

## SEXISM AND GENDER CONSTRUCTS IN THE NOVEL TUHAN IZINKAN AKU MENJADI PELACUR: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini mengkaji tindakan seksisme dalam novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis wacana kritis. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi dokumentasi. Data kemudian dianalisis melalui tiga tahap, yaitu deskripsi, interpretasi, dan penjelasan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada kutipan tekstual yang mengandung unsur seksis terhadap laki-laki dan perempuan. Melalui pendekatan analisis wacana kritis, novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur karya Muhidin M. Dahlan mengungkapkan bagaimana bahasa dan narasi digunakan untuk mereproduksi, menantang, dan mendekonstruksi kekuasaan laki-laki terhadap perempuan dan kekuasaan perempuan terhadap laki-laki dalam masyarakat. Temuan penelitian mengungkap dua bentuk utama seksisme yang ada dalam novel tersebut. Pertama, seksisme terhadap laki-laki digambarkan melalui stereotip gender yang menggambarkan laki-laki sebagai sosok yang kuat, bertanggung jawab, dan pencari nafkah utama bagi keluarga. Selain itu, laki-laki dalam novel tersebut mengalami berbagai bentuk kekerasan dan pelecehan seksual, termasuk kekerasan fisik dan pelecehan verbal. Penggambaran ini memperkuat ekspektasi gender yang kaku yang membatasi identitas laki-laki pada peran dan perilaku tertentu. Kedua, seksisme terhadap perempuan terwujud melalui stereotip yang memaksakan ekspektasi pengasuhan, kepatuhan, dan kemurnian moral. Perempuan menjadi sasaran tindakan kekerasan dan pelecehan seksual, yang mencerminkan ketidakadilan sosial yang lebih luas yang hadapi. Novel ini menggambarkan bagaimana konstruksi gender berkontribusi terhadap penindasan dan ketidaksetaraan. Melalui narasinya, Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur menyajikan seksisme sebagai isu multidimensi yang memengaruhi kedua gender. Analisis wacana kritis terhadap novel ini mengungkapkan bahwa karya tersebut tidak hanya menyajikan narasi pribadi seorang perempuan dan laki-laki, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai alat kritik sosial yang menantang konstruksi gender dan seksisme yang mengakar dalam masyarakat. Novel ini mendorong pembaca untuk merefleksikan dan mempertanyakan norma-norma sosial dan keagamaan yang selama ini diterima tanpa kritik, serta mengadvokasi pentingnya kesetaraan gender dan kebebasan individu.*

**Kata Kunci:** *seksisme, stereotip gender, kekerasan, pelecehan seksual, analisis sastra*

### Abstract

This study examines acts of sexism in the novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur through a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis. Data collection was carried out through documentation studies. The data were then analyzed through three stages, namely description, interpretation, and explanation. This study focuses on textual excerpts that contain sexist elements against men and women. Through a critical discourse analysis approach, the novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur by Muhidin M. Dahlan reveals how language and narrative are used to reproduce, challenge, and deconstruct male power over women and female power over men in society. The research findings reveal two main forms of sexism in the novel. First, sexism against men is depicted through gender stereotypes that depict men as strong, responsible, and the main breadwinners for the family. In addition, men in the novel experience various forms of violence and sexual harassment, including physical violence and verbal abuse. This depiction reinforces rigid gender expectations that limit male identity to certain roles and behaviors. Second, sexism against women is manifested through stereotypes that impose expectations of nurturing, obedience, and moral purity. Women are subjected to acts of violence and sexual harassment, reflecting the broader social injustices they face. The

novel illustrates how gender constructs contribute to oppression and inequality. Through its narrative, *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* presents sexism as a multidimensional issue that affects both genders. A critical discourse analysis of the novel reveals that the work not only presents the personal narratives of a woman and a man, but also serves as a tool for social critique that challenges gender constructs and sexism that are deeply rooted in society. The novel encourages readers to reflect on and question social and religious norms that have been accepted uncritically, and advocates for the importance of gender equality and individual freedom.

**Keyword:** sexism, gender stereotypes, violence, sexual harassment, literary analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Sexism in human life is a recurring phenomenon that remains difficult to eliminate, as language, the primary tool of communication, perpetuates discriminatory practices within society. The word sexism was created and given academic value by the feminist Caroline Bird in a 1968 lecture (Crimmins, 2019). Caroline Bird used the phrase to highlight how women in the US are marginalized and oppressed in social settings (Opoku et al., 2024).

