



Female Sacrifice and Gendered Recognition of Black Widow in Avengers: Endgame a Feminist Analysis

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Abstrak

Film superhero menjadi teks budaya untuk mengkaji gender, kekuasaan, agensi, dan pengakuan. Penelitian ini menganalisis representasi pengorbanan perempuan dan pengakuan berbasis gender melalui Natasha Romanoff (Black Widow) dalam Avengers: Endgame (2019), khususnya pengorbanannya di Vormir serta perlakuan naratif terhadap kematiannya dibandingkan dengan Tony Stark. Penelitian menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan feminis. Data diperoleh melalui observasi dan dokumentasi terhadap sembilan adegan yang dipilih secara purposif berdasarkan dialog, tindakan tokoh, penyajian sinematik, serta konsekuensi naratif terkait agensi, pengorbanan, kekuasaan, dan pengakuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepahlawanan Natasha dibentuk melalui tindakan fisik, kerja emosional, persuasi strategis, tanggung jawab relasional, dan keputusan sadar untuk berkorban demi misi bersama. Meskipun menunjukkan agensi kuat, pengorbanannya sekaligus menghilangkan Natasha dari kelanjutan cerita. Sebaliknya, Tony memperoleh pengakuan naratif lebih panjang melalui pemakaman, kesedihan kolektif, kenangan personal, dan warisan kepahlawanan. Kebaruan penelitian menegaskan bahwa kajian feminis perlu memperhatikan bagaimana pengorbanan perempuan diingat, dihargai, dan dipertahankan dalam kesinambungan narasi.

Kata-kata Kunci: Feminisme; Pengorbanan; Pengakuan; Agensi.

Abstract

Superhero films serve as cultural texts for examining gender, power, agency, and recognition. This study analyzes the representation of female sacrifice and gender-based recognition through Natasha Romanoff (Black Widow) in Avengers: Endgame (2019), particularly her sacrifice on Vormir and the narrative treatment of her death compared with that of Tony Stark. The study employs a qualitative descriptive design with a feminist approach. Data were collected through observation and documentation of nine purposively selected scenes based on dialogue, character actions, cinematic presentation, and narrative consequences related to agency, sacrifice, power, and recognition. The findings reveal that Natasha's heroism is constructed through physical action, emotional labor, strategic persuasion, relational responsibility, and her conscious decision to sacrifice herself for the collective mission. Although demonstrating strong agency, her sacrifice simultaneously removes her from the continuing narrative. Conversely, Tony receives more extensive narrative recognition through his funeral, collective grief, personal memories, and heroic

legacy. This study's novelty lies in emphasizing that feminist analysis must examine how women's sacrifices are remembered, valued, and sustained throughout narrative continuity.

Keywords: Feminism; Sacrifice; Recognition; Agency.

INTRODUCTION

Film constitutes an important cultural medium by integrating visual, auditory, and narrative elements to construct meanings about society and human relationships. Contemporary films not only entertain but also represent characters, conflicts, and endings that may reinforce or challenge social assumptions concerning gender, power, and identity. According to Ridaryanthi and Sinuyul, their study of female superhero representation in *Avengers: Endgame* demonstrates that women occupy diverse roles, although power distribution between male and female characters remains unequal and bodily representation may reproduce ideals of desirable femininity.¹ These findings indicate that superhero cinema functions as a cultural text through which gender relations can be critically examined. Accordingly, feminist analysis of popular superhero films is essential for understanding how female heroism is constructed, valued, represented, and remembered within contemporary narratives and broader cultural discourse.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe has emerged as a popular culture phenomenon, portraying women as figures alongside dominant male superheroes. However, increased female visibility does not necessarily indicate equal narrative authority, agency, or recognition within superhero stories. According to Folukemi Olufidipe and Yunex Echezabal, feminist analysis of female representation in the Marvel Cinematic Universe reveals persistent sexualization, marginalization, and limited inclusivity despite the growing prominence of female superheroes.² These findings demonstrate that female representation requires analysis beyond character presence, particularly by examining narrative functions, bodily representation, relationships, and narrative consequences. This perspective is especially relevant to *Black Widow*, whose heroic identity develops through agency, sacrifice, redemption, and recognition, making her representation an important site for examining gendered patterns within superhero narratives.

¹ Melly Ridaryanthi dan Ceaserlyn Jindan Sinuyul, "Representation of Female Superhero and Gender Roles in the *Avengers: Endgame*," *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 15, no. 2 (2021): 139–154, <https://ejournal.uinsaizu.ac.id/index.php/komunika/article/view/4580>.

