

Women's Resistance to Religious Values in Several Indonesian Novels of the 2000s: A Feminist Literary Criticism Review

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Abstract—This study examines women's resistance to religious values in several Indonesian novels from the 2000s, aiming to reveal the forms and causes of such resistance. The analysis is based on feminist literary criticism, complemented by James C. Scott's theory of resistance. Data collection was conducted through a literature review, while data analysis and interpretation employed a qualitative descriptive method. The findings indicate that female characters in these novels resist oppression and injustice both openly and covertly. The study also reveals that this resistance arises from women's critical awareness that religion has been used as a tool to reinforce male dominance. Religion, which serves as a reference for truth and morality, has been misinterpreted and socially constructed in ways that create gender imbalances. As a result, women in these novels seek various strategies to reclaim their agency and challenge the structures that marginalize them. Their resistance is expressed through personal struggles, intellectual discourse, and acts of defiance against traditional norms. This study emphasizes the urgency of reinterpreting religious values to foster a more just and equitable society for both men and women.

Index Terms—resistance, women, religious values, novel, feminist literary criticism

I. INTRODUCTION

Literary works serve as reflections of real-life experiences, highlighting the objective realities of human existence. However, literature is not merely an imitation of reality; it is an imaginative creation that carries both aesthetic and didactic functions—what Horace described as *dulce et utile* (pleasurable and useful) (Rahman, 2021; Suma et al., 2023; Abbas et al., 2024). In this regard, literature can affirm existing values and norms, restore lost traditions, challenge prevailing norms, or innovate new perspectives (Teeuw, 1982, pp. 18-26). Through these functions, literature becomes a medium for exploring which values should be preserved, questioned, fought for, or rediscovered. According to Ratna (2003), literature, as a linguistic and artistic expression, can serve as a catalyst for social change, seeking truth and justice to improve human conditions (pp. 35-36). Such themes are particularly prominent in Indonesian novels of the 2000s, where literary narratives increasingly engage with critical social issues, including gender dynamics and religious interpretations.

Indonesian novels from the 2000s depict the application of religious values in ways that deviate from their fundamental meanings. These deviations are manifested primarily in gender relations—between husbands and wives, fathers and daughters, and other social interactions. Instead of fostering harmony, religious values in these narratives are often portrayed as instruments of power, used to justify male dominance and maintain societal hierarchies. Many of these novels expose the oppression and injustices faced by women, depicting their struggles within patriarchal structures where religious interpretations are manipulated to reinforce gender inequality. Ironically, religion, which should serve as a source of moral guidance and justice, becomes a tool for justifying systemic discrimination against women.

When compared to real-life experiences, the fictional realities in these novels carry profound implications. Religious teachings, particularly in Islam, emphasize justice and mutual respect between men and women. Islam advocates for gender equity in various aspects of life, including marriage, work, and social engagement in Islam society. However, in the novels analyzed, these religious teachings are often misinterpreted, leading to societal structures that marginalize women and restrict their agency.

A significant aspect of these novels is how female characters respond to the injustices they endure. Unlike women in

earlier Indonesian literature, who were often portrayed as passive and submissive, the female protagonists in 2000s novels exhibit various forms of resistance. Their defiance is not limited to silent endurance or mild discontent but extends to both open and covert rebellion. Some characters challenge oppressive norms verbally and nonverbally, while others take drastic measures such as leaving their marriages and defying traditional expectations. This shift in literary representation reflects a growing awareness of women's struggles in contemporary society and their increasing agency in resisting patriarchal structures.

This study aims to explore the forms and causes of women's resistance to religious values as depicted in Indonesian novels from the 2000s. Specifically, it seeks to answer two key questions: (1) What forms of resistance do female characters exhibit? and (2) What factors contribute to their resistance? To address these questions, this research applies James C. Scott's theory of resistance, which distinguishes between open and hidden forms of defiance. Additionally, the study employs feminist literary criticism, particularly liberal and radical feminist perspectives, to analyze the underlying ideologies that drive women's resistance. Furthermore, these fictional narratives are examined in relation to real-world gender dynamics, investigating how the themes presented in the novels mirror the lived experiences of women in contemporary Indonesian society. By doing so, this study sheds light on the critical need to reinterpret religious values in ways that promote gender equality and social justice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Feminist Movement*

Feminism is a theory of equality between men and women in various fields, such as politics, economics, and society (Motta et al., 2012; Abbas et al., 2023). The feminist movement seeks to advocate for women's rights and asserts that women's inferiority is not caused by biological factors but rather by the dominance of patriarchal culture, which is controlled by men (Pattu et al., 2022). In feminist analysis, texts are read to expose and dismantle patriarchal ideology.

Patriarchy, which literally means "rule of the father" or "patriarch," initially referred to a family system dominated by men. However, over time, the term evolved to describe male dominance in power relations, where women are considered inferior and positioned as subordinates in all aspects of life (Iannelo, 2010; Rutven, 1999). This concept is widely used by feminists to understand the realities of women's lives. The primary goal of radical feminism is not merely to eliminate male privilege but to dismantle the social class system based on sex. It seeks to abolish the sexual hierarchy, where women are categorized based on their gender, which in turn forms the foundation of social structures and hierarchies. Radical feminism is rooted in the belief that the oppression of women based on their sexuality is the most fundamental form of oppression in patriarchal societies. Therefore, women must actively work to free themselves from the constraints of patriarchal culture.

