

From Resist to Exist: The Existence of a Woman in Novel *Layangan Putus*

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Abstract

This research is on literary criticism which discusses on women's existences in fighting against gender inequality. The source of data is taken from novel entitled Layangan Putus whose the main character as the woman, called Kinan. Techniques of collecting data uses literature review and library research. While the data analysis uses the interactive models by data condensation, display, and conclusion. Findings showed that there are three existences of the woman to fight the gender inequality, namely being a worker to prosper herself, being a well-educated woman to solve the problems with her ex-husband, to control her feelings while raising her children, and being a social transformer to keep her head facing on the past life, giving lessons to learn by women who fight against gender inequality such as stereotype, subordination, domestic violence, and double burden. To conclude, women should also prioritize themselves even though they get married and never limit their existences to live and to decide their own life.

Keywords: resist; exist; existence; woman; layangan putus

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the widely assumed beliefs is that actually women were made down below the men's rib. The metaphor itself, however, has been widely misinterpreted and made many people believe that the female is a subservient being that came down from man. A literal meaning of this sort is contrary to the principle of human dignity and against the essence of religion. In the philosophical understanding of Islam, various hadiths cite that women were compared to being down below a rib, including narrations found in Al-Bukhari No. 3261, Muslim No. 3601, Al-Nasa'i No. 9050, Ahmad No. 19714, and Al-Darimi No. 2222. However, such narrations have been mostly misinterpreted without proper contextual analysis, thus giving way to misapprehensions. For one, the narration found in Al-Nasa'i No. 9050 accounts that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) made this statement:

"Advise women, for women were created from a rib, and the most crooked part is its uppermost. If you try to straighten it, you will break it, but if you leave it, it remains crooked. So, treat women kindly."

When read superficially, this description seems to insinuate that women ontologically originate as men's ribs, by allusion to the account of Adam and Eve. However, such a literalist interpretation threatens to affirm the subordination of women and ratify male dominance of societal structures. Here, Beauvoir (2011) remarks in *The Second Sex* that women are all too often confined to the sphere of *immanence*, bound to passivity and service, while males fulfill the role of agents of transcendence and liberation. Such a setup forces

the internalization of inferiority by women, subjecting themselves to male authority and muting their own subject. In a similar vein, Butler, (2016) contends in *Gender Trouble* that gender norms discursively construct the power relations between asymmetrical terms to make inequality second nature, ontologizing rather than positing on societal contingency. Among Islamic scholars, however, feminist scholars Wadud (1999) and Barlas (2002) refuse androcentric interpretations of scripture, insisting that the metaphor of the rib was misappropriated to justify the subordination of women. For Wadud, the Qur'an establishes the moral and spiritual equality of men and women, while Barlas resists androcentric hermeneutics that conceal such an egalitarian morality. Through this common feminist perspective, this misinterpretation of the rib metaphor not only corrupts theological meaning but serves instead to act as a tool of patriarchal domination, qualifying male arbitrariness, even violence, by assuming that inwardly, women lack rights of equality (Fadlillah, 2019).

To clarify, the hadith is interpreted much more deeply with the Nash Al-Qur'an, the historical facts, and scientific theories which state that men and women are created from the same substance in Surah Al-Mu'minun: 12-14, undeniable within the words in Al-Ma'a, Al-Nafs, At-Tin, Al-Turab, and Al-Nutfah that the process of human creation, women are just likened to the ribs of men. (Shihab, 2014) also confirms that in hadith of Al-Bukhari No. 3261, The Prophet Muhammad Saw treats women are likened to the ribs of men. By interpreting the hadith, the imagery of crooked ribs

has a meaning that there is a reflection of the uncertainty of women's attitude and morals, could change from one condition to another. Both men and women, therefore, they should be wisely act in dealing with women's fickle attitudes. For men, they are expectedly to protect, guide, and kindly advise women without imposing a will that suppresses their minds, harassment and commits to violence against them. Women, however are also expected to tend to their attitude and self-respect. This message actually means that in the religious texts such as Islam, women and men remain equal in the presence of Allah SWT, and they have the same rights and obligations (Agustin, 2017).

