

## Gender Identity Ambiguity in the Novel Pasung Jiwa by Okky Madasari

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### ABSTRACT

English This study examines the gender identity confusion of Sasana's character in the novel Pasung Jiwa by Okky Madasari. The objectives of this research are; (1) to identify the obstacles faced by Sasana in forming her gender identity, (2) to identify the steps taken by Sasana in strengthening her gender identity. The approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative analysis with Stuart Hall's concept of identity as a process of being and becoming. The results of this study show that the concepts of masculinity, femininity, and the assessment of identity by others, as well as body identity are factors in Sasana's gender identity ambiguity. The steps taken by Sasana's character to deal with this ambiguity is through the process of her life journey, traits, attitudes, and behaviors to resemble women. In the end, Sasana gained full confidence in herself with the identity she wanted to look like a woman and Sasana finally got the support from the mother figure she had been longing for.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Identity is a flexible construction, a process of not only being but also becoming, which is the basis of the fundamental difference between 'who we are' and 'what we are'. This process of becoming occurs continuously, but depends on social, cultural, spatial, and place circumstances (Rutherford, 1990: 225). Many aspects play a role in the process of finding and shaping one's identity. Thus, identity can be interpreted as how humans position themselves and are positioned by others. In short, identity is a matter of stance, not essence, and this stance is influenced by factors such as self-awareness and sociocultural interactions with others. In addition, identity is also characterized by similarities and differences.

Humans are divided into certain groups based on differences in gender, race, or ideology. Differences in identity can also be the basis for the formation of power relations between certain groups or groups. Then a person places himself into a group based on similarities. A person can have many identities, depending on which aspect is the reference. These aspects include physical conditions, personality, religion, and other things.

Identity is a matter of representing oneself. This shows that identity is related to the concept of representation. For example, by providing symbols, a person tries to present his identity by presenting himself as a tall and strapping man or a certain group (Hall & du Gay Paul, 1996: 4).

Gender issues that are often discussed and brought up in intellectual discussions have always been one of the hot and controversial conversations. These gender issues are back in the spotlight when transgender, queer, and non-conforming people voice, ask for justice, and acceptance of their gender in a society that adheres to the gender binary. However, their gender identity is a big question in heterosexual society that only recognizes feminine (generally associated with the female gender) and masculine (generally associated with the male gender) genders (Razan et al, 2018: 121).

Gender identity is a hot topic and controversy, given that the concept of gender identity only recognizes feminine (generally associated with the female sex) and masculine (generally associated with the male sex). Feminine itself represents female traits such as softness, patience, compassion, and other traits, while masculine itself represents male traits such as strength, courage, bravery, and other traits that describe male traits. In the medical world, both transvestites and people who look like men or known as tomboys are called transgender. A transgender can be said to be a person who changes their gender identity. Transgender people are people who live without following the gender roles associated with their sex in the context of a particular society.

Transgender people, although acting outside their gender roles, do not change or undergo surgery to change their gender. They just want to look like the opposite sex in their daily lives. However, sex (gender) is biological or natural. This is different from transsexuals. Transsexuals are people who undergo surgery to change their gender to look like the original or the way they want. But there are still things that cannot be hidden from what should be like a

heavy voice if someone is male and changes his appearance (transsexual) to become a woman.

An individual's gender and sex can be accepted in society if that person has a certain gender and sex that makes that person understood and accepted by other humans or the society around them. However, problems will arise if a certain gender must act as a certain gender and sexuality, while an individual who does not comply will be considered deviant and then ostracized by the surrounding community.

There is an imbalance because waria or effeminate people who look more conspicuous than someone who is a tomboy, are considered to have more severe inferiority. They are considered to have failed to compromise with the things that have been formed by society. Their actions are considered taboo and deviant in society. But what makes transvestites choose like that is one of them because of the weak psychological state of the individual (inferiority) and results in the individual becoming transgender, but there are other reasons that encourage someone to become transgender.

Gender is a trait related to roles and attached to men and women. These traits or roles are socially and culturally constructed and can change according to the times. This gender concept is studied through feminist studies and has the goal of achieving equality or egalitarianism (Fakih, 2006: 71).