B. *Feminist Literary Criticism*

The application of feminist theory in literary analysis is known as feminist literary criticism. One approach within feminist literary criticism that focuses on this issue is the Images of Women approach. This approach analyzes how female characters are portrayed in literary texts. A key assumption that critics must consider is the extent to which these female characters are depicted authentically. Critics must assess whether the character possesses a self-formed critical awareness, particularly when confronted with stereotypical identities imposed by society (Duman, 2012; Donovan, 1990).

Through feminist literary criticism, the position and attitudes of women in facing various life challenges can be carefully and thoroughly analyzed. Additionally, this approach allows for a rational and critical examination of the reasons behind women's attitudes and positions in their interactions and relationships with men. This type of analysis is used in this study to reveal the forms and causes of women's resistance as depicted in several Indonesian novels from the 2000s, which serve as the primary objects of this research.

C. *James C. Scott's Theory of Resistance*

The term resistance comes from the English words resist and -ance, meaning to endure, oppose, or fight against something (Syam & Aris, 2021). Resistance refers to attitudes or behaviors that take a stance to defend, oppose, or challenge a particular condition and can be seen as a form of opposition. According to Susilastri (2020, p. 4), resistance to pressure in daily life is a natural occurrence, particularly among those in inferior or subordinate positions against more dominant powers. This resistance is not always expressed openly but can also take subtle or covert forms. James C. Scott, a well-known scholar in this field, focuses on the various forms of resistance that manifest in everyday life. His theory highlights how weaker groups, often oppressed and lacking power, engage in acts of defiance. Scott's theory has been widely applied in social research, particularly in examining how marginalized communities express their dissent through daily actions. He categorizes resistance into two main types: public (open) resistance, known as the public transcript, and hidden (covert) resistance, termed the hidden transcript (Scott, 2002). These categories are distinguished based on how the resistance is expressed, its form, characteristics, and the surrounding socio-cultural context.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study, "Women's Resistance to Religious Values in Several Indonesian Novels of the 2000s," is qualitative research that explores the interaction of key concepts through empirical analysis. According to Semi (1990, p. 9) and Sugiyono (2020, pp. 3-5), qualitative research involves analyzing and interpreting texts to uncover deeper meanings. This method focuses on non-numerical data, collecting and analyzing narratives to provide rich and in-depth insights into social and humanitarian issues. It aims to explore individual and group behavior, particularly in the context of women's resistance as portrayed in literature.

In qualitative literary research, the researcher is the main instrument, actively engaging in reading, analyzing, and interpreting texts. The primary data consists of textual evidence from four Indonesian novels published between 2000 and 2010, selected for their depiction of women's resistance to religious values. These novels include *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (PBS) by Abidah El Khalieqy, *Adam Hawa* (AH) and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (TIAMP) by Muhiddin M. Dahlan, and *Naylah* by Djenar Maesa Ayu.

These novels were purposively selected for their thematic relevance. Data collection was conducted through literary analysis, while interpretation followed a qualitative descriptive approach. The study applies feminist theory and James C. Scott's resistance theory, using feminist literary criticism as the primary analytical framework. The findings are critically evaluated in relation to feminist concepts and Islamic religious values, linking the literary themes to real-world gender dynamics.

IV. RESULTS

A. Forms of Resistance

The forms of resistance analyzed in this study align with James C. Scott's theory, which distinguishes between open resistance and hidden resistance. The resistance expressed in the novels under study is categorized and discussed based on these two forms.

a. Open Resistance

1) Resistance Against Restrictions on Freedom

The findings of this study reveal that the four novels examined portray the lives of women who experience limitations on their freedom due to social norms and regulations, often framed within religious symbols. In this context, restrictions on women's mobility are frequently legitimized through religious values that demand their compliance with specific gender constructs. However, the female protagonists in these novels do not passively accept these constraints. Instead, they resist these limitations, either verbally or through concrete actions.

For instance, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (PBS) illustrates various restrictions imposed on women. The protagonist, Annisa Nuhayyah (Nisa), is the daughter of Haji Hanan Abdul Malik, the founder and owner of the Islamic boarding school that serves as the novel's primary setting. Nisa is depicted as a young, intelligent, and beautiful girl (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 29, 37, 97, 108). Despite her young age, her critical thinking and awareness are evident in how she responds to various societal issues (El Khalieqy, 2022, p. 89). Throughout the novel, she displays remarkable courage and refuses to accept the restrictions placed on women, especially when men are granted far greater freedom to make their own choices. This conflict is evident from the very beginning of the novel, as illustrated in the following analysis.

Data 1

Siapa yang mau naik kuda? Kau, bocah Wedok?

"Iya. Memangnya kenapa, Pak? Tidak boleh? Kak Rizal juga belajar naik kuda."

