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ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS *ENTROK* AND *PASUNG JIWA* THROUGH THE LENS OF LIBERAL FEMINISM BY OKKY MADASARI

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis secara komparatif terkait novel *Entrok* dan *Pasung Jiwa* karya Okky Madasari melalui perspektif Femenisme Liberal. Novel *Entrok* menggambarkan realitas sosial masyarakat pedesaan Jawa pada masa Orde Baru, di mana perempuan terjebak dalam rantai tradisi, kemiskinan, dan mitos budaya. Sementara, novel *Pasung Jiwa* menghadirkan dinamika urban kontemporer melalui tokoh Sasana dan Cak Jek, yang berusaha mendobrak batas-batas identitas, seksualitas, dan kebebasan individu. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi Pustaka. Sumber data utama penelitian ini adalah novel *Entrok* dan *Pasung Jiwa* karya Okky Madasari, dan sumber data lain yang dikumpulkan melalui studi kepustakaan, seperti artikel jurnal dan kajian teoretis relevan. Analisis dilakukan melalui pembacaan mendalam dan interpretasi teoretis yang berfokus pada manifestasi hak personal, rasionalitas individu, serta tuntutan atas kebebasan sebagai nilai inti feminisme liberal. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan, bahwa Okky Madasari secara konsisten mengangkat konflik antara struktur sosial yang opresif dan aspirasi individu untuk menentukan diri. Kajian ini menawarkan kontribusi teoretis dengan menggeser fokus analisis dari resistansi kolektif menuju pemaknaan ulang otonomi personal dalam sastra Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Okky Madasari, feminisme liberal, *entrok*, *pasung jiwa*, sastra kontemporer

Abstract

This study conducts a comparative analysis of Okky Madasari's novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* through the perspective of Liberal Feminism. *Entrok* portrays the social reality of rural Javanese communities during the New Order era, where women are trapped within the chains of tradition, poverty, and cultural myths. Meanwhile, *Pasung Jiwa* presents contemporary urban dynamics through the characters Sasana and Cak Jek, who attempt to challenge the boundaries of identity, sexuality, and individual freedom. This research employs a qualitative, library-based approach. The primary data sources consist of Madasari's *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*, supported by additional materials gathered from scholarly literature, including relevant journal articles and theoretical studies. The analysis is carried out through close reading and theoretical interpretation, focusing on the manifestation of personal rights, individual rationality, and the pursuit of freedom as core values of liberal feminism. The findings reveal that Okky Madasari consistently highlights the tension between oppressive social structures and individual aspirations for self-determination. This study offers a theoretical contribution by shifting the analytical focus from collective resistance to a rearticulation of personal autonomy within contemporary Indonesian literature.

Keywords: Okky Madasari, liberal feminism, *Entrok*, *Pasung Jiwa*, contemporary literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indonesian literary studies over the past two decades have shown a strong tendency toward themes of identity, freedom, and women's struggles against patriarchal systems.

Literary works no longer function merely as sources of entertainment, but have become instruments of social reflection that record the shifting dynamics of society. Through characters, conflicts, and symbols, literature becomes a discursive arena in which ideas of freedom and

equality are ideologically and culturally tested (Faruk, 2012). Within this context, the works of Okky Madasari hold a significant position as representations of the modern human struggle against various forms of social confinement. Two of her most prominent novels, *Entrok* (2010) and *Pasung Jiwa* (2015), present narratives rooted in the lived experiences of women and individuals confronting cultural, social, political, and state power pressures. Both texts reflect two distinct worlds, traditional rural life and the modern urban sphere, each with its own forms of oppression.

These novels articulate a spirit of resistance against oppressive social structures, yet through different settings and modes of struggle. *Entrok* centers on the efforts of rural women seeking freedom within an agrarian patriarchal system, whereas *Pasung Jiwa* explores existential freedom in a modern world governed by social norms, religion, and capitalism (Sultoni & Simanungkalit, 2020).

This study begins with the argument that understanding how identity and freedom are represented in the two novels can be approached through the lens of liberal feminism, which emphasizes the individual's right to make life choices freely and equally. Liberal feminism rejects all forms of gender-based discrimination and calls for social reforms that ensure women have equal opportunities in education, employment, and public life (Tong, 2009; Jaggar, 1983).

