menjadi pesakitan di dalam tahanan?"	Detention without clarity causes Old Frank to experience confusion and inner suffering. Emotional vulnerability arises as a result of the authorities' treatment of him.
	"Frank tua merasa takut dan semakin takut."	The situation of detention and the unequal power dynamic give rise to a steadily increasing sense of fear. Emotional vulnerability is triggered by

		social and institutional pressures.
	"Pak Tua, kulitmu legam dan telapak tanganmu kasar.... Apakah hanya karena miskin, kamu tega menggendam untuk mengambil paksa milik orang lain?"	Old Frank faces stereotypes and discrimination based on his physical appearance and social status. His emotional vulnerability stems from the stigma attached to him.

The short story *Vigili* recounts the experience of the character Frank Tua, who faces detention without any clarity. This situation causes confusion and inner anguish because the character does not understand why he is being treated as a prisoner. This situation places Frank Tua in a position where he has lost control over himself, while his relationship with the authorities remains unequal. The pressure stemming from the legal system creates an emotional experience filled with uncertainty. His mounting fear demonstrates that the detention not only restricts the character's physical freedom but also affects his psychological state, leaving him feeling powerless in the face of his situation.

Frank Tua's emotional vulnerability is further exacerbated by the stereotypes attached to him. His dark complexion, rough palms, and poverty are used as grounds to suspect and judge him as a criminal. This stigma demonstrates that the character's social identity is the reason for discriminatory treatment that disregards the principle of justice. Consequently, his emotional vulnerability is shaped not only by his experience of incarceration but also by social constructs that link poverty and physical appearance to criminality. This short story portrays men's emotional vulnerability as a consequence of unequal power dynamics and ongoing discriminatory practices in social life.

4. *Penyesalan* by Daisy Rahmi

> *"Tak ada yang salah dengan diriku. Aku mandiri, penghasilanku lebih dari cukup. Penampilanku pun tak mengecewakan."*

The quote above shows that the character defines herself based on standards considered valuable in social life, such as independence, financial stability, and physical appearance. This self-assessment reflects the existence of social expectations that serve as benchmarks for the success of adult men. When the character continues to face rejection despite feeling she has met these various standards, she experiences disappointment and self-doubt. This situation demonstrates that the character's emotional vulnerability stems from the mismatch between internalized social expectations and the reality he faces, leading to emotional turmoil when the anticipated recognition is not achieved.

5. *Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua* by Damhuri Muhammad

> *"Sejak saat itulah, suaminya mulai sering beralasan ditugaskan ke luar kota. "*

Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua's short story portrays a man through the behavior of a character who chooses to distance himself from his family on the pretext of frequently being assigned to work out of town. This decision indicates that the character is unable to confront the problems he faces openly, so he chooses to avoid situations that cause emotional stress. This avoidance reflects an inner conflict that is not resolved through communication, but rather through efforts to create distance from his family environment. Masculinity is constructed as a response to social pressures that encourage men to suppress and hide the problems they face rather than express them directly.

6. *Rumah untuk Istriku* by Kanya Ahayu Ning Yatika

> *"Tiada yang golongan darahnya sama.... Keadaanmu di dalam semakin kritis dan tak keruan."*

This quote illustrates that the character's emotional vulnerability is built through a crisis situation in which his wife is in critical condition and in need of blood that is difficult to obtain. The unavailability of a donor with the matching blood type places the character in a state of anxiety, uncertainty, and helplessness, as his wife's safety depends on assistance he cannot secure on his own. This situation reveals that social pressure arises not only from his responsibilities as the head of the household but also from the limitations of the system and the environment in providing support during a crisis.

7. *Hari Itu, Laut Sedang Pasang* by Rizky Alvian

"Sekolah pelayaran militer adalah mimpi yang dibunuh nasib."

This quote illustrates that the character's emotional vulnerability stems from socioeconomic limitations that thwarted his aspiration to attend a military maritime academy. The phrase "*mimpi yang dibunuh nasib*" represents the experience of losing hope due to life circumstances that denied the character the opportunity to realize his aspirations. This failure not only brings disappointment and frustration but also shows that the character's future is constrained by social realities beyond his control.

8. Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru by Akasawakya

Table 4. Excerpts from the short story *Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru*

Title	Excerpt	Social Context Criteria
Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru	"Dalam pada itu, dimensia semakin parah menggerogoti otak Surti.... Membuat aku benar-benar repot sementara lututku tambah kerap ngilu."	The protagonist faces social pressure as an elderly man who must care for the residents of a nursing home all by himself. The burden of caregiving creates both emotional and physical vulnerability.
	"Mereka menuduhku menjadi pelanjut disiplin monster Orde Baru. "	The protagonist experiences social stigma and rejection from the community even though he is merely following the nursing home's rules. This social pressure highlights the position of men who continue to be the target of prejudice.
	"'ET' yang terpampang di pojok kartu itu berubah menjadi badai... "	His identity as a former political prisoner continues to be a source of discrimination. His past has limited his freedom, even as he prepares to return to Buru.

This short story depicts an elderly man who must bear the burden of caring for the residents of a nursing home on his own amid his own declining physical condition, making this responsibility a source of both exhaustion and emotional stress. His vulnerability is further exacerbated by societal stigma and rejection, as people accuse him of perpetuating the repressive practices of the New Order, even though he was merely following the rules at his workplace. Furthermore, his identity as a former political prisoner continues to be a source of discrimination that restricts his freedom, even as he attempts to return to Buru Island. This series of experiences demonstrates that the man's emotional vulnerability is constructed as a result of social burdens, societal prejudice, and discrimination that remain inescapably tied to his identity, thereby affecting his life and his relationships with his social environment.

9. *Lelaki Dua Babak* by Martin Aleida

"Dua puluh tahun yang lalu, saat itu aku masih muda.... Tugasku waktu itu hanya menjemput kawanku yang disandera di dalam kampus "

This quote suggests that the character's past experiences in social conflicts are part of the life context that shapes his emotional experiences. Memories of his involvement in a hostage rescue operation reveal that the character once found himself in a situation fraught with risk and violence. That experience is not only part of his life journey but also remains vivid in his memory as he enters old age. The character's emotional vulnerability is shaped by experiences of social conflict that leave an emotional imprint and influence how he interprets the events he has experienced.

10. *Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati* by Radja Sinaga

Table 5. Excerpts from the short story *Buru Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati*

Title	Excerpt	Social Context Criteria
Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati	"Aku bersembunyi di sebuah tempat paling sunyi.... Pilihan ini semata demi menyelamatkan manusia dari kesunyian yang menyayat hati."	The character isolates himself because he realizes his body carries a disease. Social isolation is practiced as a form of responsibility toward the safety of others, thereby giving rise to emotional vulnerability in the form of loneliness.
	"Aku memang meminta kepada Tuhan agar bangsaku dilahirkan dalam keadaan buruk rupa "	The character faces stigma regarding his identity and that of his nation. His awareness of this negative image reflects the social pressures that shape his emotional experience.

The short story above is built around the experience of social isolation and the stigma attached to the male protagonist. The protagonist's decision to isolate himself shows that he chooses to distance himself from social life in order to protect others from the disease he suffers from. This choice brings about an experience of loneliness that does not stem solely from personal desire, but rather as a consequence of the social conditions he faces. The protagonist's emotional vulnerability is further intensified by his awareness of the stigma attached to his personal identity and his nationality. His acceptance of this negative image shows that social pressure not only affects the protagonist's relationship with his environment but also shapes the way he views himself.

Based on these overall findings, the social context in the short stories published in the 2020 edition of *Kompas* serves as the primary space that constructs men's emotional vulnerability. The COVID-19 pandemic, social conflict, economic inequality, discrimination, illness, aging, and even social isolation do not merely serve as the backdrop for events but also shape the characters' affective experiences through feelings of fear, anxiety, loss, loneliness, frustration, and helplessness. These conditions demonstrate that emotional vulnerability does not arise as a result of individual weakness but is produced by social structures that limit the characters' choices, actions, and positions in daily life. From Connell's perspective on masculinity, these experiences reveal that masculine identity is constantly negotiated within power relations that unfold across various social spheres.