In feminist studies, they still lack attention related to gender. This gender issue should involve sex which is intended as a reproductive process. In response to this, Judith Butler criticized traditional feminism by claiming three weaknesses in the concept of traditional feminism. Butler states that these weaknesses are: First, feminism assumes that women have the same problems and characteristics, as if all women can be simplified into one category, namely women. Whereas there are women who are transgendered and then their gender and sex identities are questioned. Second, feminism believes that there is a stable point of reference between gender and sex. For feminism, gender is the manifestation and result of sex. Sex itself is the essence or interior core that must be released, actualized into gender. Third, by recognizing the naturalness of sex and the stable point of reference, feminism assumes the stability of gender, the stability of sex, and assumes sex and the body outside of history (Alimi, 2011).

There are five concepts of gender, namely, First, gender differences are differences in social attributes, characteristics, behavior, appearance, dress, expectations, roles, and so on that are formulated for individuals according to their birth conditions. Second, gender inequality is the difference in politics, voting, and behavior between men and women. Third, genderization is a confusion of concepts in an effort to put gender at the center of attention of self-identity and views of others. Fourth, gender identity is a description of the sex that the character should have and display. This causes differences in behavior according to biological characteristics. Fifth, gender role is the role of women or the role of men that is applied in real life (Sugihastuti and Saptiawan, 2010: 100).

In the world of fiction works, many works have sprung up that raise issues around transgender people. Like the writer Andrei Aksana who raised the issue of transgender in his novel entitled *Lelaki Terindah* in 2005. In his novel, he tells the love story of Valent, a transgender.

Literary works that carry other transgender identities, one of which is found in the novel *Pasung Jiwa*, in general this novel tells the life of a man named Sasana. This man was born and raised in a family environment that belongs to the upper social class in society. From a young age, he was demanded by his parents to grow into a human being according to the views of his parents.

Little Sasana was made to learn piano and forced to listen to and play jazz and pop songs. But unexpectedly, she was more fond of dangdut songs and the moves of dangdut singers. Sasana's parents found out about this and became even harsher towards her, eventually sending her to an all-boys high school. Throughout high school, Sasana experienced violence and pressure from her seniors. After graduating from high school, Sasana entered college and chose to continue her studies in Malang to be away from her parents who had been too strict with her.

Sasana's freedom began when she met Jaka Wani, or Cak Jek as he is commonly called. He had a talent for playing the guitar, so he invited Sasana to busk with him because Cak Jek knew that Sasana had a talent for singing dangdut. Cak Jek began to dress Sasana up in women's clothing to attract more attention. Since then, Sasana changed her name to Sasa. She enjoyed changing her appearance from a man to a sexy woman and felt the freedom she wanted.

The phenomenon of Sasana's life story can be considered taboo in a society that views men as masculine. The struggles of a woman who is still doing a lot of work to get equality are often rejected by many people because of their view that men are still dominant in many aspects. Based on the thoughts described above, this paper will examine the novel *Pasung Jiwa* by Okky Madasari with a focus on the issue of self-identity confusion. Specifically, this research will describe the process that Sasana's character goes through in becoming transgender.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Novel Essence***

The term novel comes from the Latin novellas which was later derived become novies, which means new. This word was then adapted into language England coined the term novel. This new saying is linked to reality that the novel is a type of fictional story that appeared recently compared to short stories and romances (Herman. J. Waluyo, 2002: 36).

Burhan Nurgiyantoro (1994: 9) believes that the terms novella and novelle contains the same meaning as the Indonesian term novellet (English: novellet), which means a long work of prose fiction enough, not too long, but not too short either. In line with In this opinion, Abrams stated that the term novel is in language English and which later entered Indonesia came from Italian novella (which in German: novelle). Literally novella means "a small novelty", and then interpreted as a short story (short story) in prose form.

Novels are expressions and depictions of human life an era faced with various life problems. From Complex human life problems can give rise to conflict and dispute. Through novels, authors can tell about aspects of life humans in depth including various human behaviors. The novel contains about human life in facing life's problems, novels can serves to learn about human life in a certain era.

### *Type of Novel*

Jakob Sumardjo & Saini K.M (1986:29) argue that novels can be classified into three groups, namely romance novels, novels adventure, and new fantasy.

1. Romance novels are novels in which there are characters women and men equally, sometimes even playing a role women are more dominant. As a novel created by the author including the type of romance novel and this type of novel almost exists all themes.
2. Adventure novels involve more than just women's roles man. If women are involved in this type of novel, then the depiction is almost stereotypical and lacks acting. Type of novel Adventure is a type of reading that many men are interested in reading because the male character is very dominant and involves a lot of problems a man's world that has nothing to do with women.
3. Fantasy novels are novels that tell events that occur unrealistic and unlikely to happen in everyday life. Not sure the characters, setting, and plot used are unrealistic so it cannot be used to convey the author's ideas. Concepts, ideas and ideas of writers are clearly conveyed in The form of the story is fantastic, meaning it is not in accordance with everyday life.