The primary aim of liberal feminism is to create equal opportunities for women in education, the workplace, and public participation. Its strategies are reformist rather than revolutionary, seeking change through legislation, public policy, and equitable educational systems (Chambers, 2024). Liberal feminism highlights three key instruments of women's emancipation:

1. Education, as a means to build critical consciousness and intellectual independence;

2. Fair legal policies that guarantee protection and equal access; and

3. Economic independence, enabling women to exercise autonomy over their own lives.

In literary analysis, liberal feminism is employed to examine how women are represented in texts as rational individuals who struggle against formal and social barriers. This approach helps interpret how narrative structures, characters, and conflicts reflect women's efforts to attain freedom, education, and self-determination (Tambotto, 2019). This research holds not only theoretical significance but also practical relevance within the realms of education and public discourse. A liberal feminist approach is expected to broaden readers' perspectives on issues of equality and individual freedom in a multicultural society such as Indonesia (Wahyuni & Casmiwati, 2024). Moreover, this analysis emphasizes that women's freedom cannot be separated from the social and economic systems that sustain gender inequality.

In *Entrok*, capitalism and state bureaucracy oppress rural women through labor exploitation and symbolic repression (Madasari, 2010). This aligns with liberal feminist critiques of structural barriers that limit women's economic autonomy (Tong, 2009). Meanwhile, in *Pasung Jiwa*, oppression manifests through social morality and religious authority. The character Sasana faces social stigmatization due to differences in orientation and self-expression (Madasari, 2015). Madasari illustrates the reality that freedom of expression remains a crucial issue in Indonesia, particularly when confronted with heteronormative norms and religious conservatism (Sultoni & Simanungkalit, 2020).

Most studies on the works of Okky Madasari, particularly the novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*, have thus far been dominated by readings that position the texts primarily as critiques of patriarchy, structural injustice, and social repression. Rohtama et al. (2018), Raharjo & Nugraha (2022), and Thavany et al. (2024)

emphasize the subordination of women within masculine cultural and political systems; meanwhile, Sul-toni & Simanungkalit (2020) and Martono et al. (2016) highlight social alienation and collective moral pressure. Even when education and social mobility are examined by Koesnadi et al. (2021), the analysis remains grounded in a structural sociological framework. The prevailing tendency in earlier scholarship has been more oriented toward systemic and collective dimensions rather than focusing on the construction of the subject as an autonomous individual. This conceptual gap indicates that the exploration of personal freedom, equality of rights, and moral rationality, as articulated within liberal feminism (Tong, 2009; Chambers, 2024), has not yet been fully optimized. Accordingly, this study offers a novel contribution by positioning the characters in *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* as rational agents who negotiate their life choices within existing social constraints.

Epistemologically, this study views literary works not merely as social reflections but also as forms of criticism against systems that oppress individuals and as vehicles for expressing human freedom. The characters in Okky Madasari's novels are not solely portrayed as victims of patriarchal structures; they also appear as moral agents who struggle to liberate themselves through rational awareness and moral courage. Thus, this research addresses a gap in liberal feminist studies within Indonesian literature, which have so far been applied more frequently to popular fiction than to socially realist works such as Madasari's.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, library-based approach that positions literary texts as the primary objects of analysis through in-depth theoretical interpretation. In qualitative research, the data produced take the form of descriptive accounts, expressed through words, writings, or meanings that emerge from the object of study,

making this method highly relevant for examining the structure of meaning within literary works (Sugiyono, 2022). A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate because the focus of analysis lies not in numerical measurement but in understanding the experiences, ideas, and representations constructed by the text (Moleong, 2017).

As an interpretive method, library research provides space for researchers to situate literary texts within broader theoretical contexts through the selection of relevant scholarly sources (Zed, 2014). In literary studies, a library-based approach enables systematic, comprehensive, and theoretically grounded readings (Ratna, 2015). Therefore, this research integrates descriptive-interpretive analysis with the framework of liberal feminism to unpack the representations of identity, individual freedom, and power relations in the novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*.

The primary data for this study consist of Okky Madasari's novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*. *Entrok*, set in a Javanese rural community, offers a critique of patriarchal culture and the dominance of tradition in shaping women's lives. Meanwhile, *Pasung Jiwa* explores struggles over identity and individual freedom within the social landscape of contemporary urban Indonesia. These two novels were selected because they present dynamic discourses on freedom, identity, and social resistance, elements that are highly relevant for analysis through the lens of liberal feminism.

Data collection was carried out using documentation techniques and library research, which involved the following steps:

1. Conducting intensive readings of the two novels (*Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*) to identify passages that depict female characters, constraints on freedom, power relations, and forms of resistance.
2. Recording relevant excerpts that reflect issues of identity, individual autonomy, and gender-based injustice.

3. Classifying the data according to key analytical categories in liberal feminism, such as individual freedom, moral rationality, women's agency, and the principle of equal rights.
4. Examining supporting literature to strengthen the interpretation by comparing theoretical concepts with findings emerging from the literary texts.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument (human instrument), as the analysis relies heavily on the researcher's sensitivity, knowledge, and the conceptual framework employed (Moleong, 2017). To maintain consistency and academic objectivity, this study incorporates the use of data notebooks, categorization tables, and a structured liberal feminist theoretical framework to support the analytical process. These mechanisms ensure that the interpretation remains within the boundaries of the theory and does not shift toward uncontrolled subjective judgment.

