

The Struggle of Papuan Women in Attaining Self-Existence in the Novel *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany

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ABSTRACT

Existence of women begins with a form of resistance to the society's behavior that women is in a lower position than men. In social life, women's move mostly restricted. This patriarchy system that grows in society causes violence and gender inequality. This study aims to find out the form of struggle, the strategy, and also the results of the struggle in attaining self-existence in the novel *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative through feminism approach with existentialist feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir as the primary theoretical basis. The result found in this study are (1) the form of struggle, namely through educations, economics, and social, (2) the strategy of the struggle, namely through working, becoming an intellectual, working to transform society, and identifying oneself through the eyes of the dominant group of society, (3) the result of struggle, which has a good impact on family, society, and children's education. Based on the data analysis and the discussion, it can be concluded that the existence of the women in Dorothea Rosa Herliany's novel entitled *Isinga* is in line with what was expected by Simone de Beauvoir, which strategy can be done by women to reach their transcendence, including women being able to work, being intellectuals, and identifying themselves in society.

Keywords: feminism, existentialist, women's struggle

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of women from various social groups has been an exciting topic in various discussion for a long time. The presence of women begins with a form of resistance to the society's behavior that women is in a lower position than men [1]. In social life, women are mostly restricted, women are often marginalized, especially in terms of equality. Such treatments tends to be seen as women's nature and system that has grown so strong in society [2]. The existence of traditional women has undergone changes or shifts [3]. In the past, women can only be housewives, however, the current presence of women can be attained through various actions. Women began to appear on economic, social, political, and educational spheres [4].

The struggle of women in attaining self-existence has been carried out by various groups, especially by women themselves. The struggle to voice out equality has also been carried out in various fields, one of which is in form of literary works novel [5]. The struggle of traditional women is interesting for some women writers in Indonesia, including Ratna

Indraswari Ibrahim in her novelette collection *Batu Sandung* published in 2007. Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim can explore various life experiences by women, like her daily life, the relationship with her children, and the relationship with her surroundings. Novels with the struggle of women as the them are usually studied from the feminism perspective.

Feminism is a movement for the emancipation of women. This movement is loudly voicing various problems related to women, including improving the gender position and rejecting differences [6]. There are several feminism theories, one of which is existentialist feminism by Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir argues that women's positions will always be below men. In this world, women's existence is only to become a *Liyen* for men. Beauvoir said that men is defined as human, while women is defined as *Liyen*. Men is subject, while women are the object. According to Beauvoir existentialism, namely when women are not objects and have become subjects for themselves. Women who are aware of their freedom will be freely choose their way of life and most importantly women have to be able to refuse being an object.

This reality can be found in one of Indonesia's literary works, entitled *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2015. This novel led the author to win the *Kusala Sastra Katulistiwa* in the Prose category in 2015. *Isinga* is a novel that tells women's lives in Papua in traditional times. This novel is able to adequately describe the harsh reality about life of the Papuan, especially women. This is why *Isinga* can be said to be one of the greatest works that interested the researchers in conducting a study about this.

There are studies that raise marginalization and women's existence as the topic. One of the studies is by [1]entitled *Perlawanan Perempuan Akibat Ketidakadilan Gender dalam Novel Entrok Karya Okky Madasari*. In his research, Gamas focused on the injustices experienced by the female characters due to gender construction by patriarchal culture, and how the female character fight against gender injustice. The theory used in the study was feminist literary criticism. Gamas study and current study both use feminism theory. The differences between the two studies are the formal objects. The previous research examines women's resistance using feminism theory that focuses on feminist literary criticism, while the current research focuses more on the existentialist feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir.

Based on the study above, feminism theory can be used to analyze literary works related to women, especially in terms of violence, marginalization, and gender inequality against women. One of the most significant things that become the weakest point of previous feminism studies is that the previous study did not show the aims of why women struggle from marginalization, violence, and gender inequality. The previous study did not focus on existentialist feminism. The current research can at least clarify and can be used as reference in studying feminism literary work, because it is able to show the forms of struggle, the strategy, as well as the results of the women's fight in attaining self-existence, which not all feminism literary works can represent all three focuses.

2. METHODS

The methodology being used in this study is descriptive analysis through feminism approach, using structuralism and feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir as the theory basis. The data obtained through literary study technique, reading, note-taking, and classification. The source of the data is a novel entitled *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany, published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, with the total of 210 pages in 2015. The data collecting procedure used in this study is documentation.

