
Watching Doraemon: Dismantling hegemony in a Japanese popular series

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ABSTRACT

This article examines hegemony spread through Japanese popular series, Doraemon. In 2008, the character Doraemon was made the Anime Ambassador and was sent around the world to campaign for Japanese popular culture. This appointment is part of the Japanese government's public diplomacy strategy. Doraemon is then synonymous with the perfect character figure, which has become one of the symbols of the progress of the Japanese state. Hegemony theory is used to dissect how ideology works through characters that have become state icons and are widely accepted with a very positive image. The results of the analysis show that patriarchal hegemony works through the depiction of scary female characters, male superiority, and the role of the media as a means of ideological dissemination. The Doraemon series preserves the patriarchy wrapped in a beautiful dream story of a future with Japan's advanced technology.

Keywords: Doraemon, hegemony, ideology, patriarchy

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INTRODUCTION

Animation has played a crucial role in the history of shared media systems in East Asia since the end of the Korean War, and East Asia is the primary market for animations from Japan today (Zahlten 2019). One of the most popular animation from Japan is *Doraemon*. Doraemon is a blue-and-white cat-shaped robot character created by Fujiko F. Fujio in 1969. The *Doraemon* series was first aired on April 1, 1979. Doraemon is told to be sent from the 22nd century by Sewashi (Nobita's future descendant) to help Nobita, a 5th grader who is lazy and often gets bullied by his friends, Giant and Suneo. Thanks to Doraemon's magic tools, Nobita can overcome various problems he faces. Since the 1970s until now, Doraemon is one of the most popular characters and is synonymous with Japan. Along with its popularity, this character has also experienced commodification, not only in the form of *manga*¹ and *anime*² series, but also films, various souvenirs, clothes, and Doraemon museum which was built in Kanagawa, Japan. Doraemon's birthday is also celebrated by fans.

There is an interesting point in the *Doraemon* series. It is Doraemon's role as a parenting robot for Nobita, a child who is considered lazy and weak. As a parenting robot, Doraemon is tasked with supporting Nobita to grow up to be a good, tough, and accomplished child, and to ensure his bright future, much like a mother's role. In Japan, parenting is primarily the responsibility of the mother. This is in line with the principles of *ryousai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), as well as the concept of *kyouiku mama* (education mother). However, Doraemon is told to be male, not female as a mother should. Besides that, in every episode, Doraemon always manages to overcome all the problems that arise in terms of caring for and assisting Nobita, which should be a mother's responsibility. What about Nobita's real mother? Nobita's mother, as well as the mothers of Nobita's friends, are portrayed as scary mothers

¹A designation for typical Japanese comics.

²The word "anime" is taken from the English word "animation" which is absorbed into Japanese to become "animeeshon", then shortened to "anime" and is used to refer to animation made in Japan.

that often suppress and scold their children, causing fear in the children. Both their husbands and their children find them to be frightful. These mothers are described as fierce and superior, as if they are not carrying out their parenting duties properly. In the end, the place to go when the child is having problems is not the mother, but this male parenting robot: Doraemon.

Viewed from the side of its genre as a family show (a show for all ages), the Doraemon series depicts the ideal Japanese family. Nobita's father works in the office, while his mother is a full-time housewife. This is a perfectly Japanese form which is adopted as the ideal family form in Japan (Roberts 2016). With this form of family, women are given power at home in managing the household and educating the children. However, the mother figure in the Doraemon series is then depicted as a feared figure. Mother is like a scary ruler in the house. On the other hand, the father figure is depicted as weak and inferior to the mother, so that the child usually loves their father more than the mother. In this series, the female figure (mother) is portrayed as dominant and has more power than the male. However, on the side of responsibility as an educator at home, mothers seem to 'fail'. The presence of Doraemon explains this failure. Doraemon is like replacing the mother's role in educating and supporting Nobita's growth and development.

There is an imbalance in the depiction of men and women in this series. Departing from this background, this paper will discuss the Doraemon series using the theory of hegemony. The analysis is carried out to see how patriarchal hegemony works through popular animation series which showcase the everyday life that has been taken for granted in society.