Based on the elements of fiction, novels can be divided into three, namely novels plot, character novel, thematic novel.

- 1) The plot of the novel or the events of the novel. This novel is interesting Story structure or development of events. This novel is typical It depicts a lot of tension because it tells a lot of stories incident.
- 2) Novel characters or novel characters. This novel is interesting telling of the characters of the perpetrators, for example, cowardly, lazy, humorous, grumpy, easily discouraged, easily discouraged, etc.
- 3) Friendly novel. This novel carries a theme or subject very many problems.

### *Novel Function*

Basically a novel is a story that contains a concentration on life fundamental human aspects, namely religion, society, or social, and personal which cannot escape conflict. This is what makes para the author to express it in a literary work (novel) in the hope that it will be possible be of benefit to the readers. Apart from that, literature can function as a work of art that can be used to entertain the reader. Nurgiyantoro, (1994: 3) stated that a work of fiction is meaningful Enjoy stories and entertain yourself to gain inner satisfaction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach. The role of process in qualitative research is very large because the part under study will be clearer if observed in the process (Moleong, 2011: 11). This research is literature research, this research conducts studies or studies through readings and various references that are related and relevant to the objectives of the research. This research is qualitative with the object of study in the form of a novel entitled *Pasung Jiwa* by Okky Madasari. In qualitative research, data collection activities are carried out by researchers themselves (Arikunto, 2010: 28).

The formulation of the problem will be studied with Stuart Hall's concept of identity as a process of being and becoming. Descriptive analysis technique will be applied in this paper by emphasizing the novel *Pasung Jiwa* about the identity confusion of the character Sasana. The data processing stages are adjusted to this research as follows (Sugiyono, 2010: 340).

### ***Data Reduction***

Reducing data includes summarizing activities, selecting key things, and focusing on important things. The data collected first is data in the form of story units that contain verbal violence. In the next stage, the data is categorized into three forms, namely dialogue, monologue, and narration, then looking for the subject-object position. To facilitate categorizing the data, coding techniques were used. The data before being presented is arranged in tables according to the categories and included in the data corpus.

### ***Data Display (Presentation of Data)***

Data is presented in the form of text that is presented narratively. Through the presentation of the data, the data is more organized and arranged in a relationship pattern, making it easier to understand. Data is presented in the results and discussion section.

### ***Conclusion Drawing (Verification)***

Conclusions are elaborated to answer the formulation of problems in research, but it does not rule out the possibility that the results of the analysis can change the formulation of the problem, because in qualitative research all problems are still temporary and can develop until the research is completed.

The steps taken in analyzing the problem are by sorting the data based on the problems that have been formulated as follows.

1. Identifying the obstacles faced by Sasana in the formation of her gender identity.
2. Identifying the steps taken by Sasana to strengthen her gender identity.

## **RESULTS**

### ***The Obstacles Sasana Faces in Gender Identity Formation***

Sasana is known as Sasa among the villagers in her hometown in Malang. The fact that Sasana looks like a woman makes her bold and confident. This gave Sasana a sense of freedom as she was able to vent her desires that she had been harboring. However, it can be seen that Sasana's condition as Sasa is

already seen by the surrounding community as a deviation labeled as effeminate or transgender.

### ***Sasana's Strategy to Strengthen Her Gender Identity***

Sasana made several strategies to strengthen his gender identity that he was looking for. In fact, physically, Sasana is a male figure with an ideal body and has various skills since childhood. Sasana was actually raised in a wealthy and respected family. Unconsciously, her parents made many rules that were contrary to what Sasana liked. That was one of the reasons Sasana was confused and felt confused about her identity.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***The Obstacles Sasana Faces in Gender Identity Formation***

#### ***Body Identity***

*My body was my first trap. Then my parents, then everyone I know. Then everything I know, everything I do. They were all traps that were set throughout my life. They confined me, held me back, high walls that became traps throughout my thirty years (Madasari, 2013: 9).*

The sentence *My body is my first trap* is a quote that hints at a question at the beginning of the background of the story. The sentence is a question about freedom. In this case a person considers that his body is the main trap that makes him trapped or bound in events that he does not want. The second sentence, *Then my parents, then everyone I know*, she considers that her parents and the people around her and everything she knows are part of what traps her in confinement. The quote is the appearance of a riddle that will begin the unfolding of a long reality in a story. Then, in the sentence *All are traps that have been set throughout my life*, Sasana thinks that the life she has lived is unhappy.