Turning from Islamic philosophy, the perspective of woman beings is created from the rib of a man is extremely refuted by a Western philosopher and also a feminist icon, Simone de Beauvoir, is well known as an existentialist, one of the pioneers in the theory of existential feminism. Beauvoir (2011) by her words, saying of 'one is not born but rather becomes a woman'. The resemblance of those hadiths stated previously above and the utterances of Beauvoir, it is clearly stated that women are created or born from the ribs of men but the social construction of society misinterprets and brings the unease out of people. Whereas, both men and women are born to live and to complete each other, especially in marriage.

In marriage, as a wife, woman has a big expectation that her marriage will bring much happiness, harmony, love, warm, and mutualism through building a household. This means, a couple may have the same vision in terms of taking care each other and also raising their children. Reality speaks on the contrary, to build a harmonious household is not easy. If a couple is not able to survive through any problem, divorce may come as the inevitable solution (Saidah, 2017).

In literary works such novels, women are often used as the topics related to their roles, attitudes, characters, and survivals. Muslimat (2000) states that some novels published in 2000s until now, still discusses the story of women in any context such as marriage. In this research, a novel entitled *Layangan Putus* is used as the source of the data, amazingly written by a woman based on her true story. This novel successfully becomes a best seller in 2021 which tells the story of a married woman with the social status of being a daughter, a loyal wife, a sister-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and a beloved mother for her children. (Rini et al., 2014) also assume that the characteristics of a novel tells more complex plot, story, and settings rather than poetry or short stories.

Choosing novel *Layangan Putus* has a focus on constructing the existence of a woman as the main character. According to Hassan (2005) who understands the existentialism of Sartre, existence is the way of how humans show their existence by creating values and being responsible for their life.

In this novel, the story tells the existence of a woman as the main character who fight against gender inequality in her marriage. As Fakhri (1996) mentions five types of gender inequality, they are marginalization, subordination, stereotype, violence, and double burden.

Speaking of the existences of the woman in novel *Layangan Putus*, right before and after her marriage, it is necessary to have a good grip of existentialism as well as Beauvoir (2016) proposes that there are four strategies of a woman can do to set her free from a man in the name of existential feminism such as free to choose being a worker, a social transformer, an intellectual person, and independent woman. Because of the concept is about the existence in domestic domain, such as marriage and a household, feminism on the existentialism of Beauvoir can be proposed. Kurnianto (2021) said that existential feminism is quite different from other genres such as socialism, radicalism, liberalism, gynocritical-psychoanalysis, and others, which tend to lead to the public domain, not the domestic one. However, the first point goes to stir up this research is taken from some previous studies about the feminism in the relation to face on gender inequality issues where women are often labelled as the inferior human beings. This phenomenon comes from a doctrine in Indonesia which is mostly called as patriarchal culture.

Research in the scope of socio-literature, peculiarly on feminism, must have curiosity to pay attention to the cultures of two human beings, men and women in the social relations without ruining each other. Studying on Beauvoir's theory on existential feminism for this current research, it is notably considered as a way to prevent a misunderstanding on moral values, cultures, and norms for people in Indonesia. Considering that this idea came from Western, both writers and literary academics are required to conduct further research in order to provide an understanding which does not conflict with the ideology of people in Indonesia. For example from a previous relevant research conducted by Nugroho et al., (2019), the analysis was about the existence of a wife who fought against her husband in the form of attempted murder because she could not stand on her husband's attitudes and characters towards domestic violence and affair. Certainly, this is not a form of woman's existences which can be accepted and done by the people in Indonesia, because trying to kill someone's life is not a solution to being free. Since this kind of crime has been regulated in the provisions of the law, article 53 of the criminal code in Indonesia. In fact, this is said to be brutal crime not the act of feminism, that is the existential one. Because Indonesian people are still encouraged to obey the law, unless women will be regarded into a negative perspective as men's servants at all times.