² Folukemi Olufidipe dan Yunex Echezabal, "Superheroines and Sexism: Female Representation in the Marvel Cinematic Universe," *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 2 (2021): 1–14, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352910364_Superheroines_and_Sexism_Female_Representation_in_the_Marvel_Cinematic_Universe.

Black Widow's character arc follows Natasha Romanoff as she evolves from a sexualized, vulnerable spy into an Avenger whose choices shape major conflicts within the MCU. Her development illustrates how female heroism can challenge patriarchal expectations while remaining influenced by male-centered narrative structures. According to Killian, feminist analyses of Black Widow and the male gaze identify a shift from hypersexualized representation toward greater agency in her later standalone film, while acknowledging the male gaze's historical influence on her superheroine construction.³ This perspective demonstrates how Natasha may appear empowered while still constrained by gendered conventions. Examining her sacrifice requires attention to her physical agency and the meanings attributed to her body, morality, and narrative value within the broader story.

Avengers: Endgame constitutes a case for examining gendered narrative recognition because Natasha Romanoff and Tony Stark both die while enabling the Avengers' victory over Thanos, yet their deaths receive markedly different narrative treatment. Natasha sacrifices herself on Vormir to secure the Soul Stone, whereas Tony employs the Infinity Stones during the climactic battle and subsequently receives an extended memorial sequence. This disparity warrants attention within feminist scholarship concerning representation, agency, and recognition in superhero cinema. According to Taylor and Glitsos, Natasha's sacrificial representation demonstrates how female empowerment can simultaneously be affirmed and constrained when her body, sacrifice, and future remain subordinated to a narrative that continues without her.⁴ Consequently, Endgame provides a productive framework for analyzing gendered visibility and recognition.

Female sacrifice warrants critical examination because heroic self-sacrifice may signify empowerment while reinforcing gendered expectations that women surrender themselves for collective objectives. Natasha's decision to die demonstrates agency because she consciously chooses sacrifice, yet its narrative implications invite scrutiny regarding whose future remains protected and whose story reaches closure. According to Kent, her feminist analysis of Black Widow emphasizes that Natasha's empowerment is mediated by genre conventions and shaped by tensions between progressive female representation and

³ Kyle D. Killian, "An Analysis of Black Widow (2021): Marvel's Most Feminist Film Features Powerful Sisters and an Attenuated Male Gaze," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 35, no. 1 (2023): 106–113, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08952833.2022.2139926>.

⁴ Jessica Taylor dan Laura Glitsos, "Having it Both Ways": Containing the Champions of Feminism in Female-Led Origin and Solo Superhero Films," *Feminist Media Studies* 23, no. 2 (2023): 656–670, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2021.1986096>.

structures that constrain female agency.⁵ This perspective encourages sacrifice to be analyzed as a gendered narrative practice rather than automatically interpreted as evidence of equality. Such an approach is particularly relevant when examining the contrasting narrative treatment of Natasha's sacrifice and Tony's heroic legacy within the MCU.

Existing studies examine Black Widow through feminism, semiotics, poststructuralism, gender representation, and superhero cinema politics, yet many emphasize identity, visual representation, or broader feminist interpretations. Research on Avengers: Endgame likewise identifies unequal gender relations, while the connection between sacrifice and posthumous recognition remains insufficiently examined. According to Saptiadi, Trisnawati, and Agustina, their poststructural feminist analysis shows that Black Widow can be interpreted through poststructural feminism and kyriarchy, with infiltration and self-sacrifice representing forms of Natasha's resistance despite sexist structures that disadvantage women.⁶ This finding supports examining sacrifice as simultaneously a form of resistance and a mechanism of limitation. Focusing on Endgame therefore extends existing scholarship by connecting female agency, sacrificial action, and unequal gendered narrative recognition within superhero storytelling.

Another dimension involves the ideological construction of feminist representation across the Marvel universe, where Natasha's development unfolds through multiple MCU films. Her death in Endgame influences interpretations of the later Black Widow film, while earlier portrayals establish the narrative conditions through which her sacrifice becomes meaningful. According to Iturregui-Motiloa, feminist and visual analyses of Marvel narratives demonstrate that superhero stories communicate ideological meanings concerning feminism, gender, history, and power beneath fantasy and science-fiction conventions.⁷ This perspective indicates that gender analysis should examine not only individual scenes but also recurring narrative structures and character patterns across films. Accordingly, analyzing Natasha's death and the recognition surrounding it can expose how progressive superhero narratives negotiate feminist ideals while simultaneously reproducing established gender hierarchies.

