

The instability of female construction as reflected in novel *Hati Seorang Perempuan***Robiatul Adawiyah*, Pujihart**

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*Corresponding Author: adawiyahrobiatul003@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The evolving and persistent gender constructs in society have greatly disadvantaged women, placing them in a subordinate position and limiting their choices in life. These negative impacts have prompted women to rise and fight for gender equality, a struggle not only in the real world but also in fictional works such as Maria A. Sardjono's novel *Hati Seorang Perempuan*. This novel features an independent female protagonist who upholds women's self-esteem and rejects the gender construction system imposed by society. In contrast, the male protagonist in this novel is portrayed as a figure who highly upholds the gender construction system in a society steeped in patriarchy. However, the gender construction believed by the female and male protagonists in the novel is not absolute but full of instability. Therefore, this study aims to identify the instability of female and male constructions in the novel *HSP*. Based on the analysis, it was found that the strong, independent female character that does not care about society's views, as formed by the female protagonist in the novel *HSP*, cannot completely break free from society's perspective, the biological need to love and be loved, and self-fragility. A similar phenomenon occurs in the male protagonist, where the construction of men as selfish and placing women in a subordinate position, as portrayed by the male protagonist in the novel *HSP*, is ultimately not fixed and is full of instability, as seen in the male protagonist's logocentric opposition.

Keywords: Deconstruction, construction of women, instability, societal ideology**Article history**

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INTRODUCTION

Most women and men have been living with an order constructed by a society whose rights and obligations are differentiated based on gender differences. Gender is a construction formed by society and is not innate, unlike sex, which is determined based on biological factors or innate. Murniati (2004:97) states that gender roles are the result of community agreements that can vary due to differences in time, place, situation, and community conditions; so far, in general, differences in roles between men and women are adjusted to the will of the local community. Differences in roles between women and men based on gender differences make many women experience restrictions because, in general, women will be placed in the domestic sphere and do not have the freedom to express themselves in the public sphere. Nartey et al. (2023:3) state that gender norms have negative impacts on women, such as increased school dropout rates among girls, violence against women, low levels of education, disproportionate health problems, discriminatory cultural practices, and low political representation.

However, along with the times, many women are now active in the public sphere, such as education and work. In education, women now have the same rights as men. Most people have realized that education is essential for both men and women. In the past, it was only men who were considered necessary to get higher education because men would become leaders in the household and be responsible as breadwinners for their families. Rahmwati et al. (2019) explained that the main factor influencing the emergence of discrimination in education rights is traditional norms or rules that destroy women's character. In comparison, women were considered unnecessary to pursue higher education because many thought that there was no point in women getting higher education because, in the end, they would only work in the kitchen and would only become homemakers. Women ultimately do not

belong to their families; they must go to their husband's house, live with their in-laws, and care for their husband, in-laws, and children (Lahiri & Self, 2007).

This is in line with the thoughts of Hanapi (2015:19), who says that some parents still feel that education for boys is more important than education for girls because, in the future, boys will have a significant role and responsibility in the household and society. Hence, some parents focus more on providing higher education only for boys. Nowadays, such thinking has begun to erode, especially in urban communities, because many women have become the backbone of the family. It is not uncommon to find women who earn more than their husbands because they have more established jobs than their husbands. The number of female workers has increased over time. Based on data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2022), the number of formal female workers in 2021 has increased by 1.55% compared to the previous year; in 2020, it was 34.65%, while in 2021, it was 36.20%. This is undoubtedly fresh air for women to further increase their existence in the public sphere. The increasing number of working women indicates that more women are financially independent. When more women can achieve financial independence and also have a good education, the problem of marginalization of women and the inferiority of women will decrease so that slowly, women can be free to actualize themselves in the social environment without worrying about being underestimated by others because they are female.