*When I was in fourth grade, my sister was born and named Melati. I loved being around her. I noticed every outfit she wore. Now there was something I remembered besides the piano and the notes. Melati. What a beautiful name. Different from mine: Sasana. Not beautiful at all (Madasari, 2013:15-16).*

Sasana was destined to be born as a boy and has the body condition of a typical boy. However, since his childhood, Sasana has shown different things after his sister was born, such as liking his sister's accessories and being jealous of Melati's beauty.

#### ***Identity Judgment by Others***

Sasana is known as Sasa among the villagers in her hometown in Malang. Sasana's female appearance makes her bold and confident. This gave Sasana a sense of freedom as she was able to vent her desires that she had been harboring. However, it can be seen that Sasana's condition as Sasa is already seen by the surrounding community as a deviation labeled as effeminate or transgender.

*I felt like everyone was looking at me. Some laughed mockingly, some were stunned. I even heard some whispering, "Ayu tenan, rek". If I heard someone say something like that, I would shake my head even more, making my ass bounce even more so that everyone would be even more amazed (Madasari, 2013:59).*

However, Sasa gets a bump in her life when she is thrown into prison for participating in a demonstration on the disappearance of Marsini, Cak Man's daughter. But while in prison, Sasa, who seemed to be a sissy, was forced to serve the depraved lust of the prison guards. Sasa herself is also beautiful with her appearance that steals the attention with her sexy clothes.

*His penis was inserted into my mouth. She held my head and moved it around. They all laughed. I struggled, screaming silently. "Enak tenan. Ora kalah karo wedokan," said one of the tantara (Madasari, 2013: 99).*

The prison guards thought that Sasa was a sissy who could be used in prostitution, which was disgusting and hurtful to Sasa. She received threats and punishments from the prison guards that made her remember the abuse she had received from her seniors in high school.

Sasa's character often makes her the subject or object of sexual harassment. For them, Sasa's actions and appearance are forbidden behavior that should not be seen and imitated by people. This is because society believes that she cannot follow the concept of gender that has been adhered to by heterosexual society.

The protest aimed at finding Marsini turned out to be disastrous for her, because instead of being properly examined she was harassed by the prison guards. People regarded her as a plaything. They use their power to justify their right to treat Sasa as they wish. They see Sasa as a womanizing man and don't see her as a "real" woman, but still play her like one. They can't accept Sasa who, according to them, doesn't show the gender that corresponds to her sex, but they recognize that Sasa is the same as a woman.

Another thing that others accepted about Sasana's identity as Sasa was when she escaped from the hospital and returned to Malang and regained her confidence in her identity as Sasa. With this boost of confidence, her longing to meet her sister and mother grew. Finally, Sasa decided to return to her parents' house dressed as a woman. All the people in her house did not recognize her as Sasana. Her mother accepted her as Sasa and volunteered to be her son's manager.

### ***Sasana's Strategy to Strengthen Her Gender Identity***

#### ***Gender Identity Transformation***

Physically, Sasana is portrayed as a male character with an ideal body and a melodious voice. However, sociologically, Sasana is a student at one of the universities in Malang, and she left her studies to join Cak Jek's busking program. Sasana often received ridicule from the public or people she met about the way she swayed while singing dangdut songs with a female or effeminate appearance.



Actually, Sasana grew up in a well-off family with her father working as a lawyer and her mother as a surgeon. From a young age, Sasana was expected by her parents to be good at school and to be good at playing the piano with jazz or pop music. Sasana herself was good at playing the piano even though she didn't like it at all.

*The first sound I recognized was the tinkling of a piano. Not my mother's voice, not my father's voice. The first time I heard it was when I was still in my mother's womb (Madasari, 2013:13).*

Sasana routinely studied piano, but she preferred dangdut music, which was strictly forbidden by her parents. The pressures from her parents made her shut herself away. What she wanted to do was not channeled at all, it seemed inappropriate to learn dangdut music. When Sasana was in high school, she was also pressured by her seniors, which made her feel like no one understood her. After that Sasana thought that she regretted her destiny as a man.

*I hate fights, I don't want blood. I hate the world of men (Madasari, 2013:39).*

After graduating from high school, Sasana chose to continue her studies at a university in Malang. After studying there and being away from her parents, she began to feel a sense of freedom. Until one day she met someone named Cak Jek. He knew that Sasana had a melodious voice and invited her to busk. Without hesitation, Sasana agreed to Cak Jek's invitation. Her meeting with Cak Jek made her feel that she had found someone who could understand her situation and what she wanted.