Based on the explanations above, this research is expected to construct woman's existences for fighting against gender inequality. The existences may form fights and survivals of a woman, particularly on feminism in a literary work, novel *Layangan Putus*. Also, Indonesian people are well-known to uphold the values of divinity, cultures, morals, and aesthetics which are the symbols of their own comparing to other nations. This actually means that women must be seen wisely to reach their freedom and survivals for a better life. Beauvoir's theory is expected to show women in Indonesia, claiming for the equality, rights and justice because women are also given responsibility, attitude as well as men to bear all risks posed by their lives and choices according to the provisions in the norms of the society, worthy, dignity, and tendency as women.

II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

EXISTENCE, m

Existence can be interpreted as something that considers human existence in the dynamic form not static, human often moves from possibility to reality. This process will assume that humans have freedom that leads to courage, particularly in making and settling their lives. Suriani (2017) argues that existence is a human process to do all things to be existed. As a matter of fact, nothing can exist except human who are able to get out of themselves beyond their biological side and their physical environment, trying hard not to be restrained from all the limitations they have.

In the term of existence, human means having freedom that other creatures do not have. The freedom in question is the freedom to be responsible for one's own life, to make choices, and to be ready to accept the consequences of that choice (Pratiwi, 2016). Every human being wants to show his existence in various ways, some even do it out of the ordinary. Its existence in the end becomes an achievement of self-love attitude so that it becomes an interesting phenomenon to observe and to conduct. Lumban Batu (2007), meanwhile adds that self-actualization is the highest life achievement done by each individual. Every human certainly has a necessity to recognize his existence in the society which then becomes a part of the community itself.

Humans have freedom in their lives because it refers to a potential in forming themselves. The way of human existence is very synonymous with behavior and moral judgments. Yussafina (2015) assumes on the concept of Sartre that humans as existences that precede their essence, means that humans are said to be beings who have the absolute freedom thus there is nothing to limit the freedom. There is an existential aspect in humans to try for determining their quality, finding out their

personality through actions based on awareness and freedom.

Accordingly, discussing on the human existence, there is a philosophy termed as existentialism. The existentialism refers to the existence of how human live in a different dimension in the world as the objects. That is also how humans recognize their souls while the essence is the value or the quality that make things what they are. (Beauvoir, 2004) defines that human can not be defined before they exist, even women must be able to exist to become what they want. Beauvoir's concept of existence views humans as having a big responsibility for their actions, particularly when they are dealing with a world that is increasingly revealing modern existence, thus human characteristics and nature emerge. Even though humans are haunted by their own fear but also followed by a sense of courage when making decisions, humans act alone without other people helping for themselves and mankind. In the social phenomena, existence affects the culture that develops within the society.

The existence that is being discussed in this research is woman's existence as one of human life representation. Literature, furthermore becomes a scope and the embodiment of culture as well as a social representation of its society such as a woman. As Ratih (2019) argues that women in general are the members of society who have various social activities and reflected in cultural moments. Those can be poured into literary works because literary works are taken from the process of creation and imagination of the happenings.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research applies a qualitative approach with the focus on identifying meaning, providing description, clarification, and situating data within its contexts. The qualitative approach essentially aims to comprehend social phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically, including linguistic features expressed in words. In line with qualitative Mahsun (2005), research may also be conducted through library research which emphasizes the systematic collection, reading, and critical analysis of various written sources relevant to the research problem. This method allows the researcher to construct interpretations and theoretical insights not merely from empirical observation, but also from the depth of conceptual and textual studies, thereby enriching the analytical framework of qualitative inquiry.

In this case, the primary source of data is novel entitled *Layangan Putus* and the secondary data to support is taken from reading books, thesis, and previous relevant studies. While the technique of collecting data dominantly uses the library research, by reading and taking notes to process the materials thus the researcher deals directly with texts to texts such as journals, books, and other

available documents both printed and electronic.

