

The Image of Oppressed Women in the Novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the image of oppressed women in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini. The image of women is explained in two forms, namely physical image and psychological image. A woman's physical image and psychological image tend to be the main points of choice. This is due to the development of the times where beauty standards are starting to form in society so that women experience the disadvantages of forming these standards. Beauty standards that apply in society are having an ideal body shape (slim, tall), symmetrical face shape, white skin, straight hair and many more. The method used is descriptive qualitative where quotation data is described and analyzed. Based on this, this research is included in library research and the researcher acts as an instrument. The research data source is the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal*. The data in the research is in the form of quotations from sentences, paragraphs and narratives of characters that show the image of women in the novel. The technique used is the reading and writing technique. This means that researchers read the novel first to gain an understanding of the content of the novel. After that, the researcher recorded the quotation data found in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal*. Then, the data is analyzed. The results of the research show that the female characters in the novel experience thoughts of physical and psychological images in the form of complaints, understanding, not being noticed and being compared with other women.

Keywords: Novels, oppressed women, physical and psychological images.

Introduction

Nowadays, discussions about women are discussed very often. Women are part of a gender group that has an important role in community life (Hazjahra et al., 2021). Discussions about women involve various aspects such as gender equality, women's rights, women's roles in the family and work as well as social issues involving women. Apart from that, women are always identified as being weak and unable to do things without men's help (Rosita et al., 2021). Women must also obey the orders of their parents or family and cannot choose or make decisions relating to themselves. Therefore, women are the number two group and are oppressed by men and society and their existence is not recognized.

Women often face various kinds of problems and the problems faced by women are different from those faced by men. This causes women to be easily oppressed by men who are considered number one in society (Nurlaily et al., 2022). The forms of oppression experienced by women are very diverse, such as gender discrimination, stereotypes and social pressure, limited access to health and employment services, wage gaps and violence against women. Violence experienced by women can take the form of physical, verbal and psychological violence (Lizawati, 2015). Apart from that, women are a group that experiences a lot of sexual harassment (Yeon, 2022). Sexual harassment experienced by women can be seen in two forms, namely verbal and nonverbal harassment. Verbal harassment includes catcalling, making jokes about certain parts of a woman's body. Meanwhile, nonverbal harassment includes rape, physical touching, either with the hands or eyes.

The oppression experienced by women is not only found in society in the real world but also in the world of fiction such as novels. This is due to the author's interest in the problems experienced by women (Rosita et al., 2021). This interest is represented through the novel he created. Novels are a medium for authors to convey their views on various forms of oppression experienced by women (Majid, 2019). The story in the novel is packaged very well and interestingly by the author so that readers can understand and find the message the author wants to convey through his work. One of the authors who discusses women's problems is Nh. Dini.

Nh. Dini is an Indonesian writer who has written various genres of literary works such as poetry, short stories, dramas and novels. Of the many genres of literary works he created, Nh. Dini is better known as a novelist whose novels discuss settings in countries outside Indonesia. Apart from that, Nh. Dini is also known as an author who intensely discusses women's issues. The novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* is one of the novels by Nh. Dini is the one who talks about women's issues. This novel discusses the character Sri who is the main character. The character Sri is known as a woman who is friendly, gentle, independent, never gives up, has a strong desire to learn new things and is not easily bullied. This novel consists of two parts, namely Dancer and Sailor. The dancer section discusses Sri's childhood and journey to becoming a dancer and working on radio. In this section it is also explained that Sri was an unwanted child when she was little. This influenced Sri so that she became a quiet child and did not want to communicate with other people. However, his father encouraged him to take part in dance activities. After joining the world of dance, Sri was finally able to open up to other people and dared to express her opinion. The sailor section discusses Sri's meeting with Michael, as well as the beginning of the affair between Michael and Sri. This novel also discusses the forms of oppression experienced by the character Sri at the hands of her family, husband and those closest to her. Therefore, the forms of oppression experienced by the female characters in this novel can be analyzed using feminist studies.