A lot of research on *Doraemon* has been carried out, especially for the *manga* and the film. One of them was written by Islam and Biswas (2012), who examined the influence of Doraemon on children in Bangladesh. This research uses the critical discourse analysis method by applying Saussure's semiotic theory and Phillipson's linguistic and cultural imperialism. Their second study concluded that more children speak Hindi than English (Islam and Biswas 2012).

Robert C. Marshall (2016, 2019) analyzed Doraemon's popularity using Levi-Strauss structural analysis. He saw how Doraemon was loved, and how the relationship between Doraemon and Nobita was formed. From his role, Marshall refers to Doraemon as Mother (with a large 'M') referring to the symbol of a Japanese mother, by analogy with the sophistication of Japanese technology in the future. In this analysis Doraemon can be seen symbolically (Marshall 2019). Another study was conducted by Zahlten (2019) who examined the films *Doraemon* and *Your Name*, which became box-office animated films in China from a political and economic standpoint. He explained that there is a collective memory between Japan and China which is mediated through these two popular animated films (Zahlten 2019).

In Indonesia, one of the studies on *Doraemon* was done by Gultom and Rustiani (2018). The two of them researched the Doraemon manga series using Foucault's power theory to reveal the ideology in the manga. They concluded that the ideology in the Doraemon manga shows that Japanese society is known for mastering science and technology and as a symbol of Japan's progress above other countries (Gultom and Rustiani 2018). Ulfa, Oktavita, & Somba (2020) examine the representation of Nobita's weakness in the film *Stand by Me Doraemon*. They use Barthes' theory of semiotics and representation to see the narrative built in the film. Several other studies were conducted in the form of theses and most of them focused on aspects of language (linguistics) used in the manga and film *Doraemon (Stand by Me Doraemon)* (Novia Ulfa et al. 2020).

From the previous studies, we know that *Doraemon* series and movies as the popular culture carried meaning for the audiences. However, there is no specific research on *Doraemon* which focuses on the hegemony spread through the series.

Hegemony is understood as a form of moral and intellectual leadership (Gramsci in Walton, 2008). Hegemony is concerned with civil society in relation to such things as churches, families, political parties, clubs, trade unions and the media. Although these are subject to state laws, they are not directly controlled by governments—they are cultural fields where ideas, values and beliefs are discussed and championed (Walton 2008). Gramsci (in Faruk, 2017) states that there is a connection between culture and politics. It is further stated that hegemony works to "cement" society into a single unit that seems organic, seems to be harmonious. Gramsci made connections that had never been considered before, questioned areas of common sense that are usually considered innocent and spontaneous, something that is considered natural and reasonable (Faruk 2017).

The theory of hegemony implies that political domination or leadership can no longer be seen as the simple imposition of the ideas, beliefs, and values (ideology) of the dominant group, but that this

'ideology', while rooted in the interests and intentions of the dominant class, is also a product of negotiation and loyalty (Williams in Walton 2008). Speaking in the Japanese context, the dominant class can be associated with patriarchal culture. This is because Japan adheres to patriarchy where power is dominated by men.

Patriarchy can be seen as the basis of a series of popular cultural products that reflect unequal power relations and gender bias. In a study of the patriarchal culture in England, Virginia Woolf (with an interest in the representation), argued that men constantly represented women who were considered as intellectually inferior and better suited for domestic tasks than learning (Woolf in Walton 2008). In what we call signifying practices, Woolf shows not only how the dominant culture can be related to its patriarchal basis, but also how that culture manifests itself in rituals and symbols. In her book, *Three Guineas*, Woolf shows how women submit subordinate forms of social, political, economic, and legal power to perpetuate a system that maintains and perpetuates the status quo in favor of the dominant male group (Walton 2008).

Marwah & Widyastuti (2021) stated that the study of women presents in the development of society mostly about women at the top positions. These top positions are usually seen as women as queens, royal women, or upper-class women. Quoted from Irwan Abdullah—an anthropologist from Universitas Gadjah Mada—she wrote that the male dominance that is present through kings or princes, to whom the journey of human history and public knowledge is attached and continues to be produced from time to time (Marwah, Lestari, and Rini Widyastuti 2021).