In domestic life, most people have begun to leave the top-down relationship system that makes the husband the centre of all household affairs. At the same time, the wife is the follower of everything the husband decides. Patriarchal culture not only places men as the primary authority figures but also instills values passed down through generations, such as the saying "*Yen awan dadi theklek, yen bengi dadi lemek*," which means "if it is daytime, women are sandals; if it is nighttime, women are blankets." This saying represents women's conditions, who are seen as merely servants to their husbands, day and night (Ardiani & Nikmah, 2024). In today's society, building a household life has made the husband-wife relationship an equal relationship; no one is above or below. The two of them discuss everything that happens in the household with each other and plan for the future of their home life. It is no longer the time for a husband to act authoritarian by making decisions unilaterally without the consent of his wife. Wongpy (2022) explains that in the relationship between husband and wife, there are two roles: traditional and egalitarian.

The more flexible division of roles and duties between husband and wife improves women's lives. With this flexibility, the burden of household life can be shared equally without burdening either party. Husbands and wives can share household responsibilities, creating a harmonious life that does not burden either party. Women can have the opportunity to pursue a career with the division of tasks in household life (Alger & Crowley, 2012). The situation women face today is certainly different from that of women in the past. During the patriarchal era, women were very vulnerable to crime, often receiving sexual violence both from men in their own families and foreign men (Saadawi, 2001:31).

Because of this helplessness and the various bad things that happen to women, it is not unusual that in certain societies, women are often subordinated, considered weak, and considered to need men as protectors or places to depend on. For hundreds of years, women have been conceptualized by society as being inferior to men, so women are generally always submissive and obedient to men. When women become wives, they are responsible for serving and making their husbands happy. Fitriani (2016:124) reveals that so far, women in domestic life have responsibilities in matters related to domestic affairs, such as cooking, cleaning the house, caring for and educating children, and serving their husbands, which are absolute and non-negotiable tasks, that wives also must obey their husbands. Based on historical research, women were first marginalized not through physical force, but through control over their reproductive functions and social institutions such as marriage (Lerner, 1986).

Muhajarah (2016:133) states that a culture that positions women as subordinate is the beginning of opportunities for violence against women (wives) in domestic life. The life of women during the patriarchal era was quite tricky. Patriarchy, which is a system built through power relations, cultural values, social norms, and institutional structures that consistently favor men and discriminate against women, has placed women in a life full of injustice (Johnson, 2014). Women were restricted in their movement, making expressing and developing themselves difficult. A woman's position becomes even more complicated when she becomes a widow. It is as if being a widow is a shameful and lowly thing. A woman who is unlucky in marriage and eventually divorced is considered a woman who is a disgrace and is not good. This is in line with Ayunisa's statement (2022:22) that, socially, in general, many people still view the status of widows with an opposing view and call them a disgrace. This happens not only

in one scope of society but also in the general scope. Puspitasari (2022:197) reveals that Javanese women, in deciding to divorce, have experienced many emotional challenges due to the burden of roles in the family and also the norms that consider widows a disgrace.

This is not only felt by Javanese women; women in other cultures also experience the same problems, as said by Ismail, et al (2020:156) that most people in Tamalate District, Makassar City have not been able to rid themselves of unfavorable perceptions in the life of a widowed woman. Through ethnographic research involving field interviews in Bandung (West Java) and Wawonii Island (Southeast Sulawesi), Parker & Creese (2016) found that negative stigma against widows emerged in the form of narratives about widows as women who possess strong sexual charms, are uncontrollable, and can endanger the harmony of other people's households. The opposing view of a woman who is a widow also occurs among the Sundanese community; this is illustrated by a collection of mini-fictions incorporated in *Serat Sapamidangan* as explained by Nurfaidah (2021:208) that through this collection of mini-fictions, can see that Sundanese society still gives a negative view of widows, any attitude and action shown by women with widow status tends to invite negative connotations, women with widow status are always in a false position.

The injustice experienced by women and also the various negative stigmas attached by society to women whose lives are not by the constructions formed by the local community make women finally begin to be moved to defend themselves. Over time, women finally began to dare to speak out and demand justice until movements demanding gender equality emerged. Women who feel that they have been mistreated for years and their position has always been marginalized demand to be treated equally with men and be able to get the same opportunities as men in the public world, such as in education, work, and politics. Garcia (2016) explains that the gender equality movement has brought about changes in social perspectives and legal and political paradigms. The struggles for gender equality slowly but surely opened up women's positions in the public sphere, and negative stigmas began to fade. Struggles for gender equality not only open up opportunities for women to be more complementary in taking part in the social environment but also cause the emergence of new ideologies. Gender equality is a struggle for women's rights and a broader ideological commitment to achieving equality and dismantling structures of gender-based oppression (Mohajan, 2022).