Techniques of data analysis right here is based on interactive models Miles et al., (2014) which has three categories namely data condensation, data display, and conclusion. In the data condensation, it reduces the data by selecting, simplifying, and transforming data which is related to woman's existences in novel *Layangan Putus*. Afterwards, the data is transferred and displayed in the forms of description to answer the main problem of the research. Then, the last stage is the researcher draws the conclusion to verify the findings.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theoretically to answer the problem of the research that is about how the woman's existences play their parts in novel *Layangan Putus*, the findings are analyzed based on the concept of Beauvoir, discussing on existential feminism to fight against gender inequality within four categories, specifically a hard worker, a well-educated woman, a social transformer, and an independent woman. In this case, the main character as a woman plays her roles as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a daughter-in-law, a sister, and ended up as an ex-wife, particularly as a single parent to raise her four little boys with her life decisions. Here are the existences of the woman, namely *Kinan* as the main character.

The Existence as A Working Mother

The main character of *Kinan* in this novel is a woman who was born from a working mother. *Kinan* inherited the persistence of her mother. *Kinan*, a woman since graduating from veterinarian school, has dreamt of opening a veterinary clinic as her interest and skill to take care of animals. Before marrying *Aris*, her husband, *Kinan* wanted to continue her role as a worker and also as wife and a mither for her beloved children. However, her husband asked her to put off her dream through a housewife. *Kinan* then considered to prioritize her household and be devoted to *Aris*. She thought all the husband's decisions are the best and there is nothing better than obeying her husband's wishes for the rest of her life. *Kinan* expected that *Aris* was able to support her physically and financially but the reality turned around when she was betrayed because *Aris* had married to another woman and destroyed their marriage for along years with four sons into the harsh life right after her husband had never proposed polygamy.

It is hard for *Kinan* to accept the reality because of betrayal and their marriage was ended up to a divorce but for the sake of a pride, she denied to live under the same roof with her husband's second wife, *Lidya*. Thus, she started to a new journey and continue to reach her ambition, working for a veterinarian. She knows that her ex-husband will never ignore his responsibility to raise and to support their children financially but she is

now no longer his own responsibility so as a working mom, it is the one way to prove that she could forget and move on her past to prosper herself without letting away her role as a mother.

Alhamdulillah, klinik kami berjalan pelan-pelan. Aku dan sahabatku Dita tinggal disana sementara dan mengoperasikannya seadanya. Benar-benar kami rintis dari bawah, dari nol. Kami belum mempunyai pegawai. Semua kami kerjakan sendiri. (ASF, 2020, pp. 21)

Alhamdulillah, our clinic is running smoothly. I and my bestfriend, Dita live there temporarily and operate it as much as possible. We really started from nothing to anything. We don't recruit any employees yet we do it all by ourselves.

Based on the existential feminism theory proposed by Beauvoir, one of the strategies to fight against gender inequality for women is the achievement of being workers outside of home. There would be a positive impact of being a worker in a family for a woman as a financial support. By working, family needs will be fulfilled. However, not all husbands in the context of marriages give their wives authority to participate in making a living and earning money because women are reasonably to take care of household, to serve what husbands need and to raise their children. Beauvoir, in that case, absolutely denies this situation in terms of gender equality and feminism because it actually makes women will have limitation to move and to partipate in social context. Thus, this reason refers women have no freedom to choose their own life because of stereotype which labels them in domestic affairs, handling household ((Ningsih, 2006).

From the psychological aspect, women who do not work and only handling household tend to feel bored and oppressed. Comparing right before marriage life, those women had taken up her education well, their life achievement particularly ambition, will not be reached. The industrial sector, furthermore, working women will actually fulfill the availability of human resources based on their skills, qualification and company requirements.

Setelah mantap merencanakan membuka klinik hewan di Malang dengan para sahabat, aku segera pergi ke Malang untuk setting lokasi. Aku memboyong keempat anakku melalui jalur darat, karena bertepatan pula dengan libur semester pertama dan libur akhir tahun sekolah mereka. Mereka menemaniku membangun klinik. (ASF, 2020, pp.11)

After firmly planning to open a veterinary clinic in Malang with my friends, I immediately went to Malang to look for a location. I brought my four children by land because coincidentally it was their first semester and at the end of school holidays. They accompanied me to build a clinic.