This research focuses on the patriarchal hegemony that works through the Doraemon series. Analysis is done by looking at the dialogue, characters, and visualizations that are displayed in the series. This research is important because, considering its role as an Anime Ambassador, Doraemon is one of the most popular Japanese cultural products, which can be seen as a symbol of Japan. In addition, because Doraemon is popular and is a spectacle for all ages, it is possible for a strong ideology to be embedded through this series. It can be pointed out that as popular culture, this series also has hegemony for its audience.

METHOD

For analysis of the series, an observation method was used through scenes, visualization, and dialogues. Critical discourse analysis is conducted to gain an understanding of the hegemony works through the series. Regarding critical discourse analysis, van Dijk (2009) stated:

“Critical discourse analysis is problem oriented. It does not primarily focus on discourse and its properties, but on social issues and problems, such as racism and sexism or other forms of domination and power abuse, and then examines whether and how text and talk are involved in its reproduction” (van Dijk 2009).

The excerpt indicates that critical discourse analysis examines how texts and discourses enforce, reproduce, and oppose power, domination, and inequality in social and political contexts. Critical discourse analysis aims to understand, expose, and ultimately fight inequalities in society. Descriptive data gathered through dialogues and scenes. The importance of conversations and scenes with representations as objects of study is reflected in their relevance. In addition, an analysis is made by connecting the reality in the series with social reality in Japan. External data was analyzed using books, journals, and articles on the internet to guarantee the validity and reliability of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Gender stereotypes are often discussed when analyzing patriarchy. In *Doraemon* series, the depiction of women is clearly stereotyped, that women who are married (and have children) are naturally at home, while their husbands work in the office. This stereotype is also seen in the child's character. What boys and girls can do is constructed. This division of roles can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Division of roles in Doraemon

No.	Stereotype	Women/Men
1	Housework (cleaning, cooking, etc.)	Women (mothers of every character in <i>Doraemon</i>)
2	Raising children	Women/wives (mothers of every character in <i>Doraemon</i>)
3	Office (and other outside housework)	Fathers (fathers of every character in <i>Doraemon</i>)
4	Playing ball and fight	Men (boys)
5	Playing houses, dolls, and barbie	Women (girls)

Beside the construction of what men and women can (should) do, the series has also informed the audiences about the same characteristic of each gender. The table below shows characters who often appear in the series.

Table 2. Characters' stereotypes in Doraemon

No	Character	F/M	Characteristic
1	Doraemon	M	smart, gentle, affectionate, a problem solver
2	Nobita	M	reckless, lazy, weak
3	Nobita's father	M	gentle, affectionate, caring
4	Giant (Takeshi)	M	grumpy, scary
5	Suneo	M	pampered and weepy
6	Shizuka	F	gentle, affectionate, having power to control her friends
7	Nobita's mother	F	grumpy, scary
8	Shizuka's mother	F	disciplined and fierce
9	Giant's mother	F	grumpy, scary
10	Suneo's mother	F	disciplined and fierce

The next part is the analysis and discussion about patriarchal hegemony according to the gender stereotype found in the series (Table 1 & Table 2).

Discussion

Japanese culture has been popular not only in Japan, but also abroad, especially among young Asians. This has a positive influence on Japan's image in the international world. As mentioned by Gadjeva (2022), Japan's culture has been carrying out diverse public diplomacy initiatives for projecting the desired image overseas and enhancing its presence. Gadjeva refers to the Soft Power 30 index of 2019—the world's most comprehensive comparative assessment of global soft power—that Japan is placed in the eight position and is Asia's highest-ranking country (Gadjeva 2022). She also wrote in her research that a poll by BBC World Service from 2005 to 2014, and in 2017 indicating Japan's productive cultural policies for constructing a favorable image (Gadjeva 2022).

The discussion of the research will be divided into three parts, (1) Doraemon and the image of Japan; (2) Doraemon and gender issues in Japan; and (3) patriarchal hegemony in the *Doraemon* series.