Language not only serves as a medium of communication but also shapes and reinforces specific social structures, including gender inequality. Regmi (2022) defines sexism as the use of language that demeans or marginalizes a particular gender, occurring both explicitly and implicitly. In this context, both men and women have the potential to be perpetrators or victims of sexism in social interactions and cultural representations, including literature. Doob (2019) asserts that sexism is a form of gender-based discrimination that manifests in various aspects of life, from social systems to literary representation. Sexism may be communicated in a number of ways, including descriptive, reported, direct, and indirect (Jiang et al., 2022).

In linguistic and literary studies, sexism is often an intriguing subject of analysis because literature not only reflects social reality but also influences societal perceptions of gender. Defina et al., (2024) argue that language in literature can serve as a tool to either reproduce or challenge deeply rooted patriarchal norms within a culture. Rahmawati (2016) The use of language that

places one gender at a lower (inferior) or uneven level is known as sexist language. Thus, examining sexism in literature contributes not only to understanding how gender inequality is normalized but also to fostering broader discussions on gender justice in literary culture.

The novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) by Muhidin M. Dahlan serves as a compelling example of a literary text that explores the dynamics of sexism in gender relations. The novel narrates the experiences of a woman named Nidah Kirani, who faces social realities that position women as vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. Over time, the protagonist's journey also illustrates that sexism is not exclusively experienced by women but can also affect men in certain contexts. A critical approach to this text allows for a deeper analysis of how sexism is represented in contemporary Indonesian literature and how language is employed to either reinforce or challenge prevailing gender norms. Women and men have the same rights, women can have masculine traits and men can also have feminine traits. Today, lesbians, people who suffer from gender inequality, and macho women are all involved in what we call masculinity. Therefore, it is not right if masculinity is interpreted as a phrase that is exclusively used by men (Dillawati et al., 2022). This concept is evident in the novel, as Nidah Kirani undergoes character transformations in response to the discrimination she endures.

Studies on sexism in literature have been conducted by various researchers with different focal points. For instance Purwanti (2018) examined the representation of sexism in François Ozon's film *Potiche*, while Dewi et al.,

(2022) analyzed forms of sexism in Edogawa Rampo's short stories. Meanwhile, Febrianto and Tjahjandari (2023) investigated violence against women in the film adaptation of *Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar Tuntas* (Longing Must Be Paid in Full). Previous research on *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) includes Prawesti (2019), who explored the novel's feminist values, and Jauhari (2020), who examined the existence of women in its narrative. However, studies that specifically analyze sexism in this novel, particularly from a more balanced gender perspective, remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how sexism is represented in the novel, both in relation to women and men, and how language functions as an instrument in shaping and sustaining gender relations in literary texts.

By employing a gender studies approach and critical discourse analysis, this research seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of sexism in Indonesian literature. Additionally, this study aims to enrich discussions on how language in literature not only mirrors social realities but also serves as a medium for resistance against persistent gender injustices. Ultimately, this research aspires to strengthen the discourse on gender justice in literary and cultural studies in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis to uncover the representation of sexism in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) by Muhidin M. Dahlan. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the language and narrative structure that reflect gender inequality and how sexist ideology is reproduced within the literary text. According to Fairclough (2015) critical discourse analysis not only examines texts as linguistic entities but also considers them within a broader social and

cultural context, offering a deeper understanding of how language shapes social reality.

The data in this study consists of excerpts from the novel that contain elements of sexism toward both men and women. Data collection was conducted through documentation study, which involved reading and identifying relevant sections of the text related to the issue of sexism. The data were then analyzed through three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The description stage involved identifying and categorizing the forms of sexism present in the text. Interpretation linked the data to the concept of sexism within gender and linguistic studies. The explanation stage aimed to situate the findings within a broader social context to understand how the novel reproduces or challenges sexist norms in society.

The research results are reliable and accountable by checking the validity of the data. The characteristics of the research are taken into account when checking the validity of this data. Persistence in reading literary texts in the form of novels is a method used to verify research data. Persistence in reading carefully the novel that is the source and is needed for data verification. From the first step of reading the data to the stage of identifying and clarifying data related to the research data, the goal is to fully understand the data review logically and comprehensively. The next stage is to consult with experts who are competent in the problem being studied. In this case, lecturers within the Faculty of Language and Literature, Makassar State University who have expertise that is in accordance with the characteristics of the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Sexism Toward Men in the Novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute)**