From the Data 2 above, it is clearly described that opening a clinic has been her future plan since she was single and it was realized after he officially got divorced with *Aris*. *Kinan* had no trouble to look for a job because she is expert on examining or taking care of pets. Based on her bachelor degree, she could perfectly look for a vacancy to fulfill the criteria as a veterinarian. Now, *Kinan* does look busier in her attention, both working and being a mother but she definitely enjoys herself because it leads to know herself much more by introspecting the past, and she is ready to live for

better future with her four beloved sons so that is why diligence is the mother of good fortune.

The Existence as Intellectual Woman

In this novel, *Kinan* is known as well-educated woman. She got her bachelor degree in veterinary school based on her will and skill. Before and after marriage, *Kinan* still show her behavior and intelligence by logically thinking and problem solving than *Aris*, her ex-husband. When she decided to get divorced, she still needs to communicate well with him for the sake of raising their children. She always tries to keep her head, facing and solving problem with *Aris*. She is more patient and does not want to pursue negative emotions. *Kinan* is succumb and careful when talking to *Aris* about children. This can be seen when *Aris* could not control himself in furocity and did not want to respect *Kinan*'s decision. *Kinan* actually does not want to spend her time fighting with *Aris* which may have a bad effect on psychology of her children who do not understand the point of divorce. Thus, *Kinan* feels that *Aris* is the one who should fix himself a lot, specifically on the situation which is no longer in marriage.

"Ini rumahku, Bu!" nada ketus tampak jelas dalam pesannya. "Kembalikan barang-barangku ke tempat semula!". "NGGAK ADA!". AKAN KU USIR SEMUA YANG MASUK KE SANA! ITU RUMAH ANAK-ANAK, RUMAH AAMIR, ARYA, ALMAN, DAN ABY! Stop membuat saya sakit hati!. Stop menyakitit saya. Saya sudah berusaha baik selama ini". "Pak, bukankah kesepakatan kita sudah jelas, rumah dan mobil saya manfaatkan untuk anak-anak?" "NGGAK ADA KESEPAKATAN".

"This is my house!", A curt tone was evidently said in his message. "Give me back my stuffs!". "NONSENSE!" "I WILL THROW OUT ANYONE WHO TRIES TO LIVE IN THERE! THAT'S MY SONS', AAMIR, ARYA, ALMAN, AND ABY". "Stop hurting me!" "Stop making me hurt!" I've been done everything to fix it. "But, Sir..that's our agreement, it is clear, isn't it?" I use that house and the car just to facilitate the children". "NO DEAL". (ASF, 2020, pp. 73-74)

It can be seen the high tone, pitched from *Aris* in his texts. He refused *Kinan*'s intention to rent out their old house for their children's financial support, particularly for their school activities. *Kinan* tried to relieve *Aris* for supporting their children financially. She just wanted to help *Aris*, offering a solution. Otherwise, this triggers conflict between them, *Aris* become annoyed, unable to control his words.

Pesan terakhirku untuknya hanya centang satu dan foto profil Mas Aris menghilang. Ya, dia memblok wa aku. Bahkan telponku diblokir olehnya. Bukan pertama kali aku diblocked oleh Mas Aris. Taka pa, aku sudah terbiasa menghadapi sikap Mas Aris seperti ini. Tapi yang ku sesalkan, hubungan ini pasti akan mempengaruhi komunikasinya dengan anak-anak. (ASF, 2020, pp. 74)

My last message to him was only notified in one ticked, then Mas Aris's profile picture suddenly disappeared. Well, he blocked my whatsapp also my contact. But it is not the first time that I've been blocked. No problem. I'm used to it, dealing with his stubborn doesn't surprise me at all. But the point is, I do feel worried that it will influence the relationship between him and our sons.