The data analysis in this study applies the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2014). This model is one of the most widely used approaches in qualitative research because it captures the dynamic relationship between data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in a simultaneous manner. Qualitative data analysis is not a linear process but a cyclical and interactive one, in which each stage can influence the others and may be revisited repeatedly to achieve the desired depth of meaning.

1. Data Reduction. The first stage involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data obtained from various sources (interviews, documentation, field notes, and literary texts). In this study, data reduction is carried out by:
 - a. Identifying segments of the novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* that portray themes of feminism, individual freedom, and gender inequality.

- b. Selecting dialogues, narratives, and symbols relevant to liberal feminist theory.
- c. Categorizing the data into themes such as forms of subjugation, women's resistance, socio-cultural conflicts, and strategies of liberation.

This reduction stage helps the researcher concentrate on the most meaningful and relevant data in relation to the research problems.

2. Data Display. The next stage is presenting the data systematically so that the researcher can easily understand the relationships among categories and derive meaning from the overall findings. In the model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), data display may take the form of descriptive narratives, tables, matrices, or conceptual diagrams. In this study, data are displayed through:
 - a. Thematic descriptions outlining the interpretation of women's roles in the novels.
 - b. Matrices showing the relationships among characters and their social contexts, highlighting the link between forms of oppression and strategies of resistance.
 - c. Interpretive narratives illustrating the processes through which female characters develop consciousness and attain freedom in line with the principles of liberal feminism.

The purpose of this stage is to clarify meaning and logical relationships between data and theory so that readers can follow the research argumentation systematically.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification. The final stage involves drawing provisional conclusions that are continually verified throughout the research process. Miles et al. (2014) emphasize that conclusions are derived inductively, based on emerging patterns, themes, or relationships within the data. In this study, the conclusions focus on:

- a. Representations of freedom and subjugation experienced by female characters.
- b. The tension between individual freedom and socio-cultural pressures.
- c. The manifestation of liberal feminist values in Indonesian literary texts.

These conclusions are verified through data triangulation, peer validation, and repeated readings to ensure interpretive consistency. This process continues throughout the research, beginning from data collection to the final analytical stage. Thus, data analysis is not conducted only after all data have been collected but proceeds simultaneously with data gathering and theoretical interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Entrok* represents women's struggle within an agrarian rural landscape shaped by structural poverty, the political repression of the New Order regime, and a patriarchal culture that regulates women's bodies and mobility (Madasari, 2010). In line with the findings of Rohtama et al. (2018) and Raharjo & Nugraha (2022), *Entrok* reveals how domestic and state power relations operate simultaneously to restrict women's access to economic resources and social recognition. Furthermore, Koesnadi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of education and social mobility as mediums of emancipation, although these have not been fully interpreted as articulations of moral autonomy. The findings of this study demonstrate that freedom in *Entrok* does not appear as an abstract concept, but rather as a concrete praxis manifested through labor, ownership, and the courage to make decisions, portraying female subjects as rational agents negotiating their dignity amid structural pressures (Madasari, 2010).

Meanwhile, the novel *Pasung Jiwa* broadens the analytical spectrum to the modern urban sphere, addressing issues of identity, self-expression, and public moral control (Madasari,

2015). Studies conducted by Sultoni & Simanungkalit (2020) and Martono et al. (2016) show that *Pasung Jiwa* reflects social alienation and symbolic violence against individuals who deviate from dominant norms. In addition, Sari et al. (2024) highlight the ambiguity of gender identity as a critique of heteronormativity. Based on the synthesis of these findings, this study affirms that *Pasung Jiwa* positions freedom as a struggle for existential recognition, not merely liberation from social constraints, but also the affirmation of personal rights over one's body and identity (Madasari, 2015).

Okky Madasari's works can be read as arenas for the production of freedom discourse, relevant to contemporary debates on gender equality and identity recognition in Indonesia. Theoretically, these results reinforce the argument that liberal feminism does not stop at demands for formal equality, but also emphasizes the rational capacity of individuals to determine their own life choices (Tong, 2009). In the Indonesian context, this relevance aligns with the findings of Holqi et al. (2024) and Sukarmi et al. (2020), which indicate a persistent gap between normative equality and social practice. Therefore, reading literature through the lens of liberal feminism not only enriches textual analysis but also contributes to broader policy discourse, education, and cultural transformation. Methodologically, this research opens space for the development of interdisciplinary studies by integrating literary analysis, gender political theory, and social studies to map how the values of freedom, autonomy, and recognition continue to be negotiated within Indonesia's plural and dynamic contemporary society.