Indirectly, rejecting an ideology can give rise to other ideologies, which one day, if destroyed, will also give birth to other new ideologies. Ideologies can change over time due to changing social, political, or economic realities. Ideological change is dynamic and responsive to an ever-changing social context (Facchini, 2016). As part of ideology, gender constructs are constantly changing. The construction of gender seems to bring women and men into endless competition to obtain the position of who is strong and who is weak; the strong will rule over the weak, and the weak will be controlled by the strong. This situation aligns with He (2017) that gender constructions are shaped by society and culture, which are continuously repeated and standardized, eventually appearing to be natural identities.

Today, even though women have begun to be free to move and actualize themselves, there are still parts of patriarchy that overshadow women, making it seem as if women cannot entirely escape the patriarchal thoughts that have been so ingrained. For example, there are still many cases of physical and sexual violence against women. Mohan (2021) explained that from the results of a survey conducted by WHO, it was found that one-third of women in the world, or around 736 million of them, had experienced violence both physically and sexually. Women have experienced much violence from a young age; one in four women in the age range of 15-24 years experienced violence committed by their partners. Partner violence in the form of harassment is the most reported, with approximately 641 million women worldwide experiencing it, while the remaining 6% experience violence perpetrated by someone other than their husband or partner.

Both in the public and domestic spheres, women still receive much unpleasant treatment and are marginalized and excluded. The crimes and injustices experienced by women are regardless of age, social status, or educational status. Both wealthy and less wealthy women, both educated and uneducated women, are equally subjected to acts of injustice. However, it is usually women with low social status and lack of education who are at greater risk. As a representation of the reality of social life, literary works are also influenced by patriarchal thinking and the struggle to eliminate this culture in social life. It is not uncommon in literary works for women to be portrayed as inferior and marginalized while men are portrayed as superior. This can certainly happen because, after all, an author is part of a community group, so consciously or unconsciously, the labeling given by society in the social environment

influences the author in constructing the figure of women in his work. This applies to both female and male authors.

One of the literary works in which women are constructed as strong and independent figures who do not depend on men, which also clearly shows how thick patriarchal thinking is in people's lives, is a novel entitled *Hati Seorang Perempuan* by Maria A. Sardjono, published by Novelindo Publishing in December 2021. Although the novel's main construction shows how thick the patriarchal ideology believed in by the husband and the community where the female protagonist lives in the novel and also how idealistic the female protagonist is in determining her life path based on the ideology she believes in, which ideology is very different from the ideology believed in by the surrounding community, in it there is an instability of thought that contradicts the main issue raised by the novel.

A Novel *Hati Seorang Perempuan* (which will henceforth be written *HSP*) tells the story of Pipit, who has to live a difficult life because of the divorce in her household. Pipit's parents, older siblings, neighbors, and friends consider Pipit to be a woman who took the wrong step because she chose the path of divorce in her household. In Pipit's neighborhood, a woman who divorced and became a widow was considered an evil woman and had many negative impacts. Although Pipit was able to find success in her career and education after her divorce, her parents and older siblings still considered her a failure. They believed that Pipit had not become a successful woman until she could start a family and have children.

Pipit felt that the construction of women, formed by the society in which she lived, was so confining and burdensome for women. Pipit, a modern and open-minded woman who has absorbed many thoughts from the Western world because of her central philosophy, frees herself from the shackles of patriarchal thinking still profoundly rooted in her family and social environment. She firmly supports her ideology that women are independent and do not need the support of men to live and be happy.

Through the figure of Pipit, a young widow with a free spirit, the novel attempts to show society that women should not be viewed and labeled the way society generally is. This research seeks to examine the construction of women in the novel *HSP* and uncover its hidden discourse through a deconstructive reading.