B. Emotional Vulnerability in Masculine Performance

The research findings indicate that the discursive construction of male emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition of *Kompas* short stories is shaped by masculine performance as a response to these various pressures. Masculine performance is represented through attitudes such as maintaining self-respect, controlling emotions, shouldering responsibility, making independent decisions, hiding weaknesses, and demonstrating resilience in the face of difficult situations. These various forms of performance demonstrate that emotional vulnerability is not always expressed openly

but is often masked through actions that reflect courage, resilience, and self-control. The following data illustrates the presence of masculine performance:

1. *Gus* Karya Komang Adyana

> *"Dia ingat beberapa tahun lalu ketika Gus melakukan aksi mogok makan yang sama, dia hanya bilang: baginya hidup dan mati sudah tidak ada batasnya. Dia tidak akan mundur. Tak sedikit pun."*

This quote shows that Gus's masculine performance is built through his steadfast determination to stick to his decision to go on a hunger strike, even though this action endangers his own safety. His statement that there is no longer a boundary between life and death, along with his refusal to back down, represents his effort to maintain his self-image as a man of principle who does not give up easily. This situation is not expressed through complaints or pleas for help, but rather through self-control and consistency in adhering to the choices he believes in. This performance constructs masculinity as an identity embodied through steadfastness, the courage to face risks, and a refusal to show weakness in front of others.

2. *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama* by Maya Sandhita

> *"Aku geram! Aku marah! Aku tidak terlahir sebagai budak sahaya!"*

This quote demonstrates that the character's masculine performance is represented through a rejection of a position deemed degrading to his dignity. The emphatic expression of anger reflects the character's effort to defend his self-respect and assert his identity as an individual unwilling to be treated as submissive or shackled. This emotional response shows that anger serves as a form of expression the character uses to cope with the pressure she faces.

3. *Vigili* by Windhu Wee

> *"Frank tua merasa sebelum-sebelumnya penjelasan yang diberinya tidak pernah digubris. Frank tua tetap diam."*

This quote shows that Frank's masculine performance is represented through his restraint and choice to remain silent, even though the explanations he provided continue to be ignored. His decision not to fight back or protest the treatment he receives demonstrates the character's effort to control his emotional expression amid a stressful situation. This attitude shows that emotional vulnerability is not expressed openly but is concealed through self-control as a way of maintaining dignity in the presence of those with greater power.

4. *Penyesalan by* Karya Daisy Rahmi

> *"Penolakannya melukai harga diriku."*

This quote shows that the rejection experienced by the protagonist not only causes disappointment but also wounds his self-esteem as a man. Self-esteem is an important part of masculine performance, which has long been built through confidence in one's abilities and worth. When those expectations are not met, the protagonist experiences an emotional upheaval that affects how he views himself.

5. *Rumah untuk Istriku* by Kanya Ahayu Ning Yatika

> *"Aku akan tetap membangun rumah impianmu di tanah ini. Namun, bukan sekarang."*

This quote shows that the character's masculinity is represented through his commitment to fulfilling his promise to build a house for his wife despite facing various limitations. This statement reflects the character's responsibility and determination in fulfilling his role as a husband. The delay is not interpreted as a form of giving up, but rather as an effort to maintain his commitment to the goal he wishes to achieve.

6. *Hari Itu, Laut Sedang Pasang* by Rizky Alvian

> *"Bhari membanting pintu.... Ardi yang sedang berbaring di ruang tamu diseretnya ke tembok."*

This quote shows that Bhari's masculine performance is represented through an outburst of anger expressed physically. His actions slamming the door and dragging his younger brother reflect the character's failure to manage the emotional pressure he has long suppressed due to the various problems he faces. Anger becomes a form of expression used to demonstrate dominance and to vent the burden he feels.

7. *Lelaki Dua Babak* by Martin Aleida

> *"'Aku tersulut emosi, kutarik peluru asli. Kuarahkan moncong senjataku ke mereka, dan peluru itu lepas saja.'"*

This quote shows that the character's masculine performance is represented through actions driven by an outburst of emotion in a conflict situation. The decision to draw a live round and aim the weapon at the other party demonstrates that the use of force is the character's way of responding to the pressure he faces. These actions illustrate how emotions are manifested through behavior that affirms both courage and control over the situation.