Doraemon and Japan's image as a country

In order to get influence in politics and international relations, Japan utilizes its soft power and public diplomacy. Roca (2021) mentioned that many researchers find that Japan is considered to be the first nation in East Asia explicitly to adopt the use of soft power (which is made up of its culture, political values, and foreign policy) for its foreign affairs and security policy (Roca 2021). In 2008, the character Doraemon was appointed as the Anime Ambassador of Japan. The character was sent around the world to campaign for Japanese popular culture as a strategy for public diplomacy (soft diplomacy). Soft diplomacy echoed by the Japanese government is known as "Cool Japan" and focuses on popular culture. Through this popular culture, Japan's image in the eyes of the public (international world, especially) is formed, that Japan is a developed country, both in terms of technology, industry, and culture. Japanese society is described as a modern society that are discipline, hardworking, but still adheres to traditional values. This image of 'harmony' is always echoed by the Japanese government as a nation branding.

Minister Masahiko Komura asked the character to “travel around the world to introduce Japan” (MOFA 2008). Doraemon, as a popular character for young people throughout Asia, was given the task of letting people around the world “know more about the positive side of Japan through Japanese anime, which are universally popular” (MOFA 2008). Komura’s words also demonstrated his belief in the potential of manga to enhance Japan’s soft power. A further expectation was that this ‘Anime Ambassador’ would attract attention to other Japanese cultural fare, such as music or high technologies, and thus promote Japan’s presence all over the world (Nakamura 2013).

The hope of this global anime ambassador is that Japan and its culture will be known internationally³. Nakamura further explained that pop culture is considered a "main asset for Japan's international relations", because the middle class in Asia is more familiar with the "modern and liberal face of Japan" through manga, drama, and J-pop (Nakamura 2013). Japan became popular among Asian countries for its popular culture also became a model for developing countries who wanted to emulate its success story on technology. Japanese culture has also been discussed by researchers outside of Japan. One of the famous great works titled *Japan as Number One* by Ezra Vogel, which was published in 1979. He wrote the creation of "Miracles Japan" in the book, which was an advertisement for Japan's capability not only in Asia but also globally. Japan's position in the international world was described in the book. In the book, Ezra eulogized and approved Japan's national values, which embody the character of Japanese society (Widarahhesty 2020).

The popularity of popular culture shows the concept of soft power which can increase the world's respect and interest in Japanese culture, history, and visual arts (Norris 2009). One of them is Doraemon, Nobita's companion robot parenting character. Through Doraemon, Japan wants to present an advanced image, marked by a future robot (technology) capable of changing history. Also, through Doraemon, the values of harmony in Japan were shown, by depicting advanced technology without destroying the traditional order. Japan wants to present an image as a humanist country, full of friendship, and a series of other good images in order to erase the bad image in the past⁴. As mentioned by Nye (2021),

Agenda-setting that is regarded as legitimate by the target, positive attraction, and persuasion are the parts of the spectrum of behaviors I include in soft power. Hard power is push; soft power is pull.’ Or to extend a common metaphor, hard power is like brandishing carrots or sticks; soft power is more like a magnet (Nye 2021).

As a character who is also an Anime Ambassador, Doraemon has a strategic position in spreading ideas and influencing audiences. Thus, the positive image formed through the character of Doraemon and its related products (*manga*, series and films) will be easily accepted by society as part of Japanese culture. Doraemon is pulling people's attention, just like a magnet.

Apart from the outside world, Doraemon was first known and popular in the country. Furthermore, with the appointment of Doraemon as Anime Ambassador, there is a political aspect that he brings. Doraemon is a tool for creating and strengthening nation branding, as well as spreading dominant ideas through popular culture. The nation branding that was created and strengthened through the Doraemon series is Japan that is advanced with a culture and society that live in harmony, in harmony with nature and traditions. The image of "harmony" is built through the advice given by Doraemon to Nobita, as well as from the visualization in it. Whenever Nobita has a problem, Doraemon will advise Nobita before finally providing a solution to solving the problem with his magic tools. It depicts a perfect

³ Japanese Foreign Minister, Masahiko Komura advised the character of Doraemon in his inauguration as Anime Ambassador "Doraemon, I hope you will travel around the world as an anime ambassador to deepen people's understanding of Japan so they will become friends with Japan" (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2008/03/19/japan-appoints-anime-ambassador/>) (Hounshell 2008).