Research on gender construction has been conducted several times. For example, Sulistyawan & Nurfaidah (2020) examined the differences between gender construction in society and gender construction from the perspective of the Quran. This study revealed that gender construction in society differs from gender construction taught in the Quran. Gender construction in society is very unfair, while in the Quran, it highly upholds equal justice. Additionally, Astuti (2020) found that Yogyakarta's modernization in education, economy, and politics has brought positive changes in local gender construction, increasing women's access to education and political opportunities. However, in the domestic sphere, traditional patriarchal systems with gender biases remain deeply entrenched. Furthermore, Juditha (2015) researched gender construction in the mass media, which often positions women as objects rather than subjects. Research on gender construction in social media such as Instagram and Twitter conducted by Rosyidah & Nurwati (2019) found that although social media such as Instagram provides freedom of expression, traditional gender constructions that are deeply rooted still influence individuals in their expression; Widodo et al. (2021) found that gender equality campaign strategies through social media are capable of challenging patriarchal structures of domination; and Mingkase & Rohmaniyah (2022) found that women on Twitter have not been able to completely escape gender construction, especially in terms of choosing to be childfree, which has led to many negative views.

Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that analyses of gender constructions have been conducted several times. However, these studies examine gender constructions found in society and specific groups or media, and most focus on the negative impacts of gender constructions on women. Through this study, the researcher aims to discuss another perspective on gender construction, which is always unstable, fluid, and dynamic, not viewed from the perspective of society or a particular medium, but from the perspective of individuals, the male and female protagonists in the novel *HSP*. This article will contain two main discussions: the instability of female construction in the novel *HSP* and the instability of male construction in the novel *HSP*.

The analysis of the novel *HSP* will be conducted through a deconstructive reading approach combined with an existentialist feminist perspective. Through deconstruction, text is understood as something unstable and full of contradictions (Derrida, 1976). Therefore, meanings that appear stable

can change and become unstable when traced, especially those related to patriarchal constructs. This instability will be interpreted using the existentialist feminist thinking of Simone de Beauvoir (2010), who asserts that one is not born a woman, but becomes one. Through this framework, gender is understood as a socio-cultural construct shaped by social norms and expectations, rather than as a natural identity. Through the elaboration of these two perspectives, the instability of gender construction in the novel *HSP* can be seen as a process of negotiation by subjects, both female and male, which is a response to the ideological pressures that shape their understanding of themselves and their gender roles.

METHOD

This research is qualitative research presented in descriptive form. The data of this research are words, phrases, and sentences in the form of dialog, monologue, and narration contained in the novel *Hati Seorang Perempuan* that relate to the focus of the research in the form of the construction of women in the novel. The novel, which was published by Novelindo Publishing in 2021 and has 102 pages, is the data source of this research.

The data collection method used is the literature method, which involves using and utilizing written sources to obtain data through reading and note-taking techniques. Through reading and note-taking techniques, researchers reading carefully, purposefully, and thoroughly to primary data sources in the form of the novel *HSP*. The data collection technique used to collect data was reading the primary research data in the form of the novel *HSP*; then searching for research data in the form of instability found in the novel; classifying or separating the data based on predetermined categories, namely the instability of female construction in the novel *HSP* and the instability of male construction in the novel *HSP*; then carefully examining the findings to ensure data accuracy; and systematically recording the data found to facilitate researchers in conducting rechecks if necessary.

This study uses a deconstruction analysis method carried out in several stages. First, reading *HSP* deconstructively. This means that the researcher does not limit themselves to one meaning presented or highlighted in the novel, but opens up a way of thinking that other meanings in the text contradict the main meaning construction that the novel text attempts to present. In addition, the interpretation of the data is guided by feminist existentialist literary criticism. Within this framework, gender identities are treated as unstable, historically and socially produced positions rather than fixed essences. Thus, when identifying contradictions, ironies, and paradoxes related to Pipit's and Wisnu's subjectivities, the analysis focuses on how they negotiate freedom, constraint, and self-definition as gendered subjects within a patriarchal context. Second, the data obtained and classified based on the previously determined categories are then analyzed based on the research questions. The final stage of this analysis is concluding the results and discussion that have been elaborated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is an analysis of the novel *HSP* regarding the instability of female and male construction as reflected in the main female and male characters in the novel *HSP*.