Based on the portrayal of masculinity in the 2020 edition of *Kompas's* short story collection, this is represented through seven short stories: *Gus*, *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama*, *Vigili*, *Penyesalan*, *Rumah untuk Istriku*, *Hari Itu, Laut Sedang Pasang*, and *Lelaki Dua Babak*.. These seven short stories demonstrate that emotional control, maintaining self-respect, responsibility, steadfastness, silence, and anger are masculine practices used by male characters to respond to social pressures and personal conflicts. In contrast *Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua*, *Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru*, and *Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati* do not present masculine performance as the dominant category but rather highlight emotional vulnerability within the characters' social relationships and life contexts. These findings confirm that emotional vulnerability is not always expressed openly but is negotiated through various masculine practices aimed at maintaining the legitimacy of male identity.

C. Emotional Vulnerability in Social Relationships

Emotional vulnerability in social relationships refers to affective experiences such as loss, longing, loneliness, alienation, and the need for emotional closeness with others. Connell (2005) explains that emotional relationships, or *cathexis,* are one of the primary structures in the formation of masculinity. Men's lives are shaped not only by power dynamics and social demands but also by the affective relationships they share with their families, partners, friends, and social circles. The following data illustrates emotional vulnerability in social relationships:

1. *Gus* Karya Komang Adyana

> *"Gus bersedia makan makanan yang dibawakannya. Sebungkus nasi berlauk babi dengan lawar nangka dimakannya sambil menyeka air mata."*

This quote illustrates that social relationships serve as a space where the character's emotional vulnerability emerges. Gus's willingness to accept food brought by those closest to him accompanied by tears shows that the attention and care from others can soften the hard stance he has long maintained. Even while choosing to go on a hunger strike, the character still has an emotional need for support and affection from those around him.

2. *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama* by Maya Sandhita

Table 2.2. Excerpts from the short story *Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama*

Title	Excerpt	Social Relationship Criteria
Ada Jenggala Mengakar di Purnama	"Jika bukan demi orang tuaku yang kini sakit dan sedang bertaruh nyawa, tak kuiyakan tawaran mereka."	The protagonist's relationship with his parents is the main factor influencing his decisions. His emotional vulnerability stems from his sense of responsibility toward his family.

	"Aku tak ingin perawatan isolasi virus terhenti begitu saja.....mereka berjanji akan tanggung semua biaya."	Family ties lead the protagonist to sacrifice his ideals for the sake of his parents' safety.
	"Hidup tak bisa hanya dengan berburu saja. Benar kan, Mama, Bapa?"	The influence of family relationships marks the beginning of a change in the protagonist's life, eventually leading them to become entangled in the company's interests.

In this short story, the male protagonist's emotional vulnerability is established through his relationship with his family, particularly his parents. His decision to accept the company's offer is driven by his desire to save his ailing parents, so his responsibility toward his family takes precedence over upholding his personal ideals. This relationship further highlights the character's emotional vulnerability when he is willing to sacrifice the values he holds dear for the sake of his parents' continued medical treatment. Furthermore, his family's advice regarding a change in lifestyle marks the beginning of the character's involvement in a system that ultimately harms his own community. This series of relationships demonstrates that men's emotional vulnerability is constructed through family bonds that influence the character's choices, sacrifices, and inner conflicts.

3. *Vigili* by Windhu Wee

"*Memikirkan bahwa istri dan anak-anaknya saat ini sedikit lebih nyaman dibanding dirinya, Frank tua menjadi tenang."*

This quote shows that his relationship with his wife and children is a source of emotional peace for Frank Tua amid his imprisonment. Despite being under immense pressure, the character finds peace when he imagines his family is in a better situation. This family bond demonstrates that concern for the safety of his loved ones takes precedence over his own suffering.

4. *Penyesalan* by Daisy Rahmi

"Aku sangat berduka dan kehilangan, tapi di balik itu tebersit rasa lega karena sahabatku tak perlu menderita lagi."