Feminism is a study that aims to look at the oppression experienced by women. The presence of feminism shows that there are women's rights that are not fulfilled in terms of work, family, education, politics and many more so they need to be fought for. Equality between women and men is the main goal to be achieved in feminist studies, regardless of gender differences (Wardani & Ratih, 2020). Feminists consider that gender differences cannot be used as an excuse to oppress other people (Stefani et al., 2023). As fellow living creatures who have been given the same reason and wisdom by God, we must look after and protect each other. However, in reality this is not implemented. Many women experience oppression simply because of their status as women (Pratama et al., 2024). In society there are several stereotypes that make women trapped in these stereotypes and make them unable to develop themselves. Therefore, in literary works that discuss women's problems, the author always tells about the suffering and struggles of female characters which are told fictionally by the author, which is expected to provide information to readers that oppression of women really occurs.

The reason this research was conducted was because the researcher saw the oppression experienced by the female characters in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal*. Most of the oppression experienced by female characters can be seen from physical and psychological aspects. This is very important to do because nowadays many people use someone's physical appearance as a joke without knowing that this is bullying because they disparage someone's physical appearance. From a physical perspective, the female character in the novel experiences humiliation of her physical form by her mother and those closest to her. Apart from that, the psychological aspect is related to women's psychology. The form of psychological oppression experienced by the female character in the novel is caused by her husband who always shouts and scolds and does not provide opportunities for the female character to develop herself. This makes the female character psychologically depressed.

There are several studies that discuss the image of oppressed women in novels. The first research is entitled *The Image of Noble Women in the Novel Panggil Aku Kartini Saja* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer: A Symbolic Study of Roland Barthes by (Muawanah et al., 2023). This research aims to discuss the image of noble women in the novel *Panggil Aku Kartini Saja*. Apart from that, this research was carried out because there has not been much research discussing the image of noble women in novels. Furthermore, (Wardani & Ratih, 2020) in research entitled *The Image of Women in the Novel Kala* by Stefani Bella and Syahid Muhammad. There are four images of women that are the focus of this research, (1) physical image, (2) psychological image (3) social image in the family and (4) social image in society. This research uses ideological feminist literary criticism studies to discuss the problems faced by female characters in the novel *Kala*. The third research was conducted by (Eni & Pujiati, 2021) with the title *The Image of Women Based on Social Aspects in Three Characters of Different Generations in the Novel Sunyi Di Dada Sumirah* by Artie Ahmad. The results of this research show that the social image of the Sunti figure in society is that he is looked down upon, likes to help, is oppressed, and upholds customs. For the Sunyi character, the social image in society is being abused, while the Sumirah character is being looked down upon. Sunti's social image in the family is a hard worker and a mother who is full of love for her children; Sumirah's character is never give up and loves her child; The character Sunyi is a child who is devoted to his parents.

Further research was conducted by (Setyanto & Haryadi, 2020), *Representation of the Ideal Female Image in the Black Widow Character*. The Black Widow character in this research shows a representation of the achievement of female identity that goes beyond the body and physique and is related to the qualities that women must achieve. This research aims to find new ideas regarding the ideal representation of women that can be found through other media, namely film. The same research was also conducted by (Wahidah et al., 2024), *Representation of the Image of Women in the Short Story Maria* by A. A. Nafis. This research wants to show the struggle of female figures against the oppression they experience. This is also due to the character of Maria as the main character in the short story who is known as a strong, independent woman who does not depend on men. Apart from that, Maria remained obedient and obedient to her husband.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that research related to the image of women has been carried out by several researchers. The image of women studied is not only from one media but is found in several media such as novels, short stories and films. This shows that research on the image of women is important to do so that women realize how important they are in this life and also becomes a motivation for women to dare to fight against their natural thoughts of oppression. Almost all research uses feminist studies as an analytical tool in research. There are differences between previous studies and this research. The differences can be seen in the study objects used, the problems analyzed and the theoretical focus used to analyze problems in research. Apart from that, there has been no research into the image of oppressed women in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini. Based on this, the formulation of the problem in this research is the forms of images of oppressed women in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini.

Theory and Method

This research is included in the type of qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative descriptive research is research that aims to describe words, sentences, paragraphs and narratives. Based on this, this research aims to describe the image of oppressed women in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal*. Oppression against the image of female characters is divided into three, namely, physical, psychological and social oppression. However, this research only focuses on the physical and psychological image of female characters. The data in this research

are in the form of quotations containing oppression of the image of female characters sourced from the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini.

