



Postmodern feminist pedagogy in history education at a public senior high school in Palembang

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Abstract. History education has traditionally been dominated by masculine narratives and has paid limited attention to contemporary social issues. In response to this imbalance, this study aims to explore the implementation of a postmodern feminist approach in the teaching of history. The research employed a case study method with purposive sampling, selecting a Grade 10 history teacher at SMA Negeri 20 Palembang, due to her direct involvement in applying postmodern feminist pedagogy. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of instructional documents, while data analysis was conducted using pattern matching and explanation-building techniques. The findings indicate that the postmodern feminist approach, applied by the history teacher through the topic of the Majapahit Kingdom, successfully challenges the androcentric orientation of historical content. The learning process is also directed toward contemporary social issues, particularly the subordination of women's roles as mothers.

Through a pop-up book project, students depicted not only male figures from the Majapahit Kingdom but also the female ruler Tribhuanattunggadewi. The postmodern feminist approach opens space for the pluralisation of women's experiences in historical narratives and fosters a more horizontal and egalitarian relationship between teacher and students.

Introduction

History education has traditionally been oriented toward politics and prominent historical figures (Kurniawan et al., 2019) and relies on textbooks that offer limited representation of women (Azifambayunasti et al., 2023). However, history education should aim to foster understanding of the present and various contemporary social issues (Supriatna, 2012), including those related to women. One relevant issue is the practice of subordinating women in their traditional roles as mothers. As many as 36% of housewives experience feelings of low self-esteem due to the negative stigma society attaches to their status (Soomro et al., 2013). This stigma aligns with Allen's (1983) view that motherhood is dangerous to women because it is perceived as limiting (Takševa, 2018). However, education is not only important to fulfil women's rights in the public sphere but also plays a crucial role within the family. In terms of child-rearing, women have a vital role in providing breast milk that contains bioactive components essential for antibodies (Reniker et al., 2023) and in strengthening the emotional bond between mother and child (Modak et al., 2023).

To address this imbalance, a new approach is needed, one capable of challenging mainstream historical narratives and creating space for women's experiences that have long been neglected. The postmodern feminist approach emerges as an effort to deconstruct these hegemonic historical narratives. Deconstruction is a concept introduced by [Derrida \(1974\)](#) that refers to the process of rereading, or uncovering new meanings within a text or a line of thought. This idea aligns with postmodern thought, which is sceptical of grand narratives ([Lyotard, 1984](#)). Postmodernism rejects the notion that knowledge or philosophy can be universal and absolutely true ([Lubis, 2016; Sallis, 1987](#)).

Feminism itself emerged in the West at the end of the 18th century as a movement against injustice toward women and to advocate for gender equality ([Aizid, 2024; Kumbara, 2023](#)). Western feminism has often overlooked differences in historical, cultural, racial, and class contexts in postcolonial countries ([Jackson & Jones, 2009; Spivak, 1988](#)). Western feminism tends to reject motherhood, as [Allen \(1983\)](#) argues that "motherhood is dangerous to women," and [de Beauvoir \(2016\)](#) considers pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding as constraints on women because they limit individual freedom and personal development. This perspective has marginalised women's roles within the family (domestic sphere). Yet, in Indonesian history, women's roles in the domestic sphere have made significant contributions. For example, Ibu Ruswo, who led the communal kitchen to prepare food for guerrilla fighters during the physical revolution in Yogyakarta ([Kurniawanti & Kumalasari, 2016](#)).

Postmodern feminism seeks to reinterpret feminism in a way that is more appropriate for postcolonial countries such as Indonesia. This approach opens space for diverse meanings and marginalised perspectives ([Barry, 2010](#)). Postmodern feminism positions women equally in both public and domestic spheres. It provides women with the opportunity to reflect on feminism according to their own experiences and life choices ([Arivia, 2003; Tong, 2010](#)). This approach offers a more inclusive and accurate representation of history, encompassing the various roles of women throughout time ([Crocco, 2018](#)). Through the strategy of deconstruction ([Derrida, 1974](#)), postmodern feminism seeks to dismantle the dominance of feminist narratives that primarily emphasise women's participation in careers, while often overlooking traditional roles of women as mothers.