Since marriage, *Kinan* often got injustice. She received domestic violence, particularly on

psychological and verbal. She also felt pressured by handling too much household activities, the double burden happened because of *Aris* was not cooperative to help her raise their children. Besides, the stereotype was attached to her as a woman whose naturally gets menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. Those made *Kinan* did not have her quality time to take care of and beautify herself. That is why Beauvoir's idea saying that marriage brings misfortune for women. But this theory are opposed with religion and social cultures in Indonesia which both men and women can live happily together as long as they could respect one to another's decision and cooperatively solve their problems in a marriage. Because marriage is a way for humans to continue what life means to be. *Kinan*, thereof, emphasized that women who get violence, double burden, and stereotype should fight against the gender inequality by using their intelligence to move on and continue their lives. Being smart or well-educated makes women not only reaching for a degree but also protecting and appraising herself, especially for solving problems and threats. Even though women are being single, the intelligence could protect their natural tendency and dignity.

The Existence as A Social Transformer

The other strategy was done by *Kinan* to keep her head is being more rational and realistic. Since her divorce, she wanted to show that a widowed woman cannot be humiliated and does not always have to find another man to protect her. She starts her life being kind, patient, and humble so that she could teach women lessons to learn from her life experience. Then, one day she wrote diary based on her true story in social media. Even though she ever stumbled and fell upon a conflict with his ex-husband, *Aris* and his current wife. Because of her diary, a drop of ink may make a million think. The digital footprint never lies and is continuously monitored by the publics then it has been widely opened to find out the secrets of her life and the identities of *Aris*, and *Lidya*, the woman who existed among them in bizzared love triangle. *Lidya* is the woman who married with *Aris*, as a second wife. She came at the wrong time becoming a thorn between *Kinan* and *Aris*. Whereas a good woman should not take the rights of other women. In terms of love, *Lidya* put and claim herself as a woman who should also have the same position and rights as *Kinan*. Until one day, *Lidya* sends a strange message starting with the intention of apologizing and ending in innuendo and insults that it was *Kinan* who caused the issue of polygamy was discovered by publics. *Lidya* thought that she acted was fair enough than *Kinan*'s.

Perempuan itu pernah mengirimimu permintaan maaf yang bernada rancu. Entah hanya perasaanku saja, prasangka burukku, atau memang isinya menyudutkanku. Permintaan maaf tapi bernada memojokkan. Setidaknya itu yang kurasakan. (ASF, 2020, pp.60)

The woman once sent me a vague apology. I don't know if it's just my feelings, my bad prejudices, or indeed the content insults me. Apologies but undertones. At least that's how I feel.

Although many supports come to *Kinan*, she must be prepared to face satires from *Lidya* who actually feels that her identity has been revealed by many people who call her a mistress in *Kinan's* marriage. As a matter of fact, *Kinan* wants to open up women's views to be exactly wise in their marriage, avoiding divorce. No one wants to get divorced and being a widow, abandoned or left and separated from their children in terms of love, care, and communication with their ex husband

Right here, *Kinan* shows that attitude is priority than words. She always tries to work cooperatively in raising their children even though they got divorced. She does not want to hurt their mentals by knowing that there is no love between them to live together at the same vision. Being a writer now, is one way to transform herself in telling the twist of a relationship, called as marriage. Without having to vilify *Aris* is the main point to save their children. *Kinan* tries to keep her four sons blessed by their father's love. Blood is thicker than water. No matter what happens, they still have a father.

V. CONCLUSIONS

According to findings and discussions, there are three existences of a woman, *Kinan* as the main character found in novel *Layangan Putus*. First, the woman as a worker, a well educated woman, and a social transformer. During the marriage, the woman got some gender inequality such as stereotype, domestic violence in psychological and verbal aspects, subordination, and the double burden. Dominantly she got stereotype and double burden because her ex-husband seldom work together cooperatively in raising their four sons. He thought that a woman naturally does menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding. He also subordinated *Kinan* not to work outside then he betrayed their love by marrying another woman in terms of polygamy without asking for permission. Even Beauvoir's statement that marriage make women miserably live in gender inequalities, women might legally propose wedding agreements to keep their marriage staying last forever in order to avoid divorce and also to protect women's rights and equality without ignoring their goals, bringing the civilization, becoming well-educated and intellectual human beings against gender inequality issues because women often are likened to men's ribs in the way of discrimination and subordination.

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