Liberal Feminism in the Indonesian Context

In Indonesia, the application of liberal feminism faces persistent challenges from patriarchal cultural norms and conservative religious interpretations. Nevertheless, several studies indicate that liberal feminist principles

20 have begun to influence Islamic women's movements, such as the Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI), which advocates for women's rights in social and legal spheres (Asy'ari & Zuhriyah, 2025). In addition, the growing body of local research on education, employment, and gender-based violence demonstrates that liberal notions of equality are increasingly accepted in public discourse (Yashinta & Nurhayati, 2024).

25 The development of feminism in Indonesia is also shaped by its complex legal framework. A study by Kumar et al. (2025), titled "Gender Equality in Indonesia's Legal System: Progress or Stagnation?", shows that although legal reforms and the ratification of international instruments have taken place, real conditions in society, in terms of access to employment, freedom from violence, and opportunities for women, remain constrained by institutional and cultural barriers (Kumar et al. (2025). Therefore, the primary goal of liberal feminism is to build a social and legal system that is gender-neutral so that women can fully enjoy the same rights as men (Yashinta & Nurhayati, 2024).

19 In an ideological context, the study conducted by Maulana et al. (2021), "Liberal Feminism: from Biblical Tradition to the Emergence of CEDAW," explores how liberal feminism evolved from Western biblical traditions, how its ideas were absorbed into social and political structures, and how they eventually contributed to the creation of international instruments such as CEDAW. This demonstrates that liberal feminism did not emerge spontaneously but developed through a long history of cultural, religious, and political conflict (Maulana et al. (2021).

5 1 26 The application of liberal feminist theory is also evident in the research by Holqi et al. (2024), "Gender Equality in Women's Political Participation through Liberal Feminism Theory: A Comparative Study in Parliament of Indonesia and the United States of America," which compares how legal structures and political

systems either enable or constrain women's political participation. Their findings show that although formal equality exists in regulations, cultural barriers, gender stereotypes, and practices of symbolic representation remain substantive obstacles in both countries. This analysis aligns with the normative framework of liberal feminism, which emphasizes the importance of equal rights, individual freedom, and fair access to public institutions, as formulated by Tong (2009) and further developed in theories of justice and autonomy by Chambers (2024). Within this tradition, inequality is understood not merely as a cultural issue, but as an institutional failure to guarantee conditions that allow individuals, as rational agents, to actualize their potential equally.

In the context of literary studies, the principles of liberal feminism can be transformed into analytical tools for textual interpretation, particularly in examining representations of agency, moral choice, and struggles for individual rights within narratives (Tong, 2009; Chambers, 2024). This approach is rooted in the thought of Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which asserts women's rationality as the foundation for equality claims, and is reinforced by John Stuart Mill in *The Subjection of Women*, which critiques the legal and social subordination of women. In literary analysis, this framework enables researchers to assess the extent to which female characters are portrayed as possessing the capacity to choose, act, and negotiate constraining structures as autonomous moral subjects (Tong, 2009). Thus, just as Holqi et al. (2024) highlight the tension between normative equality and social practice in the political sphere, the application of liberal feminism in literary analysis serves to identify the gap between discursive claims of freedom and the lived realities represented within texts (Chambers, 2024).

Nevertheless, liberal feminism is not without criticism. Several studies argue that this approach tends to focus on formal rights, education, and

individual freedom, potentially overlooking structural dimensions such as social class, race, ethnicity, and religion that concretely shape women's experiences (Tong, 2009). Without integrating analysis of these systemic factors, interpretations may fall into the assumption that all individuals possess equal capacity for choice, even though material conditions and power relations often restrict such possibilities. Therefore, the use of liberal feminism in literary analysis should be complemented by intersectional sensitivity to avoid producing reductive or superficial portrayals of the complexity of women's experiences.

Critiques and Challenges of Neoliberalism

In relation to the connection between liberal feminism and neoliberalism, it is often noted that an emphasis on individual choice and autonomy can obscure the fact that not all individuals possess equal access to the resources required to choose freely. Formal freedom without structural support can become hollow. In *Entrok*, economic and educational barriers are evident in Marni's life, demonstrating that individual choices are deeply shaped by local class and economic conditions (Madasari, 2010; Raharjo & Nugraha, 2022).