The postmodern feminist approach is also closely linked to feminist pedagogy, which is a branch of critical pedagogy that aims to foster social justice and empower students ([Dwikamayudha et al., 2024](#)). This approach emphasises the importance of women's experiences, voices, and perspectives in the learning process ([Qibtiyah 2016; Hoffmann & Stake 1998](#)). An important aspect of this approach is the management of classroom communication to foster an inclusive environment, particularly for female students who tend to remain silent or hesitate to express their opinions, as noted by [Lewis \(1993\)](#). By implementing active learning and project-based approaches, power domination in the classroom can be dismantled ([Garber & Gaudeluis, 1992](#)). Teachers empower students by providing opportunities for active learning and by creating a balance of power between teachers and students. Such efforts open up space for dialogue and promote more egalitarian relationships between teachers and students ([Robertson, 1994](#)). Postmodern feminism offers a new, more inclusive perspective that recognises the diversity of women's experiences, which can be applied in history education.

Previous studies on the construction of women in history education have predominantly focused on analysing the representation of women in history textbooks ([Azifambayunasti et al., 2023; Kurniawan, 2023; Sari & Andi, 2024; Diana, 2022; Utami, 2021](#)). The issue of women's representation in Indonesian history textbooks has also drawn attention in countries such as Germany, the United States, Africa, and India. Findings from these studies reveal similar patterns,

where women are marginalised and often stereotyped in official historical narratives (Jabjiniak & McCabe, 2023; Košir & Lakshminarayanan, 2023; Hellmanzik, 2023; Russell et al., 2021; Williams & Bennet, 2016). This situation aligns with Riley's (2021) observation that when students study history, they are frequently confronted with a past almost devoid of women. White male military and political figures dominate the pages of textbooks, while women, especially women of colour, are relegated to supporting roles.

In the realm of education, the development of women's history remains significantly limited. Existing efforts have tended to focus primarily on creating informational media (Virdaus et al., 2025), introducing new historical figures such as Sulianto Saroso (Aini & Amini, 2023), Supeni Pudjobuntoro (Bella & Subekti, 2023) and the leadership of Acehnese women (Sutejo, 2023; Khairunnas et al., 2022). This approach remains inadequate because it tends to overlook women's experiences in the domestic sphere. A more diverse and inclusive representation of women's roles and contributions across different social backgrounds has yet to appear in history teaching practices. Interviews with history teachers in Palembang even revealed confusion in selecting alternative learning resources that present a gendered perspective (Dhita et al., 2025). Postmodern feminism becomes a relevant alternative approach, as it opens space for the diversity of women's experiences while also fostering more contextual and reflective learning.

This study offers a novel contribution by directly examining the implementation of a postmodern feminist approach in history education. The focus is placed on the pedagogical practice of a history teacher who addresses the marginalised role of motherhood, long excluded from official historical narratives, within the classroom learning process. The aim of this research is to describe and analyse how the postmodern feminist approach is applied in history lessons for Grade 10 students at SMA Negeri 20 Palembang. In line with this objective, the present study seeks to answer the research question: How do history teachers integrate postmodern feminist perspectives into history teaching in Grade 10 at SMA Negeri 20, Palembang?. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a more inclusive, critical, and gender-sensitive model of history education.

Method

Research Type and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design (Creswell, 2015; Lodico et al., 2006; Yin, 2003) to conduct an in-depth analysis of history teaching practices implemented by Teacher YS. The study specifically focuses on the application of postmodern feminist principles, emphasising the deconstruction of dominant historical narratives and the empowerment of women in history education.