This quote demonstrates that the friendship shapes the character's complex emotional experience. The loss of a best friend brings deep sadness, but at the same time, there is a sense of relief that her best friend is no longer suffering. These conflicting feelings reveal the strength of the emotional bond between the two.

5. *Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua* by Damhuri Muhammad

Table 6. Excerpts from the short story *Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua*

Title	Quote	Criteria Social Relationships
Alena: Seorang Lelaki dan Bangku Tua	"Pertanyaan itu pula yang sebelumnya pernah dilontarkan si wanita dan suaminya diam saja."	This silence indicates a breakdown in communication within the marital relationship. The character is unable to express the conflict she is experiencing, causing the family bond to grow increasingly strained.
	"Ia masih sering datang ke rumah kalian, berharap kau dan ibumu tiba-tiba pulang lalu mau diajak memperbaiki semuanya."	The character continues to try to maintain a relationship with his wife and child even though they have separated. This hope reveals an emotional vulnerability rooted in the loss of his family.

This short story portrays a man through his fractured marital relationship and strained relationship with his child. The protagonist's silence when faced with his wife's questions reveals a breakdown in communication that prevents the family conflict from ever being resolved. The estrangement in these relationships further intensifies the character's emotional vulnerability as he continues to hope that his wife and child will return and be

willing to repair their broken bond. His persistent hope reveals that the loss of his family remains a deeply ingrained emotional experience in his life.

6. *Rumah untuk Istriku* by Kanya Ahayu Ning Yatika

> *"Kelak aku akan menemanimu di sini bersama Hanum. Di tanah yang kita beli dengan keringat kita sendiri."*

This quote shows that the relationship with his wife forms the foundation of the character's commitment and hopes for his family's future. The desire to build a home together on land earned through their own hard work demonstrates that the husband-wife relationship is built upon shared aspirations they wish to realize. These hopes also reflect the depth of the character's emotional attachment to his family.

7. Hari Itu, Laut Sedang Pasang by Rizky Alvian

> "*Semenjak ada Ibu di rumah, Bhari enggan untuk pulang."*

This quote indicates that the relationship between Bhari and his mother underwent a change after she returned home. Bhari's reluctance to return home reveals an emotional distance stemming from unresolved past experiences. The family relationship which should be a source of security instead brings discomfort and inner conflict to the character of Bhari, as depicted through family dynamics marked by emotional wounds and the difficulty of rebuilding emotional closeness.

8. Tak Ada Jalan Balik ke Buru by Akasawakya

> "*Yang selalu ditawarkan Dik adalah kesetiakawanan, bukan permusuhan. "*

This quote shows that the character's social relationships are built on the values of solidarity and concern for others. An attitude that prioritizes solidarity over hostility demonstrates the character's efforts to maintain good relationships with those around him, even though he often faces stigma and unfair treatment. These relationships show that men's emotional vulnerability is not always expressed through conflict, but also through efforts to uphold human values in the face of the social pressures they experience.

9. Lelaki Dua Babak by Martin Aleida

> *"Barangkali, hanya di akhir pekan kecemasan itu sedikit mereda tersebab anak-anak dan cucu-cucunya berkunjung."*

This quote shows that relationships with children and grandchildren serve as a source of emotional peace for the protagonist in her old age. The anxiety she has long felt subsides when her family comes to visit, so their presence provides a form of emotional support that alleviates her loneliness. These family relationships demonstrate that closeness to loved ones plays a vital role in restoring the character's sense of security and comfort. Family bonds serve as a source of emotional strength amid the loneliness experienced in old age.

10. Jalan Sunyi Menuju Mati by Radja Sinaga

> *"Aku terus berdoa semoga Tuhan menyelamatkanku dan mempertemukan kembali dengan anakku."*

This quote shows that the relationship between the character and her child serves as a source of hope amid her experience of isolation. Her prayer to be reunited with her child reveals a deep longing and a desire to maintain family bonds despite being separated by circumstances. This relationship reveals that the character's emotional vulnerability is shaped by a sense of loss and separation from the person they love. The family bond, which is maintained, serves as a source of hope and meaning in life amidst a situation full of limitations.