The instrument in this study is the researchers. Researcher as human instrument have several functions, namely researchers are in charge of setting the focus of the study as well as collecting the data. The validity of qualitative research can be done by triangulation. Then, data analysis was carried out with preparation, arrangement, and exposure of the data that had been obtained by the researchers. Exposure in data analysis is carried out so that the data obtained can be seen in detail and more accessible to understand the data. Furthermore, the data were analyzed, which started by reviewing all the data obtained.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Forms of Struggle

3.1.1. Forms of Struggle in Education Field

The form of struggle in education can be carried out by women. Through education, women will be able to get a better thinking skill. Through public education, women can improve their standard of living and abilities so that they are able to participate in development. This is illustrated in the following quote.

Irewa, if I (I) built a room in this district office for women's activities, would you want to be a teacher for them? I/SB11/187

After conducting an analysis, it was found that there are still difficulties for women to access education, though the role of women in education is significant. The traditional role still sees women as a reproduction only (taking care of house, giving birth, and raising children, as well as taking care of their husband). The whole life of women is dedicated to the family. Whereas with education, women can educate children and managed the house better.

3.1.2. Forms of Struggle in Economic Field

Irewa's struggle in the economic fields is realized through her actions, which is by working outside of the house to support and pay her children's tuition fees. By working and taking parts in fulfilling the family's needs, women can free themselves from the notion that women is the followers, a weak creature who only give birth and breastfeed children. This can be seen on the following quote.

When Irewa was proposed by Malom, Irewa got a dowry of a number of pigs. The pig now belongs to Irewa. Later when Irewa had children, the pigs would be used as a dowry as well. So, Irewa's other job is raising pigs. Feed

to live and give birth. Then the pigs breed. I/PB3/61

After doing the analysis, it was found that society still look down on women, because they are considered physically weak. In fact, women have a significant influence on the economy of the family and society. All of this happens because there is still roles division in community. So far, community still constantly looking at the physics, jobs, and access to economy when comes to think about gender equality. If it is linked to Irewa's status as a wife, Irewa is able to break the opinion that women are only in charge of taking care their family. Irewa holds an essential role in her family's economy as most of the income is for Irewa's garden and selling.

3.1.3. Forms of Struggle in Social Field

The form of struggle in the social field is carried out by Irewa through her actions, where he bravely fights again violence from men. She realizes that women can also fight for themselves from men, though women always look down upon by society. The typical women in traditional society are different from Irewa. Irewa is a woman that do not want to be trapped inside femininity. Irewa is able to reject being the object of her husband and the others.

Some time before, there was another young man who also claimed to like Irewa. Malom was his name. Irewa has rejected his love. Irewa doesn't like people like Malom. I/PC1/27

After some analysis, it is found that women are still seen from their appearance in terms of social field. Women are considered as not being able to take care of themselves and weak because of them being feminine. If linked to Irewa's situations, Irewa can place herself in family and social. Irewa knows how to act when he's with his husband and society as *Yonime* in gaining society's beliefs so that they can have a significant relation. Women need to maintain their position and take a vital part for a group.

3.1.4. Women's Strategy to be able to Work

Irewa believes that women as a strong human being, therefore, she must be able to work independently. She can do two jobs at the exact times, publicly and domestically. For some women, their goal is not to fulfill the economy, but rather to improve themselves. Similar to Irewa, she does not work for money only. By working, women become more independent and affirm their status as actively determining their own destiny. This is illustrated in the following quote.

Your calves are firm. With full calves like this you can work well in the garden. You can give birth to many children. I/SA4/22

After the analysis, it was found that women with physical conditions that often looks down upon by society were able to carry out dual roles, namely working in the domestic and public spheres. The involvement of women in the domestic and public spheres has an impact on the part of women in the family. Women do not have to be confined to circumstances that discourage them [7]. Seeing the impact of this involvement, women should respect themselves more.

3.2. Struggle's Strategy

3.2.1 Struggle's Strategy to be Intellectual Women

Being a member of a group that will build change for women, Irewa is manifested through providing understanding to the community, especially women, about the importance of health. Women can redefine their roles as wives, mothers, and working women. Women can improve themselves because there is no eternal femininity that prints a ready-made identity. This is what Irewa does in society. To free herself, she did what she wanted to do without the intervention of men. This is illustrated in the following quote.

"But Mother, there are still many women who don't know it's a dangerous disease." he explained. I/SB1/186

After doing the analysis, it was found that it is essential for women to become intellectual and open up opportunities for self-existence. Women being an academic means that women can gain knowledge and become someone who improves themselves. Through education, women will be able to change their way of thinking from not knowing to knowing and change the mindset of themselves and others by becoming intelligent people. The intelligence obtained is the result of continuous learning that is carried out from time to time. If associated with Irewa's condition, Irewa can shape herself into an intellectual.