Research Subjects and Site

The research subject is Teacher YS, a history teacher purposively selected for implementing postmodern feminist approaches in history teaching. The selection process began with a survey using a Google Form distributed to high school history teachers who teach topics related to women and are also Guru Penggerak, in accordance with postmodern feminist principles that emphasise women pursuing careers while fulfilling family roles (Husserl, 1960). Teacher YS is a member of the 10th cohort of Guru Penggerak in Palembang. The case study was conducted with Grade 10 students at SMA Negeri 20 Palembang, including classroom observation on Tuesday afternoon, 4 February 2025, during lessons on the Majapahit Kingdom, specifically covering Tribuanattunggadewi.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data were collected through participatory observation to examine Teacher YS's instructional strategies, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Semi-structured interviews were conducted on November 6, 2024, and February 4, 2025, to explore Teacher YS's experiences in implementing postmodern feminist pedagogy. Additional data were obtained from documents, including the Lesson Plan and a student-created pop-up book on the Majapahit Kingdom (Creswell, 2015). Data analysis employed pattern matching, comparing instructional patterns with postmodern feminist principles through data organisation, theme identification, and theory-based interpretation. This approach aims to provide an in-depth understanding beyond mere description (Yin, 2003).

Validity and Reliability

Data validity and reliability were ensured through several measures. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documents. Second, each stage of data collection and analysis was systematically recorded to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2015; Yin, 2003). Additionally, member checking was conducted on 4 February 2025 by verifying observation results and document data against Teacher YS's explanations during the interview, ensuring that the data obtained were both valid and reliable.

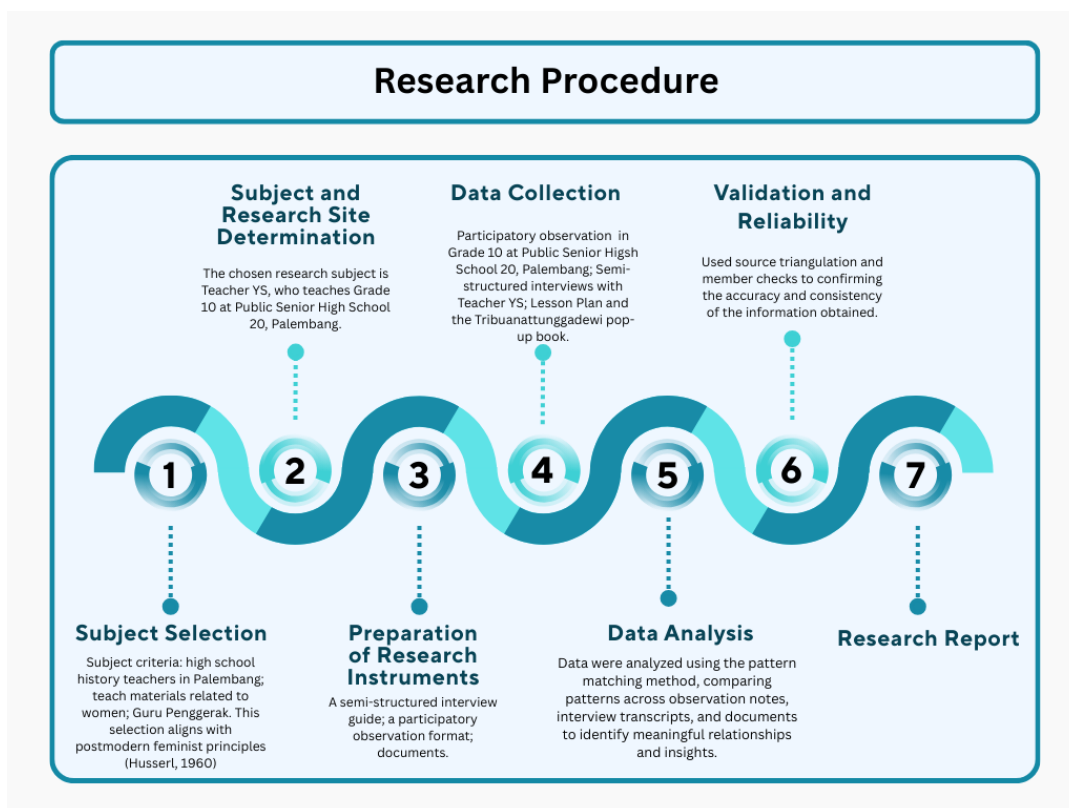


Image 1. Research Procedure

Results and Discussion

Preparation and Classroom Observation

After obtaining permission from the Principal of SMA Negeri 20 Palembang and establishing communication with Teacher YS, the classroom observation was conducted on February 4, 2025, in accordance with the schedule and history learning materials for Grade 10. This observation was conducted during the second meeting, which focused on the Majapahit Kingdom as one of

Indonesia's Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. The focus of this lesson was on the role of Tribhuwanattunggadewi as a female leader of Majapahit and her relationship with Hayam Wuruk.