⁴ Colonization experience in the past left a bad image for Japan, especially in the Asian region. Japan learned from its defeat in World War II that imperialism is not profitable. Otmazgin (2012) states, "For most of the postwar period, Japan's cultural policy became rather inward-looking, fearing that the introduction of Japanese culture in Asia once again would prove to be counter-productive and would undermine Japan's economic interests in this region" (Otmazgin 2012).

blend: cutting edge technology (future robots) with maternal care (tradition, nature). Technological advances that do not destroy traditional values.

Doraemon and gender issues in Japan

Popular culture has a role in spreading the dominant ideology. Dominant ideas play through broadcasts that are consumed by the masses. In the Doraemon series, this practice of spreading ideas is reflected through the dialogues, characters, and visualizations. Stereotypes such as what was conveyed by the former prime minister of Japan, Mori, that "women talk too much"⁵ are normalized through popular shows such as Doraemon with the depiction of female characters in it⁶.

For example, the *Doraemon* series entitled "Nukeana Borupen" or "The hole-making pen". In one scene, shows Nobita's mother made Nobita to do his homework. However, Nobita's mother was not using the usual command sentence. She ordered by yelling accompanied by a long scolding so that Nobita became frightened. This female stereotype is more talkative in contrast to the depiction of a male character (father). Women are stereotyped with home, kitchen, grumpy and nagging, while men are stereotyped with offices, hard work, patient, quiet, also friendly. This stereotype is in line with Belarmino & Roberts' research about Japanese gender role and attitudes. The respondents in their research mentioned that women were to stay home and take care of the house, the chores, and the children (Belarmino and Roberts 2019).

Women are also stereotyped as "talk too much" (as Mori said) and louder than men. Take another example, an episode entitled "Mama wo Torikaekko" (Take over Mama). This episode was a special project for Mother's Day which was broadcasted in TV Asahi on May 11, 2018. Nobita cried after being scolded by his mother. When he went out with Doraemon, he met Shizuka and Suneo, who were scolded by their mother in the same way. In this episode, we can see that three of them complaining about their own mothers. Here are examples, how a woman is described as frightening.



Figure 1. Source: <https://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/doraemon/story/0520/>

In this scene (taken from the episode "Mama wo Torikaekko"), Nobita's mother seems to be angry and scolds to Nobita in a loud voice (TV Asahi 2018). It can be seen in her gesture: hand up and eyes look down to her child. This gesture gives a nuance of superiority of a woman to a person who has

⁵After the last Tokyo Olympics, Mori, an 83-year-old former prime minister, told a meeting of the Japanese Olympic Committee that women talk too much. After that statement, he was criticized a lot because he was considered sexist. He resigned a week later after many protests. When the media reported that she had handpicked another man in his 80s as his replacement, young women called for a transparent process, until finally Seiko Hashimoto – a much younger, female, former Olympic Minister – was appointed instead. However, just days after Mori resigned, the ruling party was back in the news by announcing that, while it was willing to allow women to attend (all-male) board meetings, they would not be allowed to speak (<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210405-why-japan-cant-shake-sexism>) (Oi 2021).

⁶Apart from Doraemon, several other cartoons also feature female figures who are fierce and talkative, for example, Chibi Maruko Chan. In these cartoons, the figure of a mother is depicted as a housewife who is feared by her children and husband. Father is the main breadwinner who works in an office and is described as a more humanist figure and is loved by his children.

no power. However, this superiority has strengthened the stereotype of a woman as mentioned before. Keplinger (Susanto 2021) mentioned, in a simple way, the concept of what men and women can do in society can help explain the roles of men and women. In other words, social and cultural perceptions determine the roles of men and women, so the social and cultural roles of men and women are often unequal. The inequality in the roles of men and women is caused by gender bias (Susanto 2021).

Gender is one of the most highlighted issues from Japan⁷. Japan is known as a patriarchal country⁸. Women have a position below men, both in the domestic and public spheres. There is a term “ryousai kenbo” (good wife, wise mother) that is held tightly. After marriage, women have to act as good wives and mothers so that usually women will stop working after having children. In government, the number of women is very small, it is only about 9.9% of members of parliament. As a result, men still dominate business and political leadership in Japan, and policies that truly address women's needs have been slow to emerge⁹. However, this cannot be removed immediately by the appearance of criticism from outside, because in Japan, the people are used to the patriarchal system and disapproval rarely appears frontally on the surface.