⁵ Miriam Kent, "Beyond the Red Room: Cold War II, Genre and Feminism in Marvel Studios' Black Widow," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 42, no. 3 (2025): 647–674, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10509208.2024.2428870>.

⁶ Nur Alifia Putri Saptiadi, Ririn Kurnia Trisnawati, dan Mia Fitria Agustina, "Post-structural Feminism to Fight Kyriarchy: A Case of Black Widow (2021)," *LANGUAGE CIRCLE: Journal of Language and Literature* 17, no. 1 (2022): 140–149, <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/nju/LC/article/view/36317>.

⁷ Víctor Iturregui-Motiloa, "Feminism and geopolitics through Marvel Cinematic Universe: Ideology and History within Fantasy in Black Widow, Wandavision and Dr. Strange," *Historia Y Comunicación Social* 28, no. 1 (2023): 227–238, <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/HICS/en/article/view/85154>.

Building on the preceding discussion, this study examines female sacrifice and gendered recognition through Natasha Romanoff in *Avengers: Endgame*. It addresses a research gap by connecting scholarship on female representation with the unequal narrative recognition associated with Natasha's and Tony Stark's deaths. The study further employs feminist film analysis to explore tensions among female agency, sacrificial heroism, and patriarchal narrative structures without portraying Natasha solely as either a victim or an uncomplicated feminist hero. Sacrifice and recognition are therefore examined as interconnected dimensions of gender representation within superhero cinema. Accordingly, the research asks how Black Widow is constructed through female sacrifice in *Avengers: Endgame* and how differences in narrative recognition between Black Widow and Tony Stark reveal gendered power relations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design and feminist perspective to investigate female sacrifice and gendered recognition in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). According to Creswell, qualitative research is suitable for examining meanings, experiences, and social phenomena through careful interpretation of textual and visual social cultural materials.⁸ According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative inquiry interprets cultural texts by attending to context, meaning, representation, and power.⁹ The feminist perspective therefore guides the analysis of how gender relations, agency, sacrifice, power, and recognition are constructed within the film's narrative and cinematic language. Through this interpretive framework, the study examines how Natasha Romanoff's sacrifice is represented, how her death is narratively recognized, and how these representations reveal gendered structures of heroism and value.

The research examines *Avengers: Endgame*, directed by Anthony and Joe Russo and produced by Marvel Studios, as the primary object of analysis. According to Moleong, qualitative research requires systematic procedures for selecting, collecting, interpreting, and validating data to ensure that findings remain aligned with the research focus.¹⁰ Data were gathered through observation and documentation of scenes, dialogue, character actions, visual composition, and narrative consequences relevant to the research questions. Nine

⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014).

⁹ Norman K. Denzin dan Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5 ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2017).

¹⁰ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2021).

purposively selected scenes formed the analytical corpus: Scenes 1–6 at 29:38, 15:59, 35:42, 37:28, 38:56, and 56:54, depicting Natasha's interactions with Steve, Tony, Bruce, and Clint. Scenes 7–9 at 1:53:15, 1:57:20, and 2:37:41 respectively portray Natasha's sacrifice on Vormir, the Avengers' response to her death, and Tony Stark's funeral film.

Data analysis was conducted through three stages. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, qualitative analysis involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.¹¹ First, relevant scenes were selected and classified according to the research questions, then examined through dialogue, actions, setting, camera techniques, character positioning, and narrative functions. Second, these descriptions were interpreted through feminist concepts of female agency, patriarchal power, sacrifice, and recognition, with particular attention to contrasts between Natasha's death and Tony's funeral. According to Sugiyono, qualitative analysis requires interpretive procedures that organize and verify findings.¹² Finally, interpretations were validated by comparing selected scenes, dialogue, narrative consequences, research questions, and theoretical concepts to ensure analytical consistency and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Analysis of nine purposively selected scenes demonstrates that Natasha Romanoff is constructed as a character fulfilling important emotional, relational, and heroic functions within the Avengers. Scene 1 at 29:38 depicts her rejecting Steve Rogers' suggestion to accept the post-Snap condition and resume an ordinary life because she believes the Avengers must continue their mission. Scene 2 at 15:59 presents Natasha encouraging Steve before confronting Thanos, while Scene 3 at 35:42 portrays her persuading Tony Stark to join the time-heist plan. Collectively, these scenes position Natasha as a source of motivation, emotional stability, and responsibility rather than merely a combat-oriented superhero. Her contribution emerges through commitment to others, dedication to the mission, and willingness to subordinate personal needs to the group's survival.