The Instability of Female Construction in the Novel *HSP*

Reading a text through deconstruction means paying attention to every detail and considering every part of the text to be important. In this study, deconstructive reading is combined with a feminist existentialist approach, so that the analysis does not only trace textual contradictions but also examines how the female protagonist's lived experience reveals the tension between her desire for freedom and the gendered expectations imposed on her. From this perspective, the instability of main female character is read as an existential negotiation of what it means "to become a woman" in a patriarchal environment, rather than as a simple inconsistency in characterization.

The main female character in the novel *HSP* is initially portrayed as a strong, assertive woman who feels she does not need men. She begins to experience emotional turmoil regarding her choices. Her reunion with Wisnu causes Pipit to reflect on the path she has chosen for herself. The turmoil within Pipit regarding her way of thinking and living causes her character to become unstable.

Other people's opinions become important.

The instability that is so clearly visible in Pipit is that she was initially portrayed as a woman with strong principles who never cared about other people's opinions, not even those of her own family, but

she eventually changes. Pipit has become someone who pays attention to the opinions and judgments of others. When Pipit decided to divorce Wisnu, she ignored her parents' advice not to divorce, and when her sister also said that Pipit should not divorce Wisnu, Pipit did not care. After her divorce from Wisnu, Pipit became a young, beautiful, and sexy widow. When people gossiped about her and viewed her negatively, Pipit ignored their judgments. Pipit remained true to herself, doing what she wanted. She was not influenced by what others said about her.

However, when she was reunited with Wisnu after more than four years apart, Pipit became unstable. She began considering others' opinions when Wisnu offered to drive her home and suggested she wear his jacket. This instability, stemming from her newfound concern about others' judgments, is evident in the contradictions between her actions and words in the following excerpt.

*"Don't you think wearing your jacket for a woman who is nothing to you will cause awkwardness? Especially if that woman is your ex-wife," Pipit replied bluntly.
"What will people say when they see?" (Sardjono, 2021:40).*

Pipit's contradiction regarding her concern about other people's opinions is also evident in her attitude when her classmate, Iwan, invites her to eat with him. Pipit feels that going out alone with Iwan will cause people to think negatively of her.

"All right, I believe you. But what about other people's opinions? Are you sure that our leaving together won't cause them to think all sorts of things?" (Sardjono, 2021:70).

Based on the excerpt, it is clear that Pipit is afraid of being judged negatively by others, even though since she decided to divorce Wisnu, she has been viewed negatively and has never allowed other people's judgments or negative views to influence her social life, let alone her life choices. The instability within Pipit regarding the importance of other people's opinions continues throughout the story. Pipit's actions and statements are constantly contradictory. When Pipit is reunited with Wisnu after months of locking herself in her room due to a broken heart, Wisnu attends a seminar where Pipit is the speaker. After the seminar, Wisnu deliberately waited for Pipit to give her a ride in his car. At first, Pipit refused, but in the end, she accepted her ex-husband's request because she felt uncomfortable with the stares of people around them as they talked in the parking lot for a long time. Pipit's decision to accept Wisnu's offer to give her a ride should have been seen as negative, as at that time, Pipit believed Wisnu was married to Amanda (although in reality, the marriage had never taken place, but Pipit was unaware of this at the time).

In addition to highlighting the contradictions in Pipit's various actions that conflict with her other behaviors, the novel *HSP* reveals the paradox within Pipit herself. This paradox is evident in the following excerpt.

It was difficult to refuse such a request, especially since she wanted to know how Wisnu was doing (Sardjono, 2021:91).

When Pipit finally accepted Wisnu's request to give him a ride, she was unaware that his marriage to Amanda had been called off. Therefore, going with Wisnu while knowing he was now married to Amanda was not right, especially since Pipit knew she was the cause of the argument between Amanda and Wisnu. Pipit's decision to give Wisnu a ride also contradicted her resolve to forget him. Pipit found it difficult to refuse Wisnu's request, likely because she was still caught up in her feelings for him, making it hard to turn down the chance to spend time alone with the man she still loved.