At the beginning of the session, Teacher YS opened the class with a prayer, checked student attendance, inquired about students' feelings and learning objectives, encouraged dialogue, and prepared the necessary materials. Teacher YS is motivated by connecting the historical material to the political, religious, social, and economic developments of the Majapahit Kingdom during Tribhuwanattunggadewi's reign. The lesson also linked these historical events to the role of mothers in daily life. According to Teacher YS, Tribhuwanattunggadewi successfully educated Hayam Wuruk, which later contributed to the Majapahit Kingdom becoming a prosperous and advanced kingdom during his reign.

Implementation of Core Learning Activities

During the core activities, teacher YS invited the Majapahit group to give their presentation. The groups had been assigned in the previous meeting. The Majapahit group consisted of three female students (KD, JP, JS, and LRD) and three male students (M, AD, and ADA). They presented a project in the form of a pop-up book that they had created according to their interests and group agreement. Before starting the presentation, one female student wrote "Majapahit Kingdom" on the whiteboard. All group members then took turns explaining their pop-up book, covering aspects such as geographical location, historical sources (inscriptions and foreign accounts), kings who brought Majapahit to its golden age, the role of Tribhuwanattunggadewi and maternal intelligence, as well as the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions, and the cultural heritage of Majapahit.

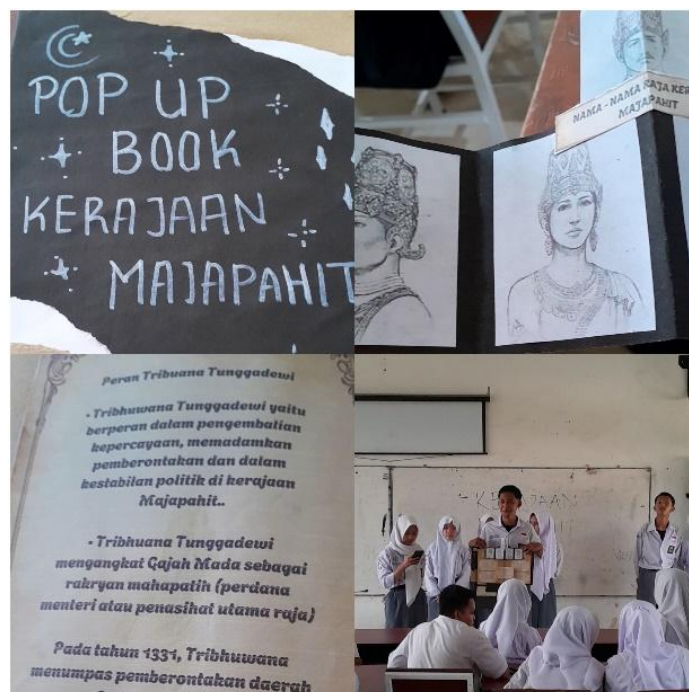


Image 2. Collage of the Tribhuwanattunggadewi Pop-up Book and the Majapahit Group Presentation

Analysis of the students' pop-up book reveals that it portrays Tribhuwanattunggadewi's role in the governance of the Majapahit Kingdom, including maintaining political stability, appointing Gajah Mada as *mahapatih* (prime minister or chief royal advisor), and managing territorial expansion. A

document-based analysis further highlights the maternal dimension, showing how Tribhuwanattunggadewi's character influenced her child, Hayam Wuruk, by emphasising qualities such as intelligence, wisdom, and care. Additionally, the pop-up book highlights the centrality of love and attention to the family as a crucial aspect of maternal responsibility.