"Ow...ow... ow... jadi begitu. Apa ibu belum mengatakan padamu kalau naik kuda hanya pantas dipelajari oleh kakakmu Rizal, atau kakakmu Wildan. Kau tahu, mengapa? Sebab kau ini anak perempuan, Nisa. Nggak pantas, anak perempuan kok naik kuda, pencilakan, apalagi keluyuran mengelilingi ladang, sampai ke blumbang segala. Memalukan! Kau ini sudah besar masih bodoh juga, hehh!" Tasbih bapak bergerak lamban, mengenai kepalaku. (El Khalieqy, 2022, p. 7)

The excerpt illustrates the restriction placed on Nisa, forbidding her from riding a horse simply because she is a girl, while Rizal and Wildan, as boys, are allowed to do so. This unequal treatment reflects how patriarchal norms impose limitations on women while granting men greater freedom. The prohibition comes from Nisa's father, a Kiai (Islamic scholar) with strong religious authority in the *pesantren*, symbolizing religious leadership in Islam. This suggests that the restriction is religiously justified, reinforcing gender-based control. The tasbih (prayer beads) mentioned in "*Tasbih bapak bergerak lamban, mengenai kepalaku*" symbolizes religious devotion but is also used in a moment of discipline and control, further emphasizing how religious symbols are employed to enforce gender norms.

Nisa resists this restriction verbally by questioning her father: "*Why not, Dad? Is it not allowed?*" She compares herself to her brother, Rizal, highlighting the unfairness of the rule. This verbal challenge, though subtle, represents explicit resistance, showing that Nisa does not accept the imposed norm. While her resistance at this stage is limited to questioning rather than direct defiance, her curiosity and refusal to accept the restriction without reason demonstrate an early form of resistance. Furthermore, PBS also portrays gender inequality in labor division, where women bear a heavy workload but remain confined to domestic roles, whereas men enjoy greater occupational freedom and access to public spaces, reinforcing systemic gender disparity.

Data 2

Ruang bermainku mendapat pagar baru, lebih tinggi dan sempit untuk cakrawala penglihatanku.

Tanganku mulai dilatih memegang piring, gelas, sendok, wajan, dan api pembakaran. Bau asap membuatku pusing dan tersedak bertubi-tubi. Bau bawang dan sambal terong membuatku bersin-bersin. Sampai lidahku tak pernah bisa menikmati sarapan pagi, bahkan tak juga merasakan kebebasan ketika kedua tangan ini mesti kembali mencuci piring yang dipenuhi minyak bekas makanan Rizal, Wildan, dan bapak yang terus saja duduk di meja makan sambil ngobrol dan berдахak. (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 8-9)

The data shows that women are conditioned from an early age to accept limitations, both physically (restricted spaces) and psychologically (reduced freedom of thought and movement). The sentence "*Ruang bermainku mendapat pagar baru, lebih tinggi dan sempit untuk cakrawala penglihatanku*" metaphorically illustrates how female characters face increasing restrictions. The "new fence" symbolizes tightening rules that confine their movement and limit their exploration of the world, reinforcing the idea that girls are subjected to stricter boundaries than boys. This restriction is further reflected in a school lesson where Nisa's teacher states that men's work involves offices, while women's work is limited to household tasks like washing dishes. Nisa openly protests this idea, citing her friend Dita's parents—where the mother works in an office while the father stays home caring for pet birds (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 10-11).

The theme of female confinement also appears in *Adam Hawa (AH)*, particularly in the character of Maia, Adam's first wife before Hawa. Living together in Eden's stone house, Maia is referred to as "*Maia si Perempuan*" (Maia the Woman), a title that emphasizes her identity through her gender rather than as an individual. Throughout her marriage, she feels trapped under Adam's dominance, constantly experiencing mistreatment and oppression. In response, Maia engages in acts of resistance, refusing to remain submissive to her circumstances.

Data 3

Setelah kedua lututnya lelah, Maia si perempuan meminta kepada Adam agar ia berbaring di atas Adam. Tapi Adam menolak seraya berkata cepat bahwa keinginan Maia si perempuan berada di atasnya sama sekali di luar aturan. (Dahlan, 2017, p. 41)

Laki-laki yang harus di atas. Takdir yang tentukan. Ingatkan kata-kataku itu?

Laki-laki adalah langit dan ia putra Tuhan yang mulia. Yang membawa sifat-sifat

Tuhan. Dan kamu tahu, Tuhan tidak pernah dibawa. (Dahlan, 2017, p. 44)

This text implies women's lack of freedom, as their roles are predetermined by male-dominated rules. In the first excerpt, Maia expresses a desire to lie on top of Adam, but he refuses, claiming it is "against the rules." This rejection is not merely about physical positioning but symbolizes how women are restricted in their roles and denied control, even in the most personal aspects of life. The second excerpt reinforces this by showing how patriarchal beliefs, justified through religion, establish male dominance. Adam declares that men are the sky, sons of God who carry His attributes, while God Himself is never "carried." This reflects how religious doctrine is used to legitimize a hierarchical power structure that positions men as natural leaders and women as subordinates.