3.2.2 Struggle's Strategy through Society Transformation

Creating human resources that produce materials is attained by Irewa through Marya room, where Irewa wants to use the community's capabilities in the economic field. Beauvoir believed that one of the keys to liberation was economic power. If a woman wants to make all her desire come true, she must create a society that will provide her with material support to transcend the boundaries surrounding her [8]. So, if you want a healthy community, it is

necessary for the society to respects women first. This is what Irewa did, through various activities, women trying to change bad habits and bring change for the better community. This can be seen from the quote below.

Marya's room is also used for other activities. A new place for girls to talk to each other. Jingi exchanged information. Irewa was asked to arrange all that. I/SC1/194

After the analysis, it was found that women can become agents of change for their environment by creating jobs. The involvement of women is an absolute requirement in the effort to realize a just development. However, in being in the midst of society, women do not escape the various perspectives that accompany them. It can be said that people define women based on their appearance, role in society, families, and education. If associated with the Irewa, Irewa as a woman figure can come to work for the social transformation of society. He creates human resources that produce material and are present in building the environment.

3.2.3 Struggle's Strategy by Self-Identifying through the View of the Dominant Community

Women must free themselves from their bodies, this is what Irewa achieved through her thoughts. She began to realize that all this time her life had been going on usually, without having a clear direction in life. Her life is always filled with violence from her husband. As a woman who is considered weak, she wants to fight her husband.

Boredoms and hardships of life, often raise a protest in Irewa's heart. Irewa walked to a high place. From there he looked at the Megafu mountains. Is it really only women who are asked by Megafu to be iko? Become a strong person? He asked. All these years she had tried to be a good woman to Malom, but she was still often beaten. I/SD1/140

After an analysis, it was found that physical and biological of the woman still greatly influences her position in society. It is undeniable that gender is a society's view regarding the functions, roles, and responsibilities between women and men. One of the stereotypes that is still common until today is the assumption that a good woman is a woman who is obedient to her husband and is good at doing work at home. If associated with the Irewa figure, Irewa can go against stereotypes in society. As a woman, Irewa

has existed by showing her identity and being aware of her existence.

3.3 The Result of the Struggle

3.3.1 Harmony of the Family is Made

After analyzing the facts, it was found that the struggles and strategies carried out by women in realizing their existence had a positive impact, one of which is harmony of the family. The presence of mutual understanding between wife and husband, children and siblings, will make them tolerating one another, which is an essential factor in family life. Regarding the wife's role and her various jobs, it can cause problems in the household. Issues related to household duties can be minimized by sharing tasks with their husbands.

3.3.2 Harmony of Living in Society is Made

After analyzing, it was found that the struggles and strategies carried out by women in attaining self-existence had an impact on the social life of the community, which is harmony of living in society. Women have the same rights and duties as men in the social life. Women have equality of position, rights, obligations, and opportunities, both in family life and society. Irewa shows to women to have a hard work, a sense of responsibility, an attitude of self-confidence, not depending on others, and determine what is good for themselves and others, as well as prioritizing togetherness and solidarity.

3.3.3 Children Becoming Intelligent People

After doing the analysis, it was found that the struggles and strategies carried out by women in attaining self-existence had an impact on children's education. The starting point is education. Education is a milestone in forming character and personality to develop the uniqueness and potential of oneself, both formal and informal education. The most important place to do informal education is in the family. Family is the place where the child first gets an education and is the basic foundation for forming the child's character and personality. This is where the role of parents is significant, especially the role of a mother.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the existence of Papuan women through the character Irewa in the novel *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany is in line with what was expected by Simone de Beauvoir. According to Beauvoir, there are four strategies that women can do to reach their transcendence, one of which is women can work. Of course, women must

be equipped with intellect to work and compete with men. Intellectuals will make it easier for someone to make their ideas come true. One of the results of intellectuality can be seen through the process of social transformation. With the modification, women will be able to identify themselves through the views of the dominant group of society. Self-identification is a way for women to become themselves in community by freeing themselves from their bodies.

Four struggle strategies to realize her existence. First, women can work whatever they want and do work independently. Second, being an intellectual woman is by becoming a member of a group that will make change for women and sharing the knowledge they have. Third, work for the social transformation of society, by creating human resources that produce materials and are involved in improving the environment. Fourth, self-identifying through the dominant group of community, by means of women having to free themselves from their bodies and show their identity.

According to the research conducted, there are several suggestions that can be made, namely (1) for lecturers, it is hoped that the study of existentialist feminism should be used in academia to emphasize the concern for women's problems and their struggles in realizing their own existence; (2) for other researchers, it is hoped that they can develop and improve studies and analysis in the field of Indonesian literature by studying the same novel using different theoretical studies or vice versa.

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