Sexism toward men in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) can be observed in various

aspects of the story. The novel depicts how men, too, can fall victim to stereotypes and unrealistic expectations, such as experiencing physical violence, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment, even though many people believe sexism only affects women. According to Hasbi et al., (2024), the content of literary works can tell about human life according to the thoughts and experiences of the writer. Several male characters in the story face pressure to meet societal expectations, such as being strong, responsible, the breadwinner of the family, and not showing emotions. When men fail to meet these standards, they are often seen as weak or unable to fulfill the masculine roles expected of them. This creates an injustice for men, who are expected to always appear perfect, while they also endure struggles and difficulties that are not always visible. Men are viewed as capable of handling everything, able to accept any form of treatment directed toward them, whether it comes from a woman or another man. These stereotypes have the potential to evolve into discriminatory prejudices that can be classified as acts of sexism (Saguni, 2014). The table below shows the results of research on sexism toward men in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute).

**Tabel 1. sexism toward men in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur***

No	Sexism	Information
1	Gender Stereotypes	There are three data that show gender stereotypes
2	Violence and Sexual Harassment	There are three data that show violence and sexual harassment

### Gender Stereotypes

Gender inequality stems from stereotypes. Stereotypes are misconceptions about a group based on characteristics or qualities attributed to that group. These stereotypes are often used to justify discriminatory practices. According to Baron et al. (Intan, 2020) stereotypes, aside from being widely held beliefs within society, also

affect how members of a group are perceived and treated. Gender encompasses the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, identity, and societal structures that influence social interaction patterns and power dynamics. Juliano (Rahman et al., 2023) posits that femininity, regarded as an ideal for women, and masculinity, considered the ideal for men, are created through gender stereotypes.

### Men Must Be Strong

In the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute), men experience sexism at the hands of a woman who faces disappointment and various problems in her daily life. Men are seen as beings who can endure all forms of sexism. The sexism directed at men in this novel is portrayed as an act of revenge for the suffering endured by the protagonist, Kiran, leading her to a final decision to become a prostitute. This choice is portrayed as a way for her to define her existence, as well as to demonstrate that being a prostitute means dominating and subjugating men, not being controlled and subdued by them.

"Kiran, love is painful. I only realized that after losing a woman I loved. I was deeply shaken by that loss. To be exact, I was betrayed."

"Is that so? But how could that happen? Aren't you a man? You can find someone else."

"But I find it hard to forget that first love. And the trauma still lingers. Until now." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 183)

Every man has both masculine and feminine traits within himself. However, men more often express their masculinity. Therefore, in the excerpt above, Kiran believes that when a man loses love, he can easily find another woman, and that it is unlikely for a man to be betrayed by a woman.



### **A Man Full of Responsibility**

A man has a deep sense of responsibility for his own actions. He demonstrates that responsibility is not just about fulfilling duties but also about love and sacrifice for his loved ones. This can be seen in the following quote.

"You've completed everything. You've finished it, you've perfected my destruction. You are truly a man. You've sealed my destruction, and now I will leave." "What do you want? You're trying to destroy yourself. You can't do that. You've been careless with me, while you're destroying yourself. We need to face this together." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 158)

Sexism against men in the quote above is shown through a woman's lack of trust in men. In this excerpt, the male character possesses a great sense of responsibility but is ignored and even blamed for everything that happens. Everything that has occurred is entirely placed on the male character, and the destruction experienced by the female character is seen as a result of the male character's actions. The great sense of responsibility the male character has in this quote cannot be separated from the general belief in society that men are the ones who should be held accountable for mistakes involving both men and women.

### **Men as the Breadwinners**

Men are often regarded as the backbone of the family because they are responsible for providing financial support and protecting their loved ones. This role includes working to earn a living, providing a good education, and creating a safe environment. Furthermore, men are expected to serve as role models and guide their family members. By fulfilling this role well, a man helps create harmony and happiness within the family, making the home atmosphere more comfortable and filled with love. This aligns with the stereotype that men should be responsible for

meeting the family's needs, as illustrated in the following quote.

"Father, if you work hard and your body is worn down by illness as a result, it is not your fault. It is not your fault; you are simply fulfilling your duty as a human being who sustains lives, providing food for mouths that hunger, and igniting the flame of hope in your household. You work as hard as you can so that the seeds of hope can blossom into flowers of benefit." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 217)

The narrative described through a child's actions toward his father represents an act of sexism against men. The father figure in the quote lives his life burdened by the responsibilities of providing for his family, facing these challenges alone. The family structure, which positions men as the heads of households, reinforces the stereotype that men are the breadwinners. This expectation not only burdens men to constantly display resilience but also creates a stigma for those who show vulnerability or emotions. In reality, a family's responsibilities should be shared, not solely placed on the father. Sexism against men should not be dismissed as unimportant or considered a natural part of life.