A study by Mirsch et al. (2025) shows that approaches focusing on a single identity category (such as gender) or relying solely on formal norms of justice may fail to recognize how individuals facing discrimination due to intersecting identities, gender, race, class, and ability, remain marginalized. This insight is important for analyzing Okky Madasari's novels, as it highlights the need to examine whether marginalized female characters also experience layered identities or multiple structural barriers beyond gender alone. A related study by Ariyanti et al. (2024) argues that in the realms of family life and economic participation, prevailing social norms still reproduce biased role expectations, placing disproportionate economic burdens on

women even when their rights are formally recognized.

Although effective in advocating for legal reform, liberal feminism is often criticized for placing too much emphasis on formal equality while overlooking deeper structural inequalities. Some feminist scholars argue that liberal feminism is elitist because it tends to represent the interests of educated, middle-class women (Lončarević, 2022). Additional critiques come from Marxist and radical feminists, who contend that capitalism and patriarchy cannot be dismantled solely through changes in formal legal frameworks (Diva et al., 2024).

In the past decade, further criticism has emerged suggesting that liberal feminism has become intertwined with neoliberalism, a system that prioritizes competition and individual success. This can be seen in the rise of feminist foreign policy approaches that position women as agents of change within the global economic order rather than as subjects of social justice (Bell & Wegner, 2025). Such critiques highlight the risks that arise when the discourse of gender equality is deployed as a tool of political strategy or global diplomacy without producing meaningful structural transformation.

In the past decade, criticism has emerged that liberal feminism has become intertwined with neoliberalism, a system that prioritizes competition and individual achievement. This tendency is reflected in feminist foreign policy frameworks that position women as agents of change within the global economic order, rather than as subjects of social justice (Bell & Wegner, 2025). Such critiques highlight the risks of deploying gender equality discourse as a political or diplomatic instrument without pursuing substantive structural transformation. In response, contemporary liberal feminism has sought to broaden its scope by incorporating concerns related to intersectionality, the plurality of gender identities, and reproductive rights (Chambers, 2024). It has also begun to integrate values of

empathy and an ethic of care while maintaining its foundational commitment to individual liberty. This evolving approach signals an effort within liberal feminism to become more inclusive of marginalized groups of women (Lončarević, 2022).

Contemporary developments also encompass intersectionality, justice within local social contexts, and issues of non-binary gender identity. In the novel *Pasung Jiwa*, Sasana's identity, shaped through confrontation with prevailing social norms, demonstrates that the central theme extends beyond freedom within heteronormative structures to include identity conflict, requiring analysis that engages more complex dimensions of identity (Madasari, 2015). In the digital era, online representation and narrative practices further expand the space of feminist discourse. Although not directly related to the novel, studies on algorithmic feminism and justice in digital spaces provide an analogous framework, suggesting that literary texts as discursive media are likewise embedded within broader structures of power and normative regulation (Gutierrez, 2021).

Studies on liberal feminism in contemporary Indonesian literature indicate that this perspective remains relevant and adaptable to local contexts. Rohtama et al. (2018), employing a liberal feminist approach in their analysis of the novel *Pelabuhan Terakhir*, found that the female protagonists strive for education, the freedom to choose their partners, and other social rights. These findings demonstrate that the core principles of liberal feminism, formal equality, autonomy, and individual rights, have emerged significantly within modern Indonesian literary narratives.

Research by Panambunan et al. (2022) further expands this approach in their analysis of Tere Liye's *About You* using Naomi Wolf's liberal feminist framework. They conclude that the female character is portrayed as strong, independent, and capable of making decisions that

shape her own destiny. This shows that Indonesian popular literature also serves as a medium for liberal feminist ideas, even when articulated through lighter and more accessible narrative forms.

Other research conducted by Yashinta & Nurhayati (2024) examines the film *On the Basis of Sex* and identifies parallels with the struggle for liberal feminism in Indonesia, particularly in issues related to education and law. Their study strengthens the argument that liberal feminism is not a foreign Western concept, but a universal principle that can be adapted to the Indonesian context, where women also confront unequal legal and cultural structures. In addition, the study by Wahyuni & Casmiwati (2024) on rural women demonstrates how the application of liberal feminist values in everyday life is closely linked to economic empowerment and access to education. Thus, liberal feminism in literature and society mutually reinforces one another: literature reflects social realities, while those realities enrich literary interpretation.

In this context, although *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* have not been widely analyzed explicitly through a liberal feminist framework, existing studies provide strong evidence that this theory is highly relevant for understanding the representation of individual freedom, women's rights, and personal autonomy in Indonesian literature. This approach also enables a more inclusive and rational reading of Indonesian women's struggles, which not only emphasize structural resistance but also the strengthening of selfhood and individual rights.