After all group members completed their presentation, teacher YS invited other students to ask questions. When a female student named M raised her hand, Teacher YS repeated her name and provided a pause, allowing her to articulate her question. The teacher demonstrated balanced attention, engaging not only male but also female students equally. The Majapahit group recorded each question raised on the whiteboard. Once all questions had been asked, Teacher YS gave the group time to respond. All group members, both male and female, were given turns to address the questions. Upon completing the responses, teacher YS offered reinforcement for the answers and raised a critical issue regarding Tribhuwanattunggadewi and the problem of subordination in the role of motherhood.

The discussion then progressed as Teacher YS directed students' attention to Tribhuwanattunggadewi's role as a mother. The teacher linked the success of Hayam Wuruk, the great Majapahit king, to the character of his mother, Tribhuwanattunggadewi. Teacher YS posed a reflective question about how a mother shapes her child's character. Students responded by stating that a mother should possess intelligence, wisdom, and care, as these traits are passed down to her children. A female student named KD remarked that a disciplined and independent mother would raise children with similar attitudes. This response demonstrated that the learning process not only engaged students cognitively but also fostered their affective awareness regarding the value of the mother's role in daily life and historical contexts. Teacher YS also shared the following reflective statement:

"The Majapahit Kingdom had a queen named Tribhuwanattunggadewi. Now, imagine a woman ruling a vast and powerful kingdom back then. This queen played a pivotal role in expanding Majapahit's influence throughout the archipelago. Mahapatih Gajah Mada assisted her. Moreover, remember, Gajah Mada was appointed by Tribhuwana not randomly, but because she recognised and carefully assessed the potential of her subordinates who could help her expand the kingdom's territory. Moreover, the queen was intelligent; without intelligence, Majapahit would not have thrived and expanded its dominion. So, when we look at Tribhuwana's reflection on her intelligence, wisdom, resilience, and strong determination, how do we compare today? If women in the past were already remarkable, how much more so today? Therefore, women must be intelligent, because an intelligent mother will give birth to intelligent children".

Teacher YS then continued by asking, "How does a mother influence her child?" A female student raised her hand and responded:

"In my opinion, a mother with an intelligent and dignified character, like Tribhuwanattunggadewi, can shape a child who is confident and capable of leading. A mother can be a role model, especially if she raises her children with love and discipline".

Teacher YS responded to the female student's opinion by emphasising that history teaches us about the important roles women have played, not only within the family but also in society. Tribhuwanattunggadewi serves as a concrete example that female leadership is not a new phenomenon in Indonesian history.

Alignment with the Lesson Plan

The observation data aligned with the learning module implemented by teacher YS, which utilised the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model and three behavioural focuses. The first focus

encouraged active student communication, strategic grouping to enhance participation, and reminders of class agreements. Analysis of interview data indicates that this strategy engaged students actively and reflected teacher YS's experience, emphasising the importance of family and child education alongside professional responsibilities (Interview, November 6, 2024). Further analysis of the interview responses shows that Teacher YS also developed pedagogical skills through the *Guru Penggerak* Program (Interview, February 4, 2025), which, over six months, transformed her perspective in line with the philosophy of Merdeka Belajar.

Highlighting Female Figures and Value Reflection

A key strength of this learning session was teacher YS's success in highlighting Tribhuwanattunggadewi not only as a female ruler but also as a mother. Teacher YS conveyed a narrative linking Tribhuwanattunggadewi's intelligence, resilience, and wisdom to her role in shaping Hayam Wuruk's character. She encouraged students to reflect and identify exemplary traits from Tribhuwanattunggadewi, such as intelligence, independence, wisdom, and care.

Table 1. An important aspect of history teaching carried out by Teacher YS

Learning Aspects	Findings
Developed Media	Pop-up book
Student Involvement	Actively asking, answering, and taking notes; involvement of both male and female students.
Female Figure Highlighted	Tribhuwanattunggadewi from the Majapahit Kingdom
Values Instilled	Female leadership, intelligence, the influence of mothers on children

The value reflections cultivated through the history lessons conducted by Teacher YS foster an awareness that women in history are not merely supplementary figures but hold central roles in social and political change. The teacher also conveyed a reflective statement emphasising that contemporary women, whether pursuing careers or focusing on domestic roles, need to possess intelligence as a crucial asset in educating future generations. This message was powerfully delivered at the conclusion of the lesson to reinforce the relevance of history to the students' present-day lives.