There are two concepts that can help explain this situation. First, the concept of *honne-tatema*. According to Sugiyama-Lebra (in Naito and Gielen 1992), 'honne' is a person's natural, real, or inner desires and tendencies, while 'tatema' refers to standards, principles, or rules by which a person is bound, at least outwardly. On the basis of these differences, the Japanese think that adults must understand both sides of other people and express relevant sides in a situation (Orihashi in Naito and Gielen 1992). When in the presence of other people, Japanese people tend to hide their true desires if it goes against the prevailing social standards or norms. They will not speak frankly. This is done so that the external situation will always appear stable, harmonious, according to good standards and norms. This also happens when society sees male domination and sexist comments, people often keep quiet to maintain harmony.

Second, is the concept of "silence" which is often termed by the phrase "kuuki wo yomu", which means "reading the situation". A Japanese gender activist, Nojo, told the BBC there is an unspoken societal etiquette, that generally, people do not argue, especially with older people. According to her, Japan is a country where people find it difficult to talk to regardless of age or gender. If anyone did, it would be considered selfish. Even when there are people who make sexist comments, many choose to remain silent. People prefer not to confront each other so that the situation does not become awkward¹⁰. This is one manifestation of maintaining harmony. This also happens in *Doraemon*, that every problem caused by Nobita is the result of a woman's failure, and all these problems can always be solved by a male robot (technology). This kind of view is considered reasonable and natural. Even if there is disagreement, the Japanese tend to hold it in.

As in almost every episode featuring the character Mother, Nobita's mother is depicted wearing an apron, talking loudly to her child and husband, controlling activities at home, and being the most feared person in the house. This depiction is clearly stereotyped, that women who are married (and have children) are naturally at home, while their husbands work in office. Since the 1970s, Japan has seen 'perfectly Japanese' as a family with the husband as the head of the family and breadwinner, and the wife as a housewife who is professional in taking care of and raising children. This aligns with the concepts of *ryousai kenbo* and *kyouiku mama*. This idea later became a normative family model in Japan (Roberts 2016). This is also described in the *Doraemon* series (see Table 1).

In *Doraemon*, Nobita's mother and the mothers of Nobita's friends are depicted as housewives with husbands working in offices (Table 1). They all take care of the house and the kids. In addition,

⁷Quoting from <https://isdp.eu/understanding-japans-gender-inequality/> Japan is ranked 121 out of 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, marking the country as one of the lowest ranked in the world in terms of women's political empowerment (Lundqvist 2020). Furthermore, in 2021 Japan is ranked 120 out of 156 countries (<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210405-why-japan-cant-shake-sexism>) (Oi 2021)

⁸Villa (2019) explains that the patriarchal system in Japan can be traced historically, with strong influences from Shinto, Buddhist and Confucian beliefs. For example, teachings that ask women to regard the country as a family so that women must fully serve the country, which when brought into the domestic sphere means fully serving their husbands. This system is deeply rooted. Even though Japan has now experienced modernization and feminist thought has developed, patriarchy is still very strong in influencing many areas of life.

⁹<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210405-why-japan-cant-shake-sexism> (Oi 2021).

¹⁰*Ibid.*

there are characteristics that are identified with gender embedded in the character of the mother (female) and father (male), for example (1) the mother is responsible for domestic affairs such as cooking, cleaning the house, etc., while the father is responsible for earning a living outside the house. Therefore, fathers are no longer burdened with household chores; (2) boys are synonymous with hard games, for example playing ball, baseball, also fighting, while girls play dolls and houses. For example, in an episode entitled "Nobiko", when Nobita refuses to fight with Suneo. Suneo and Giant scoffed by asking, "*Do you really want to play house like a girl? Then let's call him Nobiko!*" In Japan, names ending in "ko" are usually reserved for girls. Likewise with games, men (supposedly) play ball or fight, while women play houses, dolls, and so on. As a show for all ages (including children), this stereotype leads the audience to separate what women should do and what men should do, and this has started since childhood. Goldstein-Gidoni (in Belarmino and Roberts 2019) mentioned that in order to follow traditional values, Japanese women push their efforts to maintain the status quo by taking courses that teach skills perceived to be traditionally feminine, such as flower arranging or how to don a kimono for ceremonies and holidays". This statement illustrates that Japanese women have traditionally been encouraged to follow these traditional values. There is a strong cultural hegemony that is firmly entrenched so that women themselves follow what is considered 'supposed' for women (see Table 2).