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about how men and women are supposed to behave. Understanding gender stereotypes is essential so that everyone can freely express themselves and pursue what they enjoy, regardless of gender. The novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) illustrates the struggles of a male character trying to challenge stereotypes about men, showing that men also have feelings and weaknesses. Therefore, the story invites readers to understand that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to be treated equally. Thus, awareness of gender stereotypes can create a more inclusive and equal society. According to Baron and Byrne (Widyani et al., 2023), gender stereotypes are characteristics that are believed to

be inherently possessed by men and women. These stereotypes develop as a result of contextual factors, stimuli, reactions, or understandings passed down from previous generations.

### **Violence and Sexual Harassment**

Violence and sexual harassment against men is an issue that is often overlooked. Many people believe that only women experience violence and sexual harassment, but men can also be victims. Violence and sexual harassment can come from a partner, friend, or even family, regardless of gender. It is important to understand that anyone, regardless of gender, has the right to protection. The story in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) shows readers that men also experience violence and sexual harassment.

### **Men Experience Physical Violence**

Men can also be victims of physical violence. Men who experience physical violence often face stigma and feel pressured not to report such incidents. They may feel ashamed or fear being seen as weak if they admit to being hurt by a woman. This is illustrated in the following quote:

'I slapped his face repeatedly. The reason is that I don't like this man. I don't love him at all. And love cannot be forced open.'  
(Dahlan, 2023, p. 191)

Physical violence against men by women is not often discussed, but it is a reality depicted in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute). Many people think that violence can only be perpetrated by men against women, but women can also commit physical violence. This quote shows that the love a man feels for a woman is met with sexist actions from the woman. Men who experience violence from women often feel ashamed to report the incident due to societal stigma.

### **Men Experience Verbal Abuse**

In addition to physical violence, men also experience verbal abuse. This occurs when someone uses harsh words, insults, or threats to hurt a man's feelings or demean him. This is illustrated in the following quote:

'Hmm. It seems that God, in His kindness, has sent His messenger to me when I was at my lowest. When my heart was empty. And what He sent to this emptiness was a person conceived by the devil. Oh God, He did not send the clerics who are always escorted by the angelic lanterns (as they say), but a cursed devil, including me in the past. And this devil is called a dealer.'

This quote shows that a man experiences verbal abuse by a woman. It represents another form of sexism against men. Verbal abuse often occurs in interpersonal relationships, whether in families, friendships, or romantic relationships. Perpetrators of verbal abuse often use words to control their partners, making them feel powerless and maintaining dominance in the relationship. As an inseparable part of human language, verbal abuse in the form of vulgar words is a powerful tool to express personal feelings and emotions. This aligns with the view expressed by Septia and Rahmat (2023) that not everyone is morally good, and not everyone always speaks politely.

### **Men Experience Sexual Harassment**

Men can also experience sexual harassment, just like women. Many people assume that only women are victims, but in reality, men can also feel threatened and uncomfortable. It is important to understand that sexual harassment is a serious issue, and anyone, regardless of gender, has the right to feel safe. The following quote illustrates that men can experience sexual harassment:

'Look at Daarul, Wendi, Poet Kusywo, Midas, Pak Tomo, and others. They are great people in their movements and environments. They belong to the upper class in society's pyramid. The educated class. But once their clothes are uncovered,

their weaknesses are revealed. Their fragile self-esteem and morality can be bargained with a small piece of my flesh.' (Dahlan, 2023, p. 296)

The same thing happens in the quote above, showing that men are viewed as objects for the release of desires. Self-esteem is often measured by an individual's courage and ability to face moral challenges, including interactions with women like Kiran. Many men feel threatened when confronted with this reality, leading to the loss of the ethical and human values that should serve as the foundation for interacting with others. The story in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) demonstrates that anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, including men. Through this novel, the use of language as a tool, according to Damono (2021), shows that a writer does not just record life around them but also provides an evaluative response to it. In other words, literature seeks to offer a series of experiential choices and life reflections, preventing one from being confined to the daily experience and understanding of life.