Through a postmodern feminist approach, Teacher YS develops history learning that is not only oriented toward the past but also directed at understanding the present and contemporary social issues (Supriatna, 2007). Teacher YS highlights social issues concerning the subordination of women in their roles as mothers. According to Teacher YS, this issue arises from the perspective that the sole purpose of education is financial gain. By using the historical figure Tribhuwanattunggadewi, Teacher YS aims to deconstruct this perspective.

Tribhuwanattunggadewi was a female ruler of the Majapahit Kingdom. She had a son, Hayam Wuruk, who later became a renowned king of the Majapahit Empire. When Tribhuwanattunggadewi abdicated the throne, she continued to guide her son as he assumed kingship (Nastiti, 1998). The closeness between Tribhuwanattunggadewi (as a mother) and Hayam Wuruk (as a child) demonstrates that maternal roles historically held strategic importance in political and royal leadership. It also indicates that women's domestic experiences are not inferior to their public roles; both are equally significant for historical analysis (Arivia, 2003; Tong, 2010). Students' reflections on the character of a wise, intelligent, and caring mother demonstrate that history learning has moved beyond formal chronological boundaries toward deeper social meaning.

Teacher YS successfully challenges the masculinised (androcentric) historical content by deliberately highlighting the female figure, Tribhuwanattunggadewi. This initiative serves as a critical response to the historically masculine and hegemonic narratives of national history (Darmawan, 2019; Purwanta, 2012). In the context of Majapahit history, Teacher YS not only

introduces male figures such as Raden Wijaya, Hayam Wuruk, and Gajah Mada, but also represents women as historical actors. This approach challenges gender bias in historiography, which has traditionally considered politics as an exclusively male domain (Kuntowijoyo, 2003; Rahayu, 2016). Historical events are no longer dominated solely by men but now create space for the representation of women in historical narratives (Dhita et al., 2025).

The findings of this study demonstrate that Teacher YS's efforts to integrate women into historical narratives align with previous research showing the persistent underrepresentation of women in history textbooks in Indonesia and other countries (Azifambayunasti et al., 2023; Jabjiniak & McCabe, 2023; Košir & Lakshminarayanan, 2023; Kurniawan, 2023; Russell et al., 2021; Sari & Andi, 2024; Hellmanzik, 2023; Utami, 2021; Williams & Bennet, 2016). Unlike earlier studies, which mostly emphasised symbolic representation or focused on prominent figures, Teacher YS incorporates women's domestic experiences, creating a more inclusive and contextualised history learning approach while offering a model for more reflective and critical history pedagogy (Dhita et al., 2025).

History learning strategies are implemented through pop-up books, which can enhance learning effectiveness (Komari et al., 2022; Lestari & Sari, 2021) and foster creativity (Yanto et al., 2023). A pop-up book is a three-dimensional medium that provides a lifelike impression when opened (Mustika & Ain, 2020). This medium facilitates the visualisation of Majapahit figures without adhering to gender stereotypes, including Raden Wijaya, Tribhuwanattunggadewi, and Hayam Wuruk. Although female representation remains quantitatively lower, this initiative reflects an awareness of including women's roles in historical narratives more equitably and diversely. Through this project, students reflect on how gender shapes their social identities (Schaper, 2024). The selection of pop-up books also resulted from group discussions and student interest. This demonstrates that Teacher YS applies differentiated instruction, preventing student frustration (Breux & Magee, 2013; Tomlinson & Moon, 2012). Differentiated instruction is a strength of Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, rooted in Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy, which emphasizes giving students the freedom to learn and develop according to their potential (Henz & Schöllhorn, 2016; Pramono & Kertopati, 2024).