Patriarchal hegemony in Doraemon

In social life in Japan, these various gender bias situations are taken for granted, even normalized through their cultural shows and products. Doraemon is one of them. In a patriarchal society, where women have few rights compared to men¹¹, the Doraemon series seems to be reinforcing the stigmatization of women's marginal position. The Doraemon series is presented in a light and humorous way. This makes this series widely accepted by the public, both children, adolescents, and adults. Doraemon was able to survive for five decades as one of the most popular characters. This popularity makes the values in it easily taken for granted by the audience as a normal and natural idea. This gives birth to knowledge, common sense for the community. The dominant ideology in society corresponds to the concepts of perfectly Japanese, *ryousai kenbo*, and harmony. The following findings explain how patriarchal hegemony works in the *Doraemon* series.

Scary women

The depiction of women as 'scary' can be traced from the concept of castration anxiety in Freudian psychoanalysis (Ott and Mack 2014). The presence of a father figure during the Oedipal period raised the threat of castration in children because the penis was considered masculine power. Therefore, powerful women are considered as 'phallic women' and are considered as a threat and a source of fear (monstrous feminine). Lacan (in Ott and Mack 2014) explains the term 'the Name/ the Law of the Father' in the symbolic order which refers to the phallogocentric order. This monstrous feminine image also appears in the *Doraemon* series, as how female characters are identified as monstrous women. The female characters in *Doraemon* are Shizuka, Nobita's mother, Giant's mother, Shizuka's mother, Suneo's mother, and Jaiko.

Shizuka is the only female character who is described as gentle. Even so, Shizuka has power behind her gentleness so that other characters will usually follow Shizuka's words. For example, when Nobita is being bullied by Gian and Suneo, Shizuka will appear to help Nobita without fear. Gian and Suneo usually stop bullying Nobita when Shizuka intervenes. The 'power' that this young Shizuka had was gentle and protective. However, Shizuka's meek nature changed when Shizuka married and became a mother. Shizuka after getting married and becoming a mother is described as turning fierce and scary. She often scolded her husband (Nobita) and was tough on her son. Cineli & Mugiyama (2023) state that in Japan, different gender expectations are emphasized and Japanese wives' shoulder most of the household work. Regardless of their employment status, Japanese women have traditionally been

¹¹ In many ways, there is still a lot of discrimination against women in Japan. Quoting from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jun/13/there-are-almost-no-women-in-power-tokyos-female-workers-demand-change>, one of the examples, in 2017, Tokyo Medical University (one of the nine universities) was found to have cheated in its entrance examination. In the entrance examination, female applicants are excluded, and male applicants are preferred. From the same site, it is also stated that "control everything. It's so deeply rooted. There are almost no women in power." (The Guardian 2019).

responsible for household finances (Çineli and Mugiyama 2023). This makes mothers at home hold the power to manage the household and care for children. The child must submit to the mother, and if the child makes a mistake, the mother will be deemed incapable of educating the child properly.

In a scene in the episode "Nukeana Borupen", Nobita and Doraemon are described as feeling scared because their mother scolded them. One thing that we can note is that this scary depiction is specific to the mother or wife only. So, there is an impression that the institution of marriage is a gateway that reincarnates women into 'monsters'. Some of these scenes seem to show that when women are given the legal power (marriage), they will use their power to subordinate men (husbands) and people with weaker power (children). Through this series it is depicted that women will show their true nature, which is savage, wild, and uncontrollable when they are given power, and all of this is normalized in a children's animation series with visuals and a funny storyline. The depiction of the female character is much different from the male character who is depicted as being able to use his power in a more subtle, orderly, and controlled manner.