Scenes 4, 5, and 6 further reveal Natasha's sustained role in providing emotional support to male characters confronting guilt, uncertainty, and personal crisis. At 37:28, she reassures Bruce Banner that no one holds him responsible, while at 38:56 she strengthens

¹¹ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, dan Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Cet. 3. (California: SAGE Publications, 2014).

¹² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2020).

his confidence by affirming his ability to accomplish the mission of reversing the Snap. At 56:54, Natasha confronts Clint Barton in Tokyo, challenges his destructive identity as Ronin, and redirects him toward their shared responsibility to restore those who disappeared. These scenes indicate that Natasha repeatedly regulates and supports the emotions of others, whereas her own emotional struggles receive comparatively limited narrative attention, establishing emotional responsibility as a recurring dimension of her heroism before her eventual physical sacrifice on Vormir.

Scene 7 at 1:53:15 presents the clearest manifestation of female sacrifice through Natasha's confrontation with Clint Barton on Vormir. After learning that the Soul Stone demands a life, both characters seek to sacrifice themselves, yet Natasha deliberately overcomes Clint's efforts to protect her and falls from the cliff. Her death therefore emerges from a conscious decision rather than accidental circumstances, demonstrating her agency in determining the immediate act of self-sacrifice. However, its narrative consequence serves the Avengers' broader mission, since Natasha's death allows Clint to secure the Soul Stone and rejoin the team. The finding thus constructs Natasha simultaneously as an autonomous heroic subject who consciously chooses death and as a narrative mechanism whose sacrifice enables the predominantly male-centered mission to continue.

Scene 8 at 1:57:20 depicts the Avengers receiving news of Natasha's death on Vormir, followed by a brief collective acknowledgment before their attention returns to restoring those lost through the Snap. Clint explains the circumstances surrounding her sacrifice, while the group recognizes that obtaining the Soul Stone allows their larger mission to continue. Natasha receives no extended funeral sequence or sustained memorial comparable to Tony Stark's later on-screen funeral, a distinction also discussed by the film's writers. Consequently, the scene frames her death primarily through its functional contribution to the mission rather than an extended commemoration of her individual identity. This finding highlights how Natasha's heroic contribution remains closely connected to collective success, while her personal legacy receives comparatively limited narrative emphasis.

Scene 9 at 2:37:41 portrays Tony Stark's funeral as an extended sequence featuring his family, the Avengers, and figures from his history. The scene uses a slower emotional pace, solemn music, collective attendance, attention to Tony and his family, and reactions acknowledging his heroic contributions. Compared with Scene 8, the contrast indicates that Natasha and Tony both sacrifice their lives against Thanos, yet their deaths receive unequal levels of narrative attention. Natasha's death enables acquisition of the Soul Stone, whereas

Tony's death becomes a major emotional resolution within the overall Avengers storyline. The finding demonstrates that heroic sacrifice does not guarantee equivalent narrative recognition, because remembrance differs in form, duration, visibility, and emotional intensity between female and male characters.

Across the nine scenes, the findings reveal three interconnected patterns concerning female sacrifice and narrative recognition. First, Natasha consistently performs emotional and organizational labor that supports the decisions and development of male Avengers, particularly Steve, Tony, Bruce, and Clint. Second, her ultimate sacrifice demonstrates personal agency while removing her from the continuing narrative and enabling the Avengers' mission to succeed. Third, the contrast between the limited acknowledgment of Natasha's death and Tony's extended funeral reveals differences in screen attention, emotional representation, collective mourning, and memorialization. These findings address the first research question by demonstrating that female sacrifice involves sustained emotional responsibility and self-sacrifice, while addressing the second by showing that recognition varies according to each heroic character's gendered narrative position.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Natasha's heroism extends beyond physical combat, encompassing emotional support, strategic persuasion, and concern for her fellow Avengers. Her encouragement of Steve, Tony, Bruce, and Clint establishes a model of heroism grounded in care, relational labor, and responsibility rather than spectacular physical power. Gransden argues that contemporary female superhero narratives can simultaneously promote female empowerment and restrict women's agency through narrative structures that limit its continuation, especially when the female body becomes associated with a completed or closed past.¹³ This framework clarifies how Natasha is portrayed as capable, decisive, and influential while her actions remain oriented toward other characters' needs and development. Consequently, her agency appears through individual decisions, yet narrative continuity significantly constrains its lasting expression.