In the context of James C. Scott's resistance theory, Maia attempts to challenge these restrictive norms but is confronted with rules presented as absolute truths. Although she symbolically tries to reverse the power dynamic, she finds no space for women to take control. Maia resists by negotiating her position, but Adam refuses to acknowledge her defiance, instead legitimizing his authority in the name of God. He claims to inherit divine traits as a son of God, reinforcing male supremacy. Maia ultimately resists this imposed hierarchy, questioning the justification of Adam's power over her.

Data 4

Aku tak sudi. Kau terlalu mementingkan kehendakmu sendiri. Kau mau melawanku?

Kalau ini kau katakan melawan, ya, aku melawanmu, mulai malam ini. (Dahlan, 2017, p. 48).

Adam yang hidup harus dihadapi dengan hidup. Aku harus melawannya. Telah dinistainya aku.

Oh Adam, angkuhnya engkau sebagai lelaki. (Dahlan, 2017, pp. 79-80)

The conversation between Adam and Maia demonstrates open resistance, as Maia explicitly declares, "Yes, I am against you." This statement highlights her awareness of the imbalance in her relationship and her conscious decision to resist. She further emphasizes that resistance must be active and direct, as seen in her words, "Adam, who is alive, must be faced with life. I must fight him." Maia's defiance is not just an expression of dissatisfaction but a deliberate and calculated act of opposition against patriarchal dominance.

Beyond words, Maia also resists through actions and behavior. Feeling trapped and mistreated, she not only voices her discontent but also fights back. This signifies that her resistance is not just rhetorical but a real challenge to the system that subordinates women. A similar struggle for freedom is portrayed in *Nayla* by Djenar Maesa Ayu, where two female characters resist oppression. Nayla, the protagonist, faces extreme pressure from childhood. Raised by her mother after being abandoned by her father, she endures harsh parenting aimed at making her strong and independent. However, this strict upbringing causes both physical and emotional suffering, leading Nayla to resist in her own way (Ayu, 2012, pp. 1-8).

Data 5

Beberapa tahun lalu, Nayla masih gemetar ketika tangan Ibu menyalakan pemantik lantas membakar peniti yang sudah dipilihnya. Peniti dengan ukuran terkecil, tentunya. Dan ketika peniti yang menurut Ibu sudah steril itu ditusukkan ke selangkangannya, ia akan mengapit rapat-rapat kedua pahanya.

Terisak. Meronta. Membuat Ibu semakin murka. Tapi kini, beberapa tahun kemudian, tak ada satu penitipun yang membuat Nayla gentar maupun gemetar. Ia malah manantang dengan memilih peniti yang terbesar. Membuka pahanya lebar-lebar. Tak terisak. Tak meronta. Membuat Ibu semakin murka. Tak hanya selangkangan Nayla yang ditusukinya. Tapi juga vaginanya. Nayla diam saja. Tak ada sakit terasa. Hanya nestapa. Tak ada takut. Hanya kalut. (Ayu, 2012, pp. 1-2)

Nayla's story highlights two key aspects: her mother's harsh upbringing, which includes physical violence, and her open resistance to this abuse. Initially, Nayla fears and suffers under her mother's actions, but over time, she fights back in her own way. Instead of crying, she challenges her mother by choosing the largest safety pin and refusing to show pain, symbolizing her attempt to reclaim control over her body. Nayla, described as a polite, disciplined, and intelligent girl (Ayu, 2012, pp. 21, 95-96), grows up to be critical of her circumstances. After experiencing severe trauma at age nine, she resists by leaving home in search of her father, marking her escape from oppression.

Nayla's departure is a symbolic rebellion, showing that freedom matters more than material comfort. Though raised in luxury, she chooses independence over security, even declaring that she would rather have no mother than live under her mother's control (Ayu, 2012, p. 2). However, her journey is filled with struggles—she moves from place to place, encountering drugs, alcohol, and exploitative relationships. Despite these hardships, her resistance fuels her creativity, leading her to become a renowned writer, expressing her ideas without constraints. Like other novels of its time, *Nayla* critiques patriarchal restrictions disguised as religious values, particularly regarding women's autonomy and sexuality (Ayu, 2012).

A similar theme appears in *TIAMP* by Muhidin M. Dahlan, which follows Nidah Kirana (Kiran), a devout student in Yogyakarta. Seeking total submission to God, she dedicates herself to religious rituals (Dahlan, 2016, pp. 43-58). Her search leads her to Dahiri, a charismatic preacher advocating Islam Madina, which promotes Islamic law as the foundation for an Islamic state (Dahlan, 2016, p. 37). Captivated by his religious rhetoric, Kiran undergoes a secret initiation and joins his movement, believing in its mission. She withdraws from public life, adopts conservative dress, and distances herself from previous practices, reflecting how religious ideology can shape and limit a woman's identity, reinforcing patriarchal control.