Liberal Feminism and the Challenges of Plurality

In the contemporary era, liberal feminism faces new challenges as its principles are incorporated into state policies, including through feminist foreign policy approaches in Canada and Sweden (Bell & Wegner, 2025). The study shows that commitments to gender equality in foreign

policy often intersect with economic and geopolitical interests, thereby risking the reduction of feminism to an instrument of symbolic diplomacy. This tension between formal norms and practical realities parallels the problem represented in *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* by Okky Madasari, where claims of morality, religion, and social order do not always align with the concrete experiences of women and marginalized individuals. In both novels, freedom does not appear as a normative guarantee, but rather as a space continuously negotiated amid unequal power relations.

Theoretically, liberal feminism remains relevant because it provides a normative foundation for legal equality, public policy, and the recognition of individual rights (Chambers, 2024; Lončarević, 2022; Mirsch et al., 2025). As formulated by Tong (2009), liberal feminism is grounded in the belief that discrimination can be corrected through legal reform, education, and formal institutions. The principles of equality of opportunity and rational autonomy serve as primary benchmarks for assessing whether a social system genuinely secures individual freedom. In literary contexts, this framework enables characters to be read as moral agents with the capacity to choose and act, rather than merely as victims of structural forces.

However, as demonstrated by Sukarmi et al. (2020), formal equality does not automatically produce substantive justice. Although Indonesia has ratified ILO Convention No. 100 and CEDAW, wage discrimination and gender-based labor inequality persist due to weak enforcement and cultural resistance. This finding strongly resonates with *Entrok*, which portrays how rural women remain trapped in economic subordination even though no explicit normative prohibition restricts their economic activities. Economic freedom in the novel becomes a crucial precondition for autonomy, while simultaneously revealing the limitations of a purely legalistic approach.

Within Indonesia's plural legal system, encompassing state law, customary law, and religious law, the challenges facing liberal feminism become increasingly complex. Wildasari & Sunaryo (2025) demonstrate that women are often marginalized in customary and religious legal practices, despite formal guarantees of equality under state law. This situation is reflected in *Entrok*, where local social norms more decisively determine women's positions than formal state regulations. Similarly, Wahyudani et al. (2023) argue that norms embedded in Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974 continue to reproduce patriarchal power relations by placing wives in subordinate positions. Thus, legal reform requires deeper transformation of cultural structures and domestic power relations.

The religious dimension also constitutes a significant arena in debates on liberal feminism in Indonesia. Yusra (2024) notes progressive efforts to reinterpret Islamic law concerning marriage, inheritance, and reproductive rights by integrating principles of gender equality. Meanwhile, Alfitri (2014) emphasizes the urgency of rereading religious texts through the lens of contemporary justice. This hermeneutical problem resonates with *Pasung Jiwa*, in which public morality and religious norms are frequently invoked to legitimize control over bodies and identities. The novel illustrates that freedom of identity conflicts not only with formal law but also with hegemonic socio-religious interpretations.

Liberal feminism also confronts challenges in the context of digital transformation and grassroots empowerment. Wahyuni & Casmiwati (2024) underscore the importance of education and the economic empowerment of rural women to foster sustainable gender awareness. This insight is relevant to readings of *Entrok*, where economic mobility functions as a medium for self-consciousness formation, as well as to *Pasung Jiwa*, which depicts urban spaces and media as arenas of identity contestation.

Thus, liberal feminism operates not only at the level of theory or formal policy, but also within concrete social practices that shape the everyday experiences of women and marginalized individuals. As a normative framework, liberal feminism offers a strong foundation for claims to equal rights and individual autonomy; however, its transformative capacity depends heavily on its ability to negotiate the layered pluralities of law, culture, and power relations in Indonesia. In this context, *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa* by Okky Madasari demonstrate that freedom is not merely a normative principle, but an existential experience pursued through work, moral choice, and the affirmation of identity amid structural and cultural pressures, positioning literature as a critical arena for testing the relevance of liberal feminism in contemporary Indonesian realities.

Liberal Feminism in the Novel *Entrok*

Okky Madasari's novel *Entrok* (2010) has become one of the most widely examined works in Indonesian literary studies due to its thematic emphasis on women and the patriarchal social system embedded in Javanese culture. Several previous studies interpret this novel as a form of social critique against patriarchal traditions that restrict women's freedom in rural Java. As highlighted by Rohtama et al. (2018), the characters Marni and Rahayu are depicted as living within a cultural order that positions women as subordinate beings and symbols of family honor rather than autonomous individuals. In this context, *Entrok* is read as a narrative of resistance against a system that confines women to domestic spaces and binds them to traditional beliefs that limit their personal rights (Madasari, 2010).