The emotional functions identified in Scenes 1–6 indicate that Natasha's heroism is strongly shaped by care, responsibility, and the regulation of collective emotions. Rather than merely contributing to Avengers' decisions, she consistently assists male characters in confronting hesitation, guilt, grief, and uncertainty, enabling the shared mission to persist.

¹³ Elvira M. Gransden, "Empowerment and Objectification: Dual Perspectives on Female Superheroes in Contemporary Cinema," *Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities* 3, no. 12 (2024): 16–22, <https://www.pioneerpublisher.com/jrssh/article/view/1134>.

Griffin's study of affect and fandom surrounding *Avengers: Endgame* shows that gendered interpretations are closely related to emotional responses and competing perceptions of whose experiences receive legitimacy and cultural significance.¹⁴ Natasha's emotional labor should therefore be recognized as an essential component of her heroic identity rather than reduced to supportive assistance for male-centered actions. This pattern further indicates that superhero narratives may position women as relational caregivers while granting men greater visibility, authority, and centrality within heroic decision-making.

The Vormir sequence exposes tension between personal agency and structural constraint, as Natasha deliberately chooses self-sacrifice rather than becoming a passive victim. Her confrontation with Clint shows that she understands the consequences and resists his effort to take her place, framing the act as a conscious exercise of bodily autonomy. Hidayat interprets Natasha's death as both empowering and containing because her voluntary sacrifice expresses bodily agency while simultaneously ending her presence as a continuing heroic subject.¹⁵ This tension matters because viewing Natasha solely as powerless neglects her deliberate choice, whereas treating the scene only as empowerment obscures the gendered consequences of her disappearance. The sequence illustrates how feminist agency can operate within structures that restrict women's lasting visibility and recognition.

Natasha's sacrifice reflects a broader trajectory of identity, redemption, and belonging developed throughout her MCU characterization. Her choice to save Clint aligns with her transformation from a guilt-laden assassin into a character who understands herself through loyalty to a chosen community. Ariani, Pratama, and Pratami argue that Natasha's MCU development involves self-acceptance, belonging, emotional attachment, and purpose, culminating in her sacrifice in *Avengers: Endgame* as the completion of this trajectory.¹⁶ This supports the present finding that Natasha's death is not an isolated occurrence but the culmination of a character who progressively identifies the Avengers as her surrogate family. Nevertheless, fulfilling her personal journey through death generates gendered tension, as her attainment of belonging simultaneously ends her participation within that community.

The contrast between Natasha's mourning and Tony's funeral becomes meaningful when recognition is viewed as a narrative process rather than an emotional reaction.

¹⁴ Matt Griffin, "'That Moment Meant a Lot to My Daughter': Affect, Fandom, and *Avengers: Endgame*," *Feminist Media Studies* 23, no. 7 (2023): 3106–3121, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2022.2098801>.

¹⁵ Nur Hidayat, "Gender Empowerment in *Black Widow* (2021)," *LITERA KULTURA: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (2022): 32–41, <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/litera-kultura/article/view/53664>.

¹⁶ Nada Ariani, Rizky Mirani Desi Pratama, dan Mentari Pratami, "The Journey of Self-Acceptance and Belonging in Natasha Romanoff's Character in the Marvel Studios Films," *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia* 17, no. 2 (2025): 307–324, <https://ejournal.uinsatu.ac.id/index.php/lb/article/view/11449>.

Recognition involves acknowledging a character's contribution while determining how long that contribution remains visible, how others respond, and whether significance is established. Niza's semiotic study of *Black Widow* explains that Natasha's feminist representation develops through narrative, dialogue, action, cinematography, music, and cinematic codes, indicating that meaning results from their interaction rather than dialogue alone.¹⁷ Applied to *Endgame*, this perspective suggests that recognition is shaped through duration, editing, music, participation, and visual emphasis. Tony's funeral sustains heroic memory, whereas Natasha's brief mourning provides less narrative space for remembrance of her contribution.

The contrast should not imply that Tony is heroic whereas Natasha is not, since both make decisive sacrifices that directly contribute to defeating Thanos. The difference instead lies in how the film structures the aftermath of their deaths and assigns unequal narrative continuity to their sacrifices. Himika and Ahmed argue that female superhero narratives can increase women's visibility while simultaneously limiting their political and narrative possibilities through structures that confine their stories to completed moments or historical spaces.¹⁸ Natasha's sacrifice reflects this tension because her action remains essential to the mission, yet her participation ends with her death. Tony, however, remains central to the ending's emotional structure, as his death enables sustained collective remembrance, familial recognition, and lasting narrative closure.