2) Resistance Against Double Morality

Double morality refers to inconsistent moral standards applied to different groups or individuals when assessing similar situations. This creates unfair and disproportionate treatment, particularly in gender dynamics, where women face stricter control over their social, sexual, and domestic roles, while men enjoy greater freedom in the same aspects (Tong, 2009; Beauvoir, 1949). In many societies, such gendered double standards are justified through cultural and religious norms. This phenomenon also extends to politics, religion, and race, where certain groups receive privileges while others face discrimination under similar conditions.

The four novels analyzed in this study highlight double morality justified in the name of religion, portraying gender inequality in social treatment. Women are burdened by strict norms, while men have fewer restrictions. In *PBS*, Nisa constantly questions the unequal treatment of men and women, noting that women are bound by numerous rules and frequently associated with sin, fostering fear and guilt, whereas men remain largely exempt from such moral scrutiny (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 68-82). This inequality is reinforced through religious teachings, such as Kiai Ali's mandatory text for all *pesantren* students, which focuses heavily on female conduct and obligations, a bias that Nisa openly resists.

Data 6

Yang akhirnya kuketahui, bahwa kitab itulah yang selalu menjadi pegangan para santri. melebihi kitab fikih, al-Qur'an, atau hadis Nabi.

Tersebutlah dalam kitab bahwa perempuan itu memang manusia, tetapi kurang sempurna akal dan agamanya. Terbukti bahwa akal laki-laki melebihi perempuan, kata Ustadz Ali yang menjadi badalnya" bapak. Entah melebihi dalam hal apapun, aku kurang paham. Mungkin dalam hal macamnya. Laki-laki memiliki akal bulus, akal musang, akal kancil, akal buaya, akal harimau, sementara perempuan hanya memiliki akal manusia saja...Laki-laki juga banyak menjadi pemimpin besar dan hebat....lanjut Ustadz Ali. Aku mengangguk-angguk. Memang hebat laki-laki itu, seperti Rizal dan Wildan. Pastilah mereka nanti akan menjadi pemimpin besar. mengingat bagaimana pintarnya mereka membohongi ibu. Kata Lek Khudhori, banyak pemimpin laki-laki di dunia ini yang terkenal karena pintarnya berbohong. (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 68-69)

"Karena sepanjang sitirannya terhadap hadis tentang perempuan itu begitu banyak dan tidak menyebut satu pun hak istri terhadap suami, atau membacakan sebuah pernyataan sebaliknya dengan kalimat seperti ini misalnya, "Laki-laki mana saja yang selingkuh dengan perempuan lain, wajib baginya mempersembahkan seluruh penghasilannya kepada istrinya seumur hidup." Atau misalnya lagi, "Laki-laki mana saja yang hobinya zina dengan pelacur, wajib dipotong kemaluannya sebagai pahala yang setimpal atas kenakalannya." Maka itu, dengan penasaran sekali aku bertanya.

"Bagaimana jika istrinya yang mengajak ke tempat tidur dan suami menunda-nunda hingga istri tertidur, apa suami juga dilaknat Allah, Pak Kiai?" "Tidak. Sebab tak ada hadis yang menyatakan seperti itu". (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 68-69)

The data illustrates open resistance through direct criticism of religious interpretations that portray women as

intellectually and spiritually inferior, while men are positioned as superior leaders. This resistance is conveyed through satire, irony, and absurd comparisons, such as when male intelligence is likened to cunning animals like foxes, crocodiles, and tigers, subtly questioning the glorification of male intellect without considering morality. Nisa also challenges gendered double standards in adultery and infidelity, noting that women are burdened with sin and guilt, while men are rarely held accountable.

This passage also reflects resistance against patriarchal religious interpretations in *pesantren*, where *ustadz* and *kiai* control religious laws that often favor men. The gender bias in religious discourse is evident when Nisa questions whether a husband would be cursed for refusing his wife's sexual advances, to which *Kiai Ali* firmly responds that no such hadith exists, exposing the unequal expectations placed on women. Nisa's open resistance is bold yet strategic, as she directly challenges religious authority through subtle dialogue. A similar critique of gender inequality is seen in *Nayla*, where the protagonist questions the unequal marriage requirements for men and women, highlighting the disproportionate burden placed on women in relationships.

Data 7

Syarat-syarat menjadi perempuan yang mudah mendapat laki-laki sudah merakyat secara turun-menurun. Bahwasannya perempuan harus perawan, harus pandai mengatur keuangan, harus sabar, harus bisa memasak, harus bisa memberi keturunan, harus pandai memuaskan suami di ranjang. Sementara syarat-syarat menjadi laki-laki hanya satu, pandai-pandailah mencari uang. (Ayu, 2012, p. 85)

Bagaimana jika seorang perempuan mengalami pelecehan seksual, terutama yang sampai merusak keperawanan, sementara sejak kecil kepala sudah dibombardir dengan informasi bahwa perempuan mutlak perawan dan jika tidak, berarti ia tidak akan laku? Mereka tidak berani mengaku. Selain mendapat ancaman dari pelaku, mereka sudah terancam oleh informasi atau syarat perempuan ideal yang berlaku. Bagi yang mengaku, tak jarang yang didapat bukan dukungan melainkan penghinaan. Baik dari masyarakat luas, maupun dari pihak keluarga terdekat. Masih banyak orang tua yang merasa perkosaan adalah aib bagi si korban, bukan aib bagi si pelaku. Aib harus ditutupi. Kejahatan mereka tutupi. Dan kenyataan ini membuat korban merasa terhina dan lebih terpuruk lagi. (Ayu, 2012, p. 85)