Based on these overall findings, social relationships in the short stories published in the 2020 edition of *Kompas* serve as the primary arena for constructing men's emotional vulnerability through their relationships with family, partners, close friends, and the community. Various affective experiences such as love, sacrifice, loss, longing, loneliness,

hope, and the need for emotional closeness demonstrate that masculine identity is not constructed individually but rather through attachment to others. From Connell's (2005) perspective, the dimension of *cathexis* emphasizes that emotional relationships are an integral part of the formation of masculinity because affective experiences are always intertwined with social structures and power relations. Research findings show that men's emotional vulnerability emerges when social relationships face threats, loss, separation, or conflict, but also when those relationships serve as sources of support, comfort, and hope.

Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis, men's emotional vulnerability in the 2020 edition *of Kompas* short stories is constructed through three main dimensions: social context, masculine performance, and social relationships. These three dimensions are intertwined in shaping the characters' emotional experiences, thereby representing masculinity as a dynamic social construct rather than a fixed identity. This finding expands upon the study by Pratama et al.., (2023), which views *Kompas* short stories as representations of social criticism. This study demonstrates that social issues are not merely the objects of criticism but also construct men's emotional vulnerability through social pressures, demands of masculinity, and affective relationships. This perspective aligns with Connell (2005) , who views masculinity as a social practice shaped through power relations, production, and *cathexis*.

Emotional vulnerability in masculine performance suggests that men's emotional experiences are not always expressed openly, but are negotiated through emotional regulation, responsibility, anger, and efforts to maintain self-esteem. These findings expand upon the perspective of Lunabba (2023) that vulnerability is part of masculinity by demonstrating that masculine practices serve as a means for individuals to maintain the legitimacy of their identity. This reinforces the notion that masculinity is continuously produced and negotiated across various social situations.

Emotional vulnerability in social relationships reveals that family, partners, close friends, and the community serve as the primary arenas for the formation of men's emotional identities. Experiences of loss, longing, sacrifice, and loneliness demonstrate that affective relationships play a crucial role in shaping masculine experiences. These findings reinforce the research by Sadaf and Kayany (2025), which shows that contemporary representations of masculinity no longer emphasize only strength and dominance but also emotional experiences. This study complements that research by demonstrating that emotional vulnerability is constructed through the interplay between social context, masculine performance, and social relationships as an integrated construct of masculinity.

Conclusion

This study shows that male emotional vulnerability in short stories published in the 2020 edition of *Kompas* is a social construct shaped by power relations, affective experiences, and the dynamics of social life. Based on Connell's perspective on masculinity, the emotional experiences of male characters are not positioned as deviations from masculine identity, but rather as part of a dynamic process of negotiating masculinity. These representations are manifested through three main dimensions: social context, masculine performance, and social relationships. The social context reveals that economic pressures, the COVID-19 pandemic, social conflicts, discrimination, illness, and alienation shape experiences of fear, anxiety, loss, loneliness, and helplessness. Masculine

performance is evident through the various strategies employed by male characters to control their emotions, uphold their responsibilities, maintain their self-respect, and demonstrate resilience in an effort to preserve the legitimacy of masculinity. Meanwhile, social relationships serve as a space for the formation of affective experiences such as love, longing, loss, sacrifice, and the need for emotional closeness. These findings confirm that masculinity in the 2020 edition of *Kompas*'s short story section is represented as a dynamic, contextual, and constantly negotiated identity, such that emotional vulnerability functions as a mechanism that reveals the processes of formation, maintenance, and transformation of masculine identity. Thus, this study enriches the study of masculinity in Indonesian literature by positioning emotional vulnerability as an analytical category to explain the representation of masculinity in contemporary literature.

This study has limitations because it focuses only on short stories from the 2020 edition of *Kompas* and employs Connell's perspective on masculinity; consequently, the findings are not intended to be generalized to all Indonesian literary works or all representations of masculinity. Therefore, future research is encouraged to expand the data corpus by including short stories from a longer time period or other literary media, as well as to combine the masculinity perspective with other approaches such as affect theory, literary psychology, or the study of emotions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of male emotional vulnerability in Indonesian literature.

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