The findings challenge interpretations that frame Natasha's death solely as patriarchal victimization, since the Vormir sequence emphasizes her decision-making power. By resisting Clint, controlling the final confrontation, and deciding who survives, Natasha maintains agency despite the fatal consequences of her choice. Putri et al. similarly argue that Natasha represents feminist resistance to the loss of female identity and autonomy, particularly through opposition to systems regulating women's bodies and choices.¹⁹ Nevertheless, *Endgame* transforms this resistance from confronting male domination into a voluntary sacrifice undertaken for the collective mission. Consequently, the film presents ambivalent empowerment, as Natasha exercises agency at the moment of choice, yet this

¹⁷ Maria Fitriani Ainun Niza, "Feminism Representation in Black Widow (2021)," *LITERA KULTURA: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2023): 63–71, <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/litera-kultura/article/view/53560>.

¹⁸ Jannatul Ferdous Himika dan Sk. Sabbir Ahmed, "From Sidekicks to Superheroes: The Evolution of Female Representation in the Marvel Cinematic Universe," *IJRIS: International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 9, no. 3 (2025): 3204–3220, <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/from-sidekicks-to-superheroes-the-evolution-of-female-representation-in-the-marvel-cinematic-universe/>.

¹⁹ Vira Farhatul Maula Somantri Putri et al., "Empowerment Versus Commodification: The Contradictory Representation of Women in Black Widow (2021)," *Lingua Cultura* 19, no. 2 (2025): 169–177, <https://journal.binus.ac.id/index.php/lingua/article/view/13898>.

agency becomes less visible after her death when narrative attention shifts toward surviving characters and their emotional consequences.

This study's novelty connects female sacrifice with gendered recognition rather than examining Natasha's death solely through agency, representation, or feminist empowerment. It demonstrates that her heroism develops from emotional labor to strategic and relational intervention, culminating in bodily sacrifice on Vormir. The analysis treats narrative recognition as a distinct dimension of gender representation by comparing Natasha's death with Tony Stark's funeral through duration, emotional emphasis, collective mourning, and memorialization. These contrasts indicate that unequal recognition may remain even when female and male characters undertake heroic acts of self-sacrifice. Accordingly, the study offers an interpretation of *Avengers: Endgame*, arguing that its feminist significance concerns not merely Natasha's agency, but whether her agency receives comparable narrative value, remembrance, and continuity after sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that Black Widow, embodied by Natasha Romanoff in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), represents female sacrifice through emotional labor, strategic intervention, relational responsibility, and physical self-sacrifice. Analysis of nine purposively selected scenes reveals that her heroism extends beyond combat and individual strength, appearing through efforts to assist Steve, Tony, Bruce, and Clint. Scenes 1–6 portray Natasha motivating fellow Avengers, managing emotional tensions, reinforcing confidence, and directing collective efforts toward their mission. These actions position her as an active heroic figure whose agency emerges through decisions, leadership, and responsibility for others. Scene 7, at 1:53:15, completes this trajectory when Natasha consciously sacrifices herself on Vormir to secure the Soul Stone and stop Clint from replacing her. Her decision reflects agency, yet remains ambivalent because her sacrifice ends her narrative continuation while enabling surviving Avengers to pursue their mission. Thus, female sacrifice signifies autonomy while simultaneously terminating the female hero's narrative future.

The study further demonstrates that the contrast between Natasha's death and Tony Stark's death illustrates different patterns of gendered narrative recognition. Scene 8 at 1:57:20 portrays a comparatively short collective reaction to Natasha's death, as the narrative soon shifts back toward the Avengers' mission following the acquisition of the Soul Stone. Conversely, Scene 9 at 2:37:41 devotes substantial emotional and memorial attention to

Tony's funeral, bringing together his family, fellow Avengers, and characters associated with his personal and heroic journey. Although both characters perform decisive sacrifices that contribute to Thanos's defeat, their deaths receive unequal narrative duration, emotional emphasis, communal mourning, and memorial treatment. This contrast suggests that heroic agency does not necessarily ensure equivalent recognition within narrative structures. Natasha's sacrifice primarily serves collective survival, whereas Tony's death receives greater space to preserve personal memory and heroic legacy. This study therefore connects female sacrifice with gendered recognition, emphasizing agency, remembrance, value, and narrative continuity.

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