Through a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) approach, Teacher YS builds students' knowledge and experiences based on constructivist principles (Jazuli et al., 2019). PjBL also mitigates power dominance in the classroom (Garber & Gaudeluis, 1992) and encourages equal participation among male and female students. The history learning practice illustrates how the classroom can serve as a space to challenge power relations between teachers and students. Teacher YS provides equal opportunities for both male and female students to engage in discussion (Shrewsbury, 1987), creating a democratic and non-hierarchical learning environment. Recognising that the teacher is not the sole source of knowledge, history learning becomes equitable and liberating (Apriantika, 2024; Nuryatno, 2011). Moreover, by pausing communication with female students, Teacher YS allows space for what Magda Gere Lewis describes as *women's silence beyond teaching*, a form of silence not due to ignorance or passivity but stemming from the historical marginalisation of women's voices in discursive spaces, including classrooms (Lewis, 1993). This pause serves as a pedagogical strategy enabling women's voices to emerge without pressure, haste, or masculine domination, thus creating a safe space for female students to think and speak.

The strategies employed by Teacher YS serve to deconstruct the dominance of a single historical narrative, consistent with postmodern feminism, which rejects the grand narrative (Lyotard, 1984) and opens space for marginalised alternative narratives. History learning is understood not only as a record of political elites' achievements but also as a complex social record, including maternal and domestic roles of women that have traditionally been overlooked. This approach explores areas

that have been insufficiently addressed in the national history curriculum, specifically the intersection of women's domestic and political roles.

Compared to previous studies, the uniqueness of this research lies in the application of postmodern feminism in history learning, a rarely used approach by history teachers. This approach not only critiques androcentric paradigms in historical content but also provides women with the opportunity to reflect on feminism based on their experiences and life choices (Arivia, 2003; Tong, 2010). Furthermore, this study develops learning materials that go beyond history textbooks by incorporating contemporary social issues (Supriatna, 2007), particularly the often-overlooked maternal role, as a basis for critical reflection in the classroom.

The implementation of history learning through postmodern feminist approaches by Teacher YS is not only academically relevant but also demonstrates a critical and transformative stance in teaching women's history (Apaolaza-Llorente et al., 2023; Clarke et al., 2023). Teacher YS introduces new alternatives for more critical, gender-sensitive, and personally meaningful history learning. These actions demonstrate that Teacher YS is a creative history teacher (Supriatna & Maulidah, 2020; Supriatna, 2021). This approach is expected to serve as a model for the development of history teaching practices in Indonesia, particularly in addressing the persistent gender imbalance in the curriculum.

This study provides significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches postmodern feminist scholarship in history education by demonstrating how gender perspectives and women's experiences can be integrated into learning, surpassing chronological limitations and traditional masculine narratives. Practically, the study emphasises that teachers can adopt this approach to create inclusive, reflective, and critical history learning that is relevant to students' experiences, while also fostering deeper historical and social awareness. However, this study was limited in terms of its subject and topic, specifically women's history teaching. Future research is expected to involve more history teachers and expand studies on the implementation of women's history teaching in order to strengthen this pedagogical framework.

Conclusion

The implementation of a postmodern feminist approach by Teacher YS in history teaching demonstrates a significant contribution to reflective, inclusive, and contextualised learning. This approach not only highlights the role of female historical figures, such as Tribhuwanattunggadewi, but also deconstructs androcentric narratives within history education. Through pop-up book projects and open dialogues, students engage with women's social experiences, including domestic roles as mothers, integrating these perspectives into the classroom as legitimate components of historical narratives. This approach creates space for plural experiences, promotes gender equality, and fosters students' critical and personal historical awareness. The study confirms that educational transformation can begin within classroom practices and offers inspiration for developing more equitable and humane history pedagogy. Based on these findings, it is recommended that history teachers adopt a postmodern feminist approach by incorporating women's narratives, including both domestic and public roles, utilizing creative media such as pop-up books or projects grounded in students' social experiences, creating egalitarian classrooms that provide equal opportunities for female and male students to express their views, and critically reflecting on gender biases in teaching materials. This approach aligns with the innovative practices demonstrated by Teacher YS. It can enrich history pedagogy to be more inclusive, critical, and relevant to the social context and lived experiences of students.

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