Self-fragility

Pipit, a woman who has always been portrayed as independent, determined, strong, resilient, and unyielding, begins to experience inner turmoil and fragility over time, as reflected in the contradictions, ironies, and paradoxes within her. As time passes, Pipit begins questioning the principles that have always guided her life and shaped every decision and path she has taken. Pipit, who was once so certain that the path she had chosen was the right one—such as divorcing Wisnu, setting aside love, and

believing that love was unimportant as long as she could do everything freely without restrictions from others—eventually feels uncertain about all the decisions she has made.

Often, when she saw the ravine with her inner eye, Pipit felt the loneliness and emptiness of her life once again (Sardjono, 2021:52).

The excerpt shows the paradox within Pipit. She has achieved everything she wanted: a stable job, a brilliant career, recognition from many people, success in self-actualization, and many other good things in life. However, none of that can make Pipit feel completely happy. She still feels incomplete, a void in her life, and lonely even though she is surrounded by people who always praise and adore her. The incomplete happiness, emptiness, and loneliness within Pipit are based on her awareness that her relationship with Wisnu is no longer what it used to be. Pipit realizes a deep chasm separates her from Wisnu, whom she still loves. The loneliness and emptiness Pipit feels grow deeper when she sees the closeness between Wisnu and Amanda, which indirectly causes the strong, independent, and resilient Pipit to transform into a fragile woman.

Feelings that defeat logic

Pipit's deep love for Wisnu makes her unable to think clearly. Originally a logical woman who weighed everything carefully and thoughtfully, Pipit has changed into someone who prioritizes her feelings. The emotional side of Pipit influences every action and decision she makes in her life. All of this has happened since Pipit was reunited with Wisnu. Unexpectedly, their reunion revealed that they still harbored deep feelings for each other, even more mature than the love they had felt before. This is evident in the following ironic excerpt.

For the first time since they met, their eyes locked. And for the first time, both realized that the tingling sensation they had felt at the beginning of their relationship over six years ago was still there. It was even more unsettling because of the awareness of other things, namely, that they had both chosen their own lives, and there was no longer any connection between them (Sardjono, 2021:42).

The awareness of the love that still resides within them makes them sad because they realize they are no longer in the same situation. They have been separated, and Amanda is now between them. Implicitly, there is hope that they can rekindle their romantic relationship with more mature feelings and increased maturity.

This hope and desire to be together again is further strengthened by their immersion in nostalgic memories when Wisnu takes Pipit to her room after she faints from exhaustion. The two are trapped in old memories of when they were still husband and wife, which eventually leads them to have sex in Pipit's room. At that moment, Pipit's logic no longer functioned; she no longer cared about Wisnu's status as the fiancé of another woman. She prioritized her feelings and desires for love to be fulfilled.

The actions taken by Pipit and Wisnu in her room were completely contradictory to Pipit's principles, which she had always upheld—that a widow should not be a homewrecker or steal another woman's boyfriend. Pipit had always claimed she had no intention of interfering in Wisnu's relationship with Amanda, but unfortunately, her forbidden relationship with Wisnu in her room proved the opposite.

The Instability of Male Construction in the Novel HSP

The main construction presented by the novel *HSP* is about Wisnu as a conservative, selfish man who still strongly adheres to patriarchy. However, behind all these traits are traces of Wisnu's inconsistency in his thoughts and attitudes, which are highlighted in the novel *HSP*.

Freedom from the logocentric society around him

In the novel *HSP*, Wisnu, when he is still married to Pipit, is portrayed as an authoritarian figure who always acts as a man and husband as constructed in his society and as he has learned from his family. Gradually, he begins to feel uncertain about his actions and the traits he has always had. The initial seeds of doubt within him about all his attitudes and actions during his marriage with Pipit began when Pipit divorced him and vented all her grievances to Wisnu, whom she perceived as too patriarchal.

Wisnu's divorce from Pipit brought about significant changes in him. When she met her ex-husband again, Pipit was quite surprised by the changes she saw in him. Wisnu, who used to be very patriarchal in running the household and his way of thinking, had become more open-minded. On one occasion, after class, Wisnu invited Pipit to discuss his concerns about the societal constructs that have long bound women and men, creating a power imbalance between them.