This research is included in the literature study because the research data comes from novels. In the data collection process, researchers used reading and note-taking techniques. This means that the researcher first read the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* to get an overview and understanding of the contents of the novel. After that, the researcher will record data on quotations that show forms of oppression towards the image of female characters in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini. Data analysis was carried out using the theory of Sugihastuti and Suharto (2016) to find the image of women. According to Sugihastuti (2000: 7) the image of women is a form of spiritual mental image and daily behavior that is expressed in women in various physical and psychological aspects as a woman's self-image as well as family and community aspects as a social image.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we will discuss two aspects of the oppression of the image of female characters in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by Nh. Dini. The explanation of these two aspects is because the female characters in this novel experience a lot of oppression from their physical and psychological aspects. This research uses the theory of feminist literary criticism by Sugihastuti.

1. Oppression of women's physical aspects

Image is a picture or appearance that a person has. Women's image means a woman's self-image or physical appearance as well as the way a person views women in relation to their physical appearance (Fitriani et al., 2018). Physical imagery is also related to the sense of sight, which can be seen implicitly or explicitly in a literary work. This can be seen from the woman's body shape, face, hair color and overall self. According to Sugihastuti (2016), physical image means the physical description of a woman and is only owned by women. Apart from being different from a physical perspective, women and men also have different natures, for example women can conceive, give birth and breastfeed while men cannot (Majid, 2019). Apart from that, there are several parts of women's bodies that are not the same. Physical appearance for a woman is very important, because men usually look at women from their physical appearance first. In fact, a woman's physical image does not determine her worth and character.

Discussion regarding physical image is still an issue that needs to be considered. Nowadays, a woman's physical appearance can determine whether she will be accepted into a group or not and even get a job. Apart from that, the emergence of beauty standards that are promoted within social groups is very detrimental to women. Therefore, the following quotes are presented in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* which show the oppression of the physical image of female characters.

"Tolonglah sedikit, jangan hanya melotot melihat saja dengan matamu yang terlalu besar itu". Kata ibunya. (Dini, 14).

The quote above was said by the mother of the character Sri. It can be seen that Sri's mother asked for help but mentioned her physical form. Indirectly, this was a form of oppression because Sri felt offended by her mother's words. Sri's feelings of offense show that she doesn't like it when other people refer to her physically with the aim of mocking or insulting her. This also shows that most forms of oppression experienced by someone are carried out by their family or those closest to them. Apart from her mother, Sri also experienced physical oppression from her colleagues in the dance community, as seen in the following quote.

“Bakal istriku kulitnya harus tidak begitu hitam, badannya lampai, tinggi badan paling sedikit satu meter enam puluh lima senti. Rambut? Aku tidak begitu memikirkannya. Dia berambut pendek atau panjang sama saja bagiku”. (Dini, 43).

The quote above was said by Basir, one of the dance members. Sri is attracted to Basir and wants to get closer to him. Then Sri asked the criteria for the woman Basir wanted to become his future wife. The words spoken by Basir are not wrong, but they show that every man wants a woman who is white and tall. Basir's statement made Sri embarrassed because these criteria were inversely proportional to hers. This can be seen in the following quote.

“Tiba-tiba aku merasa malu. Aku tidak berkulit kuning langsung. Tubuhku lampai, tidak setinggi yang dikatakannya. Dan rambutku panjang”. (Dini, 44).

In the quote above, it can be seen that Sri was offended and felt inferior to Basir's words. Sri felt that these words were aimed at herself so that Sri would stay away and not expect more from her. Previously, only Sri showed concern and interest in Basir. This quote also shows that women are very sensitive to discussions related to physical form. Fortunately, Sri has her friend Narti who gives her advice not to get too caught up in feelings of low self-esteem, which is shown in the following quote.

“Wanita-wanita seperti kita ini sebetulnya mempunyai banyak pilihan untuk calon suami. Tapi kadang-kadang dan sering-sering orang yang kita pilih tidak memperhatikan kita bukan?” (Dini, 85).

The quote above shows Narti telling Sri that there are many men out there who like them. So far, they have only met men who don't like them. One day someone will come who accepts them as they are without having to look at their physical form. Narti's words were able to make Sri rise again and not be trapped in the past and feelings of inferiority.