Other studies, such as Raharjo & Nugraha (2022), demonstrate that *Entrok* not only reveals gender inequality but also exposes the structural injustices embedded in the socio-political system of the New Order era. The female characters in the novel illustrate a shift from passive roles toward emerging forms of active awareness, even though

their struggles remain constrained by deeply rooted social norms. Thus, *Entrok* becomes not only a representation of cultural feminism but also a reflection of broader social dynamics in which women begin demanding rights equal to those of men within the public sphere (Madasari, 2010).

Additionally, the radical feminist study conducted by Thavany et al. (2024) emphasizes that the oppression of women in *Entrok* stems from the deeply rooted male domination within the patriarchal system. From this perspective, women's liberation requires a structural transformation of the masculine and ideological social order. However, this framework does not fully account for the dimension of individual freedom highlighted in liberal feminism, namely the pursuit of personal autonomy through education, economic independence, and legal reform (Chambers, 2024).

A more recent study by Koesnadi et al. (2021) analyzes the representation of education as an instrument of freedom in *Entrok*, positioning Rahayu as a figure of an educated woman capable of transcending traditional boundaries. Yet, the study relies primarily on a sociology-of-education approach and does not explicitly connect its findings to liberal feminist thought. Through a liberal feminist lens, Rahayu's struggle can instead be understood as an act of self-actualization and a defense of individual rights to shape one's own life trajectory.

Within the framework of liberal feminism, individual freedom and formal equality constitute two central pillars. For this reason, examining *Entrok* through this perspective is crucial to understanding how women's liberation extends beyond resisting patriarchy to include the right to determine one's future, choose one's life path, and access education as a means of personal emancipation (Tong, 2009; Lončarević, 2022). This approach offers a richer reading of *Entrok*, which has previously been dominated by cultural or radical feminist analyses.

Liberal Feminism in the Novel *Pasung Jiwa*

The novel *Pasung Jiwa* portrays the complexity of individual freedom and social confinement experienced by Sasana, a man who struggles to discover his gender identity and inner liberation amid oppressive social norms (Madasari, 2015). In their study, Sultoni & Simanungkalit (2020) highlight issues such as injustice, alienation, and social inequality that restrict individual agency. The novel serves as a powerful representation of how social structures can “shackle” the human soul that longs to live freely according to its own convictions and identity.

Research conducted by Martono et al. (2016) argues that *Pasung Jiwa* also functions as a metaphor for a society trapped within artificial norms and moralities. Sasana, who dares to challenge gender stereotypes, emerges as a symbol of freedom and authenticity, while simultaneously revealing the high cost of personal liberation within a conservative social environment. This demonstrates a clear connection between the protagonist’s struggle and the core principles of liberal feminism: the freedom to choose one’s own life path without being constrained by social or religious norms. However, as noted by Sultoni & Simanungkalit (2020), their analysis remains focused on general social criticism and does not extensively relate the novel to liberal feminist theory. In fact, *Pasung Jiwa* contains strong dimensions of individual autonomy, the right to self-expression, and resistance against social structures that limit personal freedom, three key elements central to liberal feminism (Madasari, 2015; Tong, 2009; Chambers, 2024).

A more recent study by Sari et al. (2024) analyzes the ambiguity of gender identity in *Pasung Jiwa*, demonstrating that the novel not only challenges patriarchal structures but also raises fundamental questions about an individual’s right to be oneself. When read through the lens of liberal feminism, the character

Sasana can be understood as a universal representation of human freedom to determine one’s identity, orientation, and life choices without interference from the state or social norms. *Pasung Jiwa* also reflects a broader crisis of freedom within Indonesia’s social system, which often links morality to compliance with patriarchal norms. In this context, liberal feminism provides a theoretical space to evaluate the extent to which social structures suppress individual rights, whether of women or men, who seek to express themselves authentically (Madasari, 2015).

This study aligns with earlier research highlighting gender equality and individual freedom for women as core concerns of liberal feminist struggle. As shown by Holqi et al. (2024), women’s struggles in education, employment, and legal rights reflect the pursuit of freedom and equal opportunities in both public and domestic spheres (Yashinta & Nurhayati (2024). This research underscores that individual freedom cannot be separated from the social constraints surrounding it, making women’s intellectual and moral emancipation a central dimension of liberal feminism.

These findings are consistent with research by Wahyuni & Casmiwati (2024), which identifies economic empowerment and education as fundamental factors in women’s liberation. Both are prerequisites for achieving independence and equal status within society. Another point of convergence lies in the view that liberal feminism promotes change through formal and institutional systems. As argued by Tong (2009); Kumar et al. (2025), legal reform and public policy are considered essential pathways toward sustainable gender equality.

This study shares a similar approach with research conducted by Ariyanti et al. (2024); Rohtama et al. (2018), who examine cultural and social barriers as key factors behind the failure of formal equality to translate into real improvements in the lives of Indonesian women.