This text clearly reflects the phenomenon of double morality applied to men and women, particularly in matters of sexuality, purity, and gender roles. Women face stricter social control, while men enjoy greater freedom from such burdens. In cases of sexual violence, such as rape, this double standard worsens the suffering of female victims, as they are often blamed rather than defended. A woman's loss of virginity due to rape is considered a shameful disgrace, while the perpetrator faces little to no consequences. Victims are marginalized and treated poorly, whereas male perpetrators are rarely held to the same moral standards. Meanwhile, virginity remains an idealized requirement for women, reinforcing deep gender inequality. This unjust system is what *Nayla* resists through her short stories, as she repeatedly questions why women bear a far greater moral burden than men, even when they are the victims, not the perpetrators. Women suffer social stigma and bleak futures simply because they no longer meet society's rigid expectations.

b. Hidden Resistance

Hidden resistance is a covert form of opposition, carried out silently, indirectly, or symbolically, often through sarcasm or subtle defiance. This type of resistance is usually practiced by small, unorganized groups who lack the power or security to challenge authority openly. Instead, they adopt subtle strategies that are difficult to detect, such as internalized anger, silent protests, pretending to comply, or speaking to themselves in frustration.

1) Hidden Resistance Against Restrictions on Freedom

In Indonesian novels from the 2000s, female characters resist oppression not only openly but also through hidden means. The protagonists employ subtle defiance that remains undetected by those in power. In *PBS*, for example, Nisa struggles against restrictions on her freedom but cannot oppose them directly. When her father scolds her for learning to ride a horse, she does not openly challenge his authority, as he is a highly respected *Kiai* in the *pesantren*. Instead, she expresses her resistance through quiet murmurs, showing her silent defiance.

Data 8

Tak sadar aku berguman...

Apapun yang terjadi...aku harus bisa. Aku mesti belajar naik kuda. Aku tetap akan belajar naik kuda.

Naik Kuda. (El Khalieqy, 2022, p. 8)

The data illustrates Nisa's strong determination to ride a horse, despite her father's restrictions. Her silent defiance is evident in her whispered self-affirmation, "*No matter what... I must learn,*" and the repeated phrase "*ride a horse, ride a horse*", emphasizing her deep desire for freedom and skill. However, her ambition is blocked by her father's authority, as he believes such activities are only suitable for boys. This lack of autonomy is further highlighted when Nisa is betrothed to Samsuddin, *Kiai Hanan's* son, without her consent. Though she strongly opposes the arrangement, she does not voice her resistance directly, reflecting her hidden struggle against patriarchal control.

Data 9

Mendengar kata-kata itu, darahku serasa beku. Aku tertahan dan berdiam seperti patung. Rupanya mereka tengah merundingkan sesuatu untuk masa depanku. Alangkah jauhnya mereka melewati

nasibku. Begitu riangnya mereka menggambari masa depanku semau-maunya. Pastilah mereka mengira, alangkah bodoh dan naifnya aku ini, sehingga untuk menentukan Nasib masa depanku sendiri, tak perlu lagi mereka melibatkanku. (El Khalieqy, 2022, p. 86)

This text reflects the form of rejection of the character Nisa. In the narrative, Nisa carries out resistance in secret as per the concept of James C. Scott's theory. She does not directly oppose the decisions of those around her who plan her future without involving her, but through her inner narrative, she expresses dissatisfaction and resistance to the situation. Feelings of pressure described with metaphors such as "my blood feels frozen" and "I am held back and silent like a statue" show that she keeps her anger and helplessness in silence. Nisa's rejection becomes more apparent when she realizes that other people feel entitled to determine her fate, while she herself is considered incapable of making decisions. This is illustrated in "They were so happy to draw my future as they pleased. They must have thought, how stupid and naive I am, that to determine my own future outcome, they no longer need to involve me". This form of resistance is categorized as silent resistance. Nisa refrains from direct confrontation but maintains awareness of herself being treated arbitrarily. In this incident, although Nisa did not accept the decision, she was still married to Samsuddin which then led to her life of torture and suffering.

Likewise, the Resistance carried out by the Character Nayla in the novel *Nayla*. Nayla's lack of freedom to plan her future with the man she wanted was taken away by her mother's boyfriend named Om Indra when she was 9 years old, making her secretly hold a grudge against men. She tried to bring down men by controlling them sexually by having sex as she pleased. Even though she was wanted by men to be his wife, she refused. Nayla even resisted her lack of freedom by having sex with other women.

Data 10

Hayooo... udah berapa banyak?"

"Gak tauk, gak ngitung. Sepuluh orang kali."