Furthermore, the following quote shows Michael comparing Sri's physical form with other women and the physical criteria of the women he likes. This quote occurred when Sri was on a cruise ship that took her to France.

“Aku membanding kedua wanita yang baru beberapa menit yang lalu kukenal. Nyonya Hench dengan pakaiannya yang mengkilap, tubuhnya yang kokoh, dadanya yang menonjol kuat, kulitnya yang putih pucat dan rambutnya yang pirang. Segala warna dan bentuk yang seharusnya bagi seorang wanita barat. Dan nyonya Vincent (Sri), aku kurang bisa mengatakannya. Dia tidak tinggi tetapi badannya nampak berisi dan sehat.” (Dini, 224).

In the quote above, it shows Michael paying attention to the body shape of the female passengers on the ship, namely Mrs. Hench and Mrs. Vincent (Sri). Michael's actions were a form of non-verbal harassment against women which was carried out by paying attention to and assessing the shape of the woman's body. Furthermore, in the following quote,

“Kovash bersera sama dengan aku. Perempuan-perempuan yang tidak terlalu tinggi, lebih baik bertubuh padat tak terlalu berlebihan, berambut coklat atau hitam.” (Dini, 262).

The quote above is more or less the same as the previous quote where Michael describes the ideal female body shape according to him and which meets the requirements of the woman he wants. If the woman he wants to approach does not match his desired criteria, Michael will not approach the woman.

2. Oppression of women's psychological aspects

The psychological aspect is related to a person's psychology both in terms of mentality, attitude and the way a person behaves towards something. Most of those who are targets of this

psychological oppression are women. Oppression against women's psychology cannot be seen through the sense of sight but is felt by the individual who is the object of the oppression (Lizawati & Safitri, 2023). Oppression on women's psychology can take the form of stereotypes in society about women, words that are intended to offend and actions that refer to harassment, as is often the case in today's society. Not infrequently, we say offensive words but cover it up by saying that it is just a joke (Purwahida, 2018).

Currently, discussions about women's psychological or mental problems are often discussed in society. This can be seen on social media where women are always victims of sexual harassment even though women do not do anything that refers to anything related to harassment (Winarti, 2020). Apart from that, it is very easy for people to judge women, especially from the way they act or talk. Oppression against women's psychology can be found in the family, work, friendships and many more. Based on this, the following quotes are presented which show the psychological oppression of female characters in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* by NH. Dini.

"Kau kubawakan murid baru. Mudah-mudahan dia tidak sebodoh kakak-kakaknya". Kata ayahku. Aku merasa amat tersinggung oleh kalimat itu. Kulihat orang itu tersenyum. (Dini, 15).

The quote above was said by Sri's father when he took Sri to dance class. Her father's words offended Sri. This disturbed Sri's psychology where Sri did not accept being called stupid by her own father. Moreover, it was said in front of other people. Most of us will not accept being insulted in front of other people, even if it is meant to be a joke.

When she was an adult, Sri was still involved in the world of dance even though she was already working as a radio announcer. However, this made Sri get ridiculed by her colleagues at the office because she often asked permission to dance at events. This is illustrated through the following quote.

"Tidak mudah bekerja dengan orang-orang yang tidak semuanya berpikiran tumpul. Apalagi jika sebagian besar dari mereka adalah perempuan-perempuan yang berlagak pintar. Kini aku tahu mengapa mereka bermuka masam kepadaku". (Dini, 49).

"Kadang-kadang aku begitu tidak tahan lagi menanggung pandangan rekan-rekan di kantor; oleh sindiran mereka dan desas-desus yang menyakitkan telinga." (Dini, 61).

The two quotes above show Sri explaining her opinion regarding the sneering and saying that her colleagues in the office said about her. His co-workers say things that are not true and view him negatively. The words and insults from her co-workers made Sri depressed and uncomfortable in the office. Plus, those who do this are women. This shows that oppression of women's psychology is not only carried out by men but also by women. Sometimes women do this because they feel jealous of other women who they feel are superior to them. In the next quote, Sri received insults from her friends regarding her still being involved in the world of dance.