### **Sexism Against Women in the Novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute)**

Sexism against women in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) is presented through various aspects of the plot. Sexism, or the phenomenon of discrimination against women by certain groups in society, is portrayed as unjust and a violation of women's rights, and this theme is central to the development of the story. Stereotyping, ideological concerns, sexual aggression, and other forms of conduct are all examples of sexism, which may be either hostile or helpful (Lei et al., 2024). Identity is inseparable from social influence; how women perceive and experience their identity depends on their social world. In closed societies that uphold traditional values, women are conditioned to perform roles

that conform to societal standards of femininity. Women have limited choices for self-expression, and they often must conform to predetermined roles. According to Saguni (Afifah, 2024), prejudice and discrimination, in the context of sexism, refer to unfair views or treatment of individuals based on their gender. This can stem from stereotypes. A person's potential can be restricted by sexist actions that assume someone's abilities are determined by their gender rather than their credentials or actual skills. The table below shows the results of research on sexism against women in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute).

**Tabel 2. Sexism against women in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur***

No	Sexism	Information
1	Gender Stereotypes	Two are three data that show gender stereotypes
2	Violence and Sexual Harassment	Four are three data that show violence and sexual harassment

### **Gender Stereotypes**

Essentially, the author expresses their ideas based on their experiences with society during a specific period and cultural situation, including the roles and positions of men and women in society. Thus, the issues presented in the novel are adaptations of the author's surrounding world, depicting social conditions and problems from a certain era, often involving the domination and subordination of women by men, which leads to discrimination. According to Hershcovis et al., (2020) these negative social interactions can take many different forms, including sexual harassment, workplace exclusion, incivility, abusive supervision, interpersonal conflict, and interpersonal unfairness. Whereas according to Azizah (2021), stereotypes about women appear to be influenced by widespread misconceptions that women are fragile, irrational, and driven by emotions.

## Women are Nurturing

Women possess a strong nurturing nature. They frequently show affection toward family, friends, and even those around them. This characteristic makes women more sensitive to the feelings of others and ready to help when needed. Through their nurturing, women create a warm, loving environment and teach empathy and care to the next generation, ensuring these qualities are passed down in society. This is why women play a crucial role in maintaining harmony in daily life, as shown in the following excerpt:

"I didn't realize my tears fell and traced my cheek. I cried because I could feel how much my father suffered." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 212)

Women are portrayed as loving, gentle, and sensitive. The label "nurturing" is used to depict a woman's compassionate nature, particularly toward things and people she loves and cares for. The data indicates that women will emotionally express their femininity when faced with the turmoil caused by problems affecting those close to them.

## Women's Obedient Nature

Women are often perceived as obedient, a characteristic that tends to follow or comply with the orders of others. This can be seen in various aspects of life, such as family, work, and society. Many people believe that this trait reflects weakness, when in fact, women can demonstrate strength through patience and understanding. This obedient nature helps create harmony and cooperation in relationships. However, it is also important to provide women with the space to voice their opinions and make their own choices. The obedient trait of women is exemplified in the following passage from the novel.

"I'm surprised, I who used to dominate discussions with others, am very different today. Yes, today, this afternoon, I am like a compliant sheep, just nodding and agreeing

with what a man, just a year older than me, says." (Dahlan, 2023, p.46)

The gender stereotype attached to women is that they are obedient, as indicated in the passage above. It suggests that women must obey men, even when this seems to conflict with their own thoughts and values. The relationship dynamic in society positions men as superior. This shows that women, consciously or unconsciously, are conditioned to accept the superior traits assigned to men. The root cause lies in male dominance, which propagates the idea that such behaviors are justified. Additionally, the sociocultural concept of "fate" (kodrat) pressures women to adhere to societal norms, where failing to comply is viewed as dishonorable for the family, thus perpetuating a cycle of obedience.

## Violence and Sexual Harassment

Violence against women is a complex social issue that reflects deep gender inequalities within society. Its forms vary from physical and verbal abuse to economic discrimination, all of which have the potential to destroy women's dignity and mental health. Sexual harassment involves degrading and threatening actions, such as inappropriate comments, unwanted touching, or aggressive behavior. Perpetrators often exploit the victim's vulnerability, creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The effects are not only personal but also contribute to the stigma women face in various aspects of life. According to Machisa et al., (2021), physical strength and body size do not significantly impact the occurrence of violence. Therefore, it is not exclusively men or women who commit acts of violence. However, women remain the majority of victims in gendered relationships.