"Hah? Kamu kan baru empat belas tahun. Pertama kali nge-lakuin umur berapa?"

"Sembilan tahun."

"Hah?! Sama siapa?"

"Pacar nyokap gue!"

"Hah?!"

"Hah huh hah huh hah! Udah, ah!"

"Kok bisa?!"

"Diperkosa."

"Hahh/?!!"

"Ya, diperkosa satu laki-laki sejak umur sembilan tahun. Gue nyoba benaran sembilan laki-laki lainnya sejak umur tiga belas tahun. Berarti itu gue lakuin selama sama kamu!"

"Hahhhhhhhhh!!!!!!"

This dialogue reveals Nayla's hidden resistance, as she secretly engages with multiple men while maintaining a relationship with her female partner, Juli. Her actions are not only concealed from Juli but also serve as a covert form of revenge, fueled by past trauma. This is evident in her statement: "Yes, raped by one man at nine years old. I tried nine other men for real since I was thirteen." Nayla does not retaliate against her original abuser but instead channels her anger through indirect means, embodying James C. Scott's concept of hidden resistance. Rather than confronting her perpetrator, she resists by subverting the system that caused her suffering in ways that are difficult to detect. This aligns with Scott's "hidden transcripts", where oppressed individuals use symbolic or indirect strategies to express defiance.

2) Hidden Resistance Against Double Morality

Resistance against double morality as a form of injustice is evident in the novel *PBS*. Kiai Ali, in his religious teachings, repeatedly emphasizes women's weaknesses, shortcomings, and incapacities based on classical Islamic texts. He describes women as future inhabitants of hell, punished for their sins and destined to become servants in the afterlife due to their disobedience. However, he never discusses men's accountability in the same way (El Khalieqy, 2022, pp. 68-81).

This imbalance deeply disturbs Nisa, who sees how religious teachings reinforce gender inequality by disproportionately burdening women with guilt and punishment. Unable to openly confront Kiai Ali's authority, she expresses her resistance silently, cursing in her heart, embodying James C. Scott's concept of hidden resistance.

Data 11

Dan budak-budak itu adalah juga aku, para istri di kemudian hari.

Tetapi tidak!

Perempuan bukanlah pelayan bagi laki-laki.

Bukan juga budak bagi kehidupan.

Aku tidak mau menjadi budak. Pun masa depan yang kerontang bukanlah impianku, juga impian siapa-pun. Tetapi, kepada siapa aku harus mengadu? (El Khalieqy, 2022, p. 81)

The excerpt illustrates how women are viewed as mere servants to men, symbolizing their low status in society. This reflects a double standard in morality, where women are seen as weaker, more sinful, and burdened with greater consequences, while men are granted leniency or exempt from similar criticism. Nisa strongly resists this notion, stating,

"Women are not servants to men" and "I refuse to be a slave".

However, Nisa does not openly oppose this injustice but instead engages in hidden resistance, as described by James C. Scott. Rather than confronting Kiai Ali or society directly, she channels her defiance through internal monologue, expressing *silent* protest while maintaining awareness of the injustice she faces. A similar gender disparity is seen in education, where, upon receiving a marriage proposal for Nisa, her parents argue that she is too young and needs further education, only to be met with the belief that women do not need higher education.

Data 12

"Memang benar," kata ibu menimpali, "Annisa itu masih harus banyak belajar untuk mengerti hidup, juga untuk persiapan di hari depannya kelak."

Tetapi anak perempuan kan tidak perlu sekolah tinggi-tinggi. Sudah cukup jika telah mengaji dan khatam. Sudah ikut sorogan kitab kuning. Kami juga tidak terlalu keburu, Ya, mungkin menunggu sampai si Udin wisuda kelak. (El Khaliqy, 2022, p. 86).

This data highlights gender disparities in education, where women are deemed unworthy of higher education, as seen in the statement, *"But girls don't need to study too much."* Meanwhile, men are expected to pursue higher education, delaying marriage for Samsuddin until he graduates, as shown in *"Yes, maybe wait until Udin's graduation."* These statements expose a clear double standard, reinforcing unfair treatment toward women. Nisa resists this injustice, as shown in the following passage.

Data 13

Mendengar kata-kata itu, darahku serasa beku Aku tertahan dan berdiam seperti patung, Rupanya mereka tengah merundingkan sesuatu untuk masa depanku. Alangkah jauhnya mereka melewati nasibku. Begitu riangnya mereka menggambarkan masa depanku semau-maunya. (El Khaliqy, 2022, p. 86).

This data highlights the power imbalance between Nisa (inferior) and her parents and Samsuddin's parents (superior), who decide her future without her consent. Phrases like *"my blood feels frozen"* and *"held back like a statue"* symbolize her silent resistance, as she disagrees but cannot openly protest. This aligns with Scott's hidden transcript theory, where inferior individuals suppress their protest rather than directly opposing authority.