"Kau hendak mengatakan bahwa melukis itu lebih baik daripada menari, bukan?" Ku tatap matanya dalam-dalam. (Dini, 51)

This is different from the previous quote, where Sri received ridicule and negative remarks from her co-workers because she often asked for permission. In the quote above, Sri received insults from Yus. Yus said that the dance activities that Sri was involved in could not make money, unlike painters because they could sell their paintings. This shows that Yus thinks painters are better than dancers. Yus' words offended Sri as a dancer. Even though dancing cannot be displayed or sold, people can see and watch dances. Apart from that, dance also has

its own values and stories behind the movements shown by the dancers. Just like a painting which has its own value and story, both from the shapes and colors used by the painter.

The next quote states that the oppression experienced by the character Sri was not caused by other people, but by himself.

“Aku ingin kau mencintaiku. Semula aku berpikir kalau aku telah berhasil memilikimu sekali, kukira kau akan terikat kepadaku. Aku mencintaimu Sri.” (Dini, 113)

“Karena aku takut. Aku dikejar oleh rasa ketakutan dan kehilangan sekali lagi dan disusul oleh kehilangan-kehilangan yang lain. Taraf dan ragamnya kehidupanku tidak pernah kubayangkan.” (Dini, 106).

The two quotes above show Carl expressing his feelings for Sri. Sri rejects Carl's declaration of love because he is still fixated on the past. Previously, Sri almost married a pilot, namely Saputro. However, this did not happen because Saputro had a plane crash in which he died. This was the hardest blow for Sri. So, when Carl expressed his feelings, Sri rejected him because he was still traumatized by losing someone precious to him.

“Kau menolak Carl hanya untuk memndapatkan hanya untuk mendapatkan seorang negarawan yang hampir tidak kau kenal,” katanya. “Dan lagi apa yang akan kau kerjakan dengan kewarganegraanmu?” (Dini, 116).

Still continuing from the previous quote, Sutopo, Sri's older brother, scolded Sri for rejecting Carl. The quote above occurred after ten months had passed since Sri rejected Carl. Sri chose to marry Charles, who is from France. However, Sutopo did not agree with this, because according to him Sri did not know Charles well. Sutopo's words were indeed good because he thought about Sri's goodness. However, this also includes taking away Sri's rights and freedom to choose her life partner. Sutopo imposed his will on Sri to choose Carl.

In the quotes below, the psychological oppression experienced by Sri and the oppression carried out by her husband will be explained.

“Aku tahu bahwa dia mempunyai rasa iri yang besar, terhadap orang-orang lain maupun terhadapku sendiri” (Dini, 136).

“Charles terlalu pelit untuk diharap menghadiahiku sepasang sepatu Perancis yang ramping dan cukup bagus.” (Dini, 159).

The quote above is a narrative from Sri explaining the character of her husband. Charles is someone who feels jealous of other people and Sri, who is his wife. Charles' jealous nature makes Sri depressed because she does not have the opportunity to develop herself. In fact, her husband did not support her in doing what she liked. Apart from being jealous, Charles is also a stingy person. It can be seen in the second quote that Charles never bought or gave Sri shoes. This shows that Charles is a husband who does not have care and attention for his wife. Charles only thinks about himself or is selfish. Charles's character makes Sri depressed because she doesn't get good treatment from her husband and her married life is not like other married couples. Sri is not happy.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be seen that the character Sri in the novel *Pada Sebuah Kapal* experiences oppression from a physical and psychological perspective. From a physical perspective, Sri experienced humiliation regarding the shape of her face and body. The insults to Sri's physical form occurred from when she was a child until she was an adult. This makes him embarrassed and feels inferior because he does not meet the beauty requirements determined by someone. Apart from that, Sri's body shape is the subject of

comparisons made by men with other women. In fact, her body shape becomes the object of men's sexual fantasies. From a psychological perspective, Sri experienced humiliation at the dance activities she was involved in. Sri was also forced to do something that was not according to her wishes. Furthermore, Sri was unhappy with her married life because she did not get attention and support from her husband. Apart from that, her husband was also jealous of her so Sri couldn't develop herself to become a better person. Almost all of the oppression experienced by Sri, both physically and psychologically, was carried out by her family, friends, husband and those closest to her.

This research is still far from perfect. It is hoped that future researchers will be able to utilize the latest issues regarding women's problems and pay attention to the novelty of the theories used. This aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the development and dynamics of literature, both for future researchers and readers.

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