The patriarchal system places men on power bases in the public sphere. In Japan, especially after World War II, the combination of husbands who work hard to serve the company and wives who work at home continues to be campaigned¹². This is also seen in the *Doraemon* series through Nobita's parents, Shizuka, as well as Suneo. Implicitly, the *Doraemon* series explains the different powers that men and women have and how they use their powers. Through their characters and visualizations, men are depicted as using their powers 'smoothly' and appear more educated, while women are depicted as using their powers roughly and appear uneducated. This inequality is explained in everyday contexts so that it is easy to accept, as if "*to maintain harmony, it is proper for women not to be given power outside*" as something natural.

Superiority of men: Without men, women will fail to carry out their duties

In one scene in the episode "Nukeana Borupen", when Nobita's mother was angry, she was seen yelling at Nobita. Mother told Nobita to do his homework. The opposite attitude is shown by Doraemon. Doraemon supports Nobita with great affection and responsibility. As stated by Marshall (2019), this robot reproduces Japanese cultural ideals in terms of the attitude (parenting) of a mother to her child. Doraemon has an ideal role. He is like a mother, but also sometimes like a best friend. He does not demand, insist, discipline, or punish. He pampers, supports, encourages, and sometimes also whines, cries, grumbles, and even taunts a little like a friend. Furthermore, Marshall explains that Doraemon performs the task of caring for Nobita as a companion and helper so that he is able to build Nobita's character (Marshall 2019) (see Table 2).

In one of the scenes when Doraemon is waking up Nobita, the audiences can see the soft demeanor of this robot. Doraemon advises by saying that because Nobita previously skipped school, now Nobita must get up and get ready. Here, Doraemon does childcare duties that should be a mother's job. Sending Doraemon as a parenting robot shows that the parenting task which is the mother's responsibility is considered to have failed and Doraemon is here to fix the failure. In many scenes depicting Nobita's future, it is said that Nobita's success in the future has more to do with what Doraemon is doing in the present. This explains the implied message, that the parenting task of a mother (woman) will not be successful without the intervention of men.

Technology, robots, machines, are three keywords that are considered masculine and are often identified with men. Men here are described as problem solvers in every problem of life through masculine symbols such as technology, robots and machines. Doraemon is a robot from the future. It was created by a company, whose founders were all men. Doraemon is also male, who can do all the tasks of both men and women.

Media as a means of spreading ideology

In order to achieve hegemony, ideology must be spread through certain social institutions at its center, such as schooling and teaching forms, the characteristics of the dominant social group, and so on (Gramsci in Faruk 2017). *Doraemon* is a series that regularly airs on TV Asahi. TV Asahi can be seen

¹² Komazaki, a founder of non-profit organization in <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210405-why-japan-cant-shake-sexism> (Oi 2021).

here as one of the dominant forms of social institutions. TV channels are a means of spreading dominant ideas and ideologies to society. Popular broadcasts through TV then function in penetrating ideology so that they appear smooth and natural. In the case of the *Doraemon* series, the treatment of Nobita's mother (and other mothers) who intimidate her husband and children, as well as men who are 'smoother' and always become problem solvers, is normalized through attractive visuals, easy-to-understand language, and dreams of technological progress that will overcome all life's problems, even changing the past and the future. With the spectacle of everyday nuances and dreams of this beautiful future, ideology is easily absorbed and accepted as part of a culture that is considered natural. It is easier to absorb the impression that a great Japan and a harmonious society will be created with the order in the series.

CONCLUSION

Doraemon is a product of popular culture that is much loved so it was appointed as an Anime Ambassador in the context of Japanese public diplomacy. As a popular culture, *Doraemon* series brings the dominant ideology to be spread to society. Based on the analysis, several points can be concluded, (1) through the character of *Doraemon*, a positive image of Japan is disseminated so that the *Doraemon* series is not only culturally and economically charged, but also politically charged; (2) the *Doraemon* series can be accepted by many people because of its lovable nature, depicting the daily life of a harmonious society, and a beautiful future thanks to Japan's advanced technology. Everything looks perfect in *Doraemon* so that the audience is lulled into it and accepts it as something natural; (3) apart from technological advances that make Japan look cool and perfect, the *Doraemon* series shows the continuation of patriarchal hegemony in society. Hegemony works through popular culture—and with media interference—perpetuating dominant power which in a patriarchal society is dominated by men so that ideology is accepted smoothly and naturally.

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