## Women Experience Physical Violence

Physical violence against women is a serious issue that reflects societal injustice. In many cases, women are placed in vulnerable positions, subjected to torture, abuse, and mistreatment by



those closest to them. This violence not only leaves physical wounds but also causes deep trauma, affecting women's mental health and overall well-being. The following excerpt from *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) illustrates the physical violence experienced by the female protagonist:

"Both of his hands grabbed mine, twisting them, and quickly his right hand strangled me. I struggled, but he didn't release his grip." (Dahlan, 2023, p.46)

Physical violence against women is not a new topic, as depicted in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute). The violence the main character experiences is an act of degradation, diminishing her humanity, occurring at all levels of life educational, economic, cultural, religious, and ethnic. This violence is rooted in a world view still dominated by men. Men's instincts are often to manipulate or exploit women, especially those who are physically attractive, as they perceive them as easier targets for manipulation or even abuse without significant resistance. The process of violence against the protagonist begins with the labeling of women as a secondary social class, ranked after men in various aspects of life. This labeling is reinforced by strong internalized interpretations within cultural values, such as education and religion, which position the protagonist as a symbol of the second-class status of women in society.

### **Women Experience Verbal Violence**

Women are often victims of verbal violence, which can include insults, mockery, or harsh criticism that damages their self-esteem. These painful words create deep emotional wounds, disrupting their mental and emotional well-being. Verbal abuse not only damages relationships but also creates an unsafe environment for women to express themselves. The following excerpt from *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit

Me to Be a Prostitute) portrays verbal violence against women:

"Traitor! Bitch traitors! Allah will curse your betrayal!" Meli said, terrified as she saw Ukhti Zaki acting like someone possessed, watching everyone at the post flee. "Meli, do you want to betray the group too? Huh, bitch. Hehe, where are you going?" (Dahlan, 2023, p.113)

Sexism is reflected in daily life through language. Language reflects personality, influences cultural development, and shapes societal change, as seen in the narrative above, where verbal insults validate the speaker's authority to oppress others, regardless of gender. The following passage also highlights the power imbalance and how violence, even in the form of threats, continues to subordinate women:

"I could kill you now." Oh, how terrifying. Honestly, I was so afraid of this man. His treatment of me was that severe." (Dahlan, 2023, p.252)

In this excerpt, it is clear that the powerlessness of women in front of men, even under the threat of death, positions women as easy targets for male violence. This has a significant psychological impact on women, leading them to feel increasingly subordinate, unable to protect themselves or resist. Although women are often victims of violence by men, the prevailing culture of violence in society causes women to feel that such abuse is inevitable. Over time, women may become repeat victims of male violence, and in some cases, they even perpetuate this culture of violence, becoming perpetrators of violence against other women, all for the benefit of men. According to Nafisah et al., (2021), verbal violence is defined as harmful acts of aggression that can have emotional impacts on the victim. Therefore, violence in any form should never be normalized or downplayed.

## Women Experience Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment against women in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) portrays the complexity of women's struggles in the face of stigma and injustice. Kiran, as the main character, battles the social and emotional burdens that follow her, creating a narrative that raises awareness of the often-hidden violence that women face. Through her story, readers are invited to reflect on the importance of empathy and social change, as well as the need to protect women's rights and dignity in a society that often blames women. Sexual risk behaviors may be associated with sexist views in respect to sexual interactions (Ramiro-Sánchez et al., 2018). Below is an excerpt that illustrates sexual harassment against women:

"A girl who isn't touched is an annoying girl. She's just shit." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 275)

This judgment of a woman's body implies that sexual harassment can occur not only through physical acts but also through the assessment and enjoyment of a woman's physical appearance. The statement about a woman's body reveals that sexual harassment can also manifest verbally. As shown in the narrative, the belief that a woman who cannot be touched is considered annoying highlights how women are often reduced to objects of male satisfaction, subject to excessive intimidation and harassment.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that both men and women share equal potential as perpetrators or victims of sexism. The novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Permit Me to Be a Prostitute) illustrates that the experiences faced by women can also be experienced by men, and the discriminatory actions of men can also be perpetrated by women against men. Both genders are depicted as engaging in and enduring various forms of sexist

behavior. Themes such as emotional pain, sexuality, betrayal, love, body oppression, and resistance between male and female characters represent sexism within the narrative. The portrayal of sexism towards both men and women exemplifies how they may both become victims of unrealistic stereotypes and societal expectations, experiencing physical violence, verbal abuse, and sexual harassment. Despite the stigma and negative societal views they may face, both men and women can reclaim control over their lives and make choices. The novel explores the theme of equality, offering perspectives from both male and female viewpoints, thus initiating a dialogue on the importance of mutual respect and understanding each other's positions in society. This serves as a call to dismantle stereotypes and foster more equitable relationships.

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