Thus, while this study remains grounded in local socio-cultural contexts, it offers a new analytical dimension by placing individual freedom at the core of women's struggles as portrayed in literary works.

In contrast to previous studies that primarily focus on formal institutions such as law, politics, or economics, this research applies liberal feminist theory within the realm of critical literary analysis, specifically through the examination of Okky Madasari's novels *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*. Whereas Holqi et al. (2024) investigate political participation and Sukarmi et al. (2020) discuss wage equality, this study positions literature as an ideological space for interpreting women's resistance to social repression and patriarchy. Furthermore, it differs significantly from prior works by conducting a comparative analysis of two contrasting social settings. *Entrok* represents an agrarian, patriarchal rural society, while *Pasung Jiwa* depicts modern urban life marked by moral and social pressures. This comparison highlights the ideological evolution of liberal feminism from collective resistance toward a more personal existential consciousness.

The study also introduces an integration of intersectional critique and local moral frameworks, an approach rarely used in earlier liberal feminist research (Maulana et al., 2021; Lončarević, 2022). By incorporating dimensions of religious morality and social identity, the analysis seeks to interpret the struggles of Okky Madasari's female characters in a more contextual manner. Moreover, the presence of non-binary identity and existential freedom in *Pasung Jiwa* distinguishes this study by expanding the scope of liberal feminism in Indonesia, as most prior research remains limited to heteronormative women's issues. Therefore, liberal feminism in this study is understood not only as a theory of legal equality but also as a cultural critique of patriarchal domination and social morality, making it more relevant to contemporary Indonesian literature and cultural discourse.

Liberal feminist criticism in literature emphasizes that every individual, including women, possesses the right to think, choose, and act independently without being subordinated to patriarchal norms. This approach has long been used to analyze female characters in classical works such as *Jane Eyre* or *Little Women*, and it remains relevant for examining modern Indonesian literature, which continues to evolve (Paramita et al., 2023; Tambotto, 2019). The selection of liberal feminism as the theoretical framework is far from arbitrary. The theory is pertinent because it highlights the importance of personal freedom and autonomy as fundamental elements of women's emancipation. Within the context of *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*, these concepts help uncover how female characters, and other marginalized individuals, strive to negotiate spaces of freedom amid social and structural constraints.

Conceptually, this study aims to build a bridge between liberal feminist theory and the practices of contemporary Indonesian literature. Through narrative and symbolic analysis of *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*, this research seeks to generate new insights into how literature represents the struggle of women and other individuals to attain genuine freedom. Moreover, the study contributes to the development of feminist literary theory in Indonesia by introducing an analytical model that integrates ideological, psychological, and cultural dimensions within a comparative framework. Such an approach is essential for enriching the mapping of Indonesian literature as a dynamic and ideologically shaped social product.

4. CONCLUSION

The study introduces an integrative approach that combines liberal feminism, intersectional critique, and comparative literary reading to sharpen the analysis of freedom and autonomy within the Indonesian social context. *Entrok* and *Pasung Jiwa*, which represent two distinct social terrains, agrarian rural life and modern urban

space, offer a spectrum of female and marginal experiences that reveal how power, the body, and identity are negotiated under contrasting social conditions. Academically, this research expands interdisciplinary dialogue among literature, gender studies, and social theory by positioning literary works as mediums for cultivating critical consciousness. The application of liberal feminist analysis not only reinforces understanding of freedom and equality, but also demonstrates how literature can function as an ideological instrument that challenges oppressive social structures. Through a close reading of both novels, it becomes evident that Okky Madasari employs fiction to map forms of structural, moral, and cultural oppression while simultaneously offering pathways of resistance through the affirmation of human dignity.

The analytical findings further affirm that the struggle of liberal feminism cannot be separated from broader humanitarian agendas. In *Entrok*, women's emancipation is intertwined with the fight against social injustice; whereas in *Pasung Jiwa*, the liberation of identity becomes a gateway to critique public morality and normative boundaries. By incorporating non-binary issues, this research broadens the scope of liberal feminism within Indonesian literature and enriches the understanding of freedom, autonomy, and individual struggle in a more inclusive manner. Overall, the study provides empirical and theoretical contributions to the development of liberal feminism in Indonesian literary scholarship, showing that the ideals of freedom and equality are not merely conceptual abstractions but lived experiences continually negotiated across rural–urban, traditional–modern, and binary–non-binary divides. Consequently, further research is needed to expand the scope to other contemporary literary works that explore diverse identities and power relations, and to test this integrative approach in wider social contexts, including digital media, community movements, and popular cultural

representations, to deepen our understanding of the evolving discourse on freedom and equality in Indonesia.

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