B. Critical Awareness of Religious Interpretation: The Cause of Women's Resistance

Critical awareness in this context refers to the female characters' realization that the injustice and oppression they experience under the guise of religion are not absolute truths but rather misinterpretations driven by bias. Through logical reasoning, they recognize how religious values are manipulated to maintain hegemony, power, and control, ultimately disadvantaging women. In *PBS*, Nisa is portrayed as an intelligent, brave, and critical thinker, constantly questioning unfair treatment. She resists both openly and secretly, not just because of oppressive rules and unjust treatment, but because she understands that religion is being exploited for certain interests, leaving women oppressed, suffering, and facing bleak futures.

This is evident in Kiai Ali's teachings, where he interprets religious texts to reinforce women's inferiority. His sermons, based on a mandatory textbook in Nisa's pesantren, emphasize that women are intellectually and spiritually deficient. He imposes numerous restrictions on women while never mentioning equivalent rules for men. Women, particularly wives, are portrayed as sinful and bound to punishment, with their good deeds erased by minor disobedience toward their husbands (El Khaliqy, 2022, pp. 73-74). This deeply unequal interpretation, where women's lives are filled with sin and submission to male authority, prompts Nisa to critically reject and challenge Kiai Ali's teachings, as seen in the following passage.

Data 14

Sampai kapan pun aku tidak mau menjilati nanah seorang laki-laki. Pernyataan itu kuanggap lebih bid'ah dari sekedar bid'ah hasanah. Pastilah kitab ini akan menghadirkan laki-laki yang jauh melebihi Yang Maha Perkasa sendiri. Jika ini yang terjadi, aku tidak mau mengaji kitab. Tetapi jika semua kalimat itu benar dan tidak bertentangan dengan al-Qur'an, maka aku harus berpikir-pikir lagi, haruskah aku menjadi Muslimah. (El Khaliqy, 2022, p. 74)

Nisa's statement reflects her rejection of teachings that place women in a subordinate position. She questions the authority of religious texts that grant men excessive power, even beyond divine attributes. Her resistance is not emotional rebellion but a critical response to unjust teachings. She believes religion should promote equality, not justify female oppression. If the teachings align with Quranic principles, she is willing to reconsider, but if religion is used as a tool of hegemony, she even questions her own faith. This highlights women's critical awareness that injustice against them is not inherent to true religious teachings, leading her to firmly reject such interpretations.

Data 15

Karena sepanjang sitirannya terhadap hadis tentang perempuan itu begitu banyak dan tidak menyebut satu pun hak istri terhadap suami, atau membacakan sebuah pernyataan sebaliknya dengan kalimat seperti ini misalnya, "Laki-laki mana saja yang selingkuh dengan perempuan lain, wajib baginya mempersembahkan seluruh penghasilannya kepada istrinya seumur hidup." Atau misalnya lagi, "Laki-laki mana saja yang hobinya zina dengan pelacur, wajib dipotong kemaluannya sebagai pahala yang setimpal atas kenakalannya." Maka itu, dengan penasaran sekali aku bertanya.

Bagaimana jika istrinya yang mengajak ke tempat tidur dan suami menunda-nunda hingga istri tertidur, apa suami juga dilaknat Allah, Pak Kiai? Tidak. Sebab tak ada hadis yang menyatakan seperti itu. (El Khaliqy, 2022, pp. 76-77)

The excerpt reinforces women's critical awareness of biased religious interpretations. The female character resists patriarchal religious norms by symbolically questioning unequal expectations placed on women. She not only challenges the unfair interpretation of hadith regarding a wife's duties but also reverses the discourse, imagining similar consequences for men. This reflects an effort to deconstruct gender-biased religious interpretations, where women bear more obligations while men remain exempt.

Literature, including novels, conveys truth and justice, aiming for a more humane society. The female characters' resistance against religiously justified gender imbalance—which marginalizes and subordinates women—carries a powerful message. To fully understand this, a sociological approach is needed, examining Islamic teachings from the Quran and Hadith regarding gender roles, rights, obligations, and moral responsibilities between men and women.

V. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that several Indonesian novels from the 2000s depict women's resistance against injustice and oppression. This resistance is expressed both openly—through speech and actions, including rebellion—and covertly. The female characters resist because they recognize the unfair treatment they endure. Men, in these narratives, use religion as a justification for power and oppression, which the female characters critically challenge. They understand that the Quran, as a guide for Muslims, was revealed to free people from discrimination and oppression. Therefore, it is illogical to use religion to justify unjust behavior.

This study also highlights that the male-dominated power structures in these novels contradict Islamic teachings. Islam upholds equality and justice, granting equal recognition to men and women based on piety and actions, not gender. The relationship between men and women is portrayed in Islam as a partnership, where both depend on each other. Islam rejects superiority and inferiority among humans. The findings further show that female characters fight for freedom and justice, realizing that they must break free from patriarchal constraints to take control of their future. While resistance grants them freedom and self-reconciliation, the suffering caused by injustice leads to extreme resistance, sometimes resulting in harmful actions. This highlights the urgent need for a reinterpretation of religious values, preventing biased interpretations that serve particular interests and contradict the true message of the Quran. The impact of women's resistance in these novels must be further explored in relation to reality, emphasizing literature's role in guiding society toward a more dignified life.

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