Sasana's trust in Cak Jek regarding the freedom she had been craving for grew and she saw him as a father figure who could protect her with a sense of freedom. This makes Sasana feel that she has gotten the things that she has been unable to fulfill in her identity. Even more so when Cak Jek gave her the lure that someday Sasana would be able to become a dangdut singer known throughout the community.

### ***Traits, Attitudes, and Behavior to Become a Woman***

Sasana's name slowly changed into Sasa, who has a beautiful face and deadly moves. Sasana's identity changed because of her envy of Melati's body, clothes, and other things that her sister had. Slowly, she began to fulfill everything by changing her identity into Sasa.

*Oh la..la... I suddenly feel so sexy. I also feel beautiful. I swayed my ass as I walked. Imitating the style of the women I often saw in shopping centers (Madasari, 2013:55).*

Sasana became known as a singer in the surrounding community as Sasa. Some villagers began to use Sasa's services in celebrations and other events. This made her more confident in her current condition and she even created her own

goyang gandrung. The makeup on her face and the clothes she wears are even more attractive. Sasa has also prepared clothes that suit the occasion, such as morning clothes that are more covered than night clothes that seem tight. Sasa feels that she is more suitable to wear women's clothes that look sexy and steal people's attention. This has become Sasana's gender identity transformation.

*An orange shirt with half-open sleeves and chest is my choice. For bottoms, I wear a short skirt made of dark jeans. For the evening, I had prepared a different outfit. A sexy thigh-length red dress, with glittering beads in many places. Gold shoes would complement it (Madasari, 2013:76).*

Other things are also described by Sasa after being released from detention and returning to her parents' house. After what happened to Sasa in prison, her parents finally decided to put her in a mental hospital because she showed that she was always afraid of someone around her. While in the hospital, Sasa asked her mother to bring her women's clothes and makeup. Her mother brought her what she wanted and made Sasa feel quite calm and happy for the person she had been missing.

*I asked my mother to bring me a comb, powder, lipstick, and women's clothes. Mom asked what for, I said for the art performance with my friends here. I saw mom's face change. Between happy, touched, and sorry. Still, she complied with my request (Madasari, 2013:121-122).*

Sasana recognizes the existence of two persons inside her one body. She recognizes that there is a masculine gender Sasana and a feminine gender Sasa.

*I am Sasa. Sasana's twin sister. We are twins, but we are different. We are one body, but we are two souls. We don't negate each other. We're a pair of souls who long for each other. Being two is not a mistake. Being one is not a necessity. Sasana may have a penis, but Sasa has a hole and nipples. Sasa sings and sways, Sasana whistles and beats the drum. We are one, but we are two. We are two, but we are one (Madasari, 2013:232-233).*

In the quote above, Sasana realizes that she cannot separate herself from both Sasana and Sasa. She does not try to get rid of the masculine gender that she carries from childhood and the feminine gender that she carries as an adult to live her daily life. She realizes that Sasana and Sasa need each other, and one of them cannot be removed. This means that the main character is aware that she is in the middle of two genders or a confusion of gender identity.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Provide some conclusions and the implementation of the research results.*

This can be used as a basis for stating that the identity owned by a person is not fixed, which is the concept of identity proposed by Stuart Hall. Identity will always develop according to one's life journey. Because gender is not a nature or order, gender is not something that is fixed. Therefore, the ambiguity of gender

identity does not rule out the possibility to be deconstructed and reconstructed by humans who want to change their gender identity. Sasana's character in *Pasung Jiwa* shows that gender identity is not something absolute and inviolable.

Sasana's effort in changing her gender identity is not something that goes smoothly without any obstacles. The obstacles come from both internal and external factors. However, Sasana has her own solution in shaping her identity because Sasana was born as a man, but has a feminine nature and in her daily life chooses to resemble a woman which results in discrimination against her in her environment.

Sasana's appearance as Sasa and her environment are obstacles, but her feelings play a bigger role in her identity formation due to her gender identity confusion. In the end, Sasana's character shows that she is free and confident to be who or whatever she wants to be after the twists and turns she faced during the process of becoming Sasa.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

This study examines the character Sasana who is searching for his identity, so the researcher examines more deeply related to gender confusion in the character Sasana. In addition, the *Pasung Jiwa* novel is a novel that provides some real descriptions of life in society, thus providing life values for the readers of the novel.

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