"About a man's role in his family. Many unspoken teachings are parents socialize through their concrete daily actions, which eventually become internalized in their children. Among other things, there is the understanding that a husband must be superior in every way. It would be shameful for a husband to ask his wife something..." (Sardjono, 2021:34).

This excerpt shows Wisnu's awareness that social constructs burden not only women but also men. Men, like women, are victims of generally accepted constructs. Various restrictions and prohibitions constrain women, while men are forced to be perfect and superior to women in every way, especially when they become husbands. Of course, Wisnu's thoughts are vastly different and contrary to his past behavior and way of thinking. There is a contradiction within Wisnu, influenced by his life experiences. This contradiction is the trace of instability within Wisnu, related to his thinking and behavior. Through this contradiction, Wisnu has indirectly freed himself from the constraints of social construction and can become a new Wisnu, a Wisnu free from the shackles of societal constructs.

Awareness of one's imperfections

Another aspect that reveals Wisnu's instability is his awareness of his imperfections and shortcomings, which starkly contrast with his self-image when he married Pipit. As the head of the household, Wisnu always believed that he was right and knew everything better than Pipit, his wife. Then, after the two divorced and were accidentally reunited in the same class while pursuing their master's degrees, Wisnu underwent a complete transformation. He was no longer the authoritarian figure who saw himself as all-knowing and looked down on Pipit.

Wisnu now acknowledges the strengths within his ex-wife and praises her intelligence. This never happened when they were married. When the institution of marriage bound them, Wisnu never allowed Pipit to discuss anything with him outside of household matters. Consciously or unconsciously, Wisnu had made a one-sided judgment that Pipit could not understand anything beyond household matters. Wisnu's dismissive attitude toward Pipit was partly due to the pressure to be a husband who knows more than his wife. To avoid the possibility of his wife knowing more than him, Wisnu preferred not to discuss anything with Pipit beyond their household affairs.

After they were both free from the institution of marriage and had lived their separate lives, and Wisnu had gradually become more open in his view of the roles of women and men, Wisnu showed an opposite attitude to his previous one. The contradiction in Wisnu's treatment of Pipit can be seen in the following excerpt.

"But you are truly extraordinary. As Iwan said earlier, if he had stepped forward, he might not have been as good as you. If I had stepped forward, I might have been even worse. It turns out that it's not easy to grasp everything well with different academic backgrounds. There are indeed many figures or philosophers who also talk about the soul. But that's only one aspect. Humans are multidimensional beings. And the essence of humanity itself is history. That's right, isn't it?" (Sardjono, 2021:33).

Through this excerpt, it can be seen that Wisnu sincerely praised Pipit's skill in presenting the material and answering all the questions asked by their classmates. For the first time, Wisnu acknowledged Pipit's greatness and the sharpness of his ex-wife's thinking, something he had never done when they were still married.

After their separation, Wisnu no longer clings to societal norms regarding gender roles and becomes freer to express his thoughts and feelings. He also became someone who acknowledged his shortcomings, which were once again opposite to his former self, who always acted like he knew everything in front of Pipit. Wisnu did not fully understand some of the material in class, admitted it honestly in front of Pipit without shame, and humbly asked her for help explaining it to him.

Such discussions had never taken place during their marriage. As the head of the household, who positioned himself as someone who knew everything and was always right, Wisnu believed that all decisions were his to make. If there were problems at work, he never involved his wife in discussions or even asked for her opinion.

CONCLUSION

The novel *Hati Seorang Perempuan* shows that gender constructs, whether formed by society or by an individual, are always inconsistent, dynamic, and constantly changing. No construction is completely absolute and definitive. Inconsistencies in gender construction can occur for various reasons. Cultural background, personal experiences, changes in feelings, situations, and self-reflection are some of the factors that can influence the instability of gender construction.

Based on research conducted on the novel *HSP* regarding the instability of female and male constructions in the novel, it can be seen that the main female and male characters in this novel, although initially having firm stances and perspectives on the correct constructions of women and men according to their thinking, ultimately realize that the concepts of construction they believe in cannot be maintained. Certain conditions cause these constructions to be fluid and not absolute. The construction of women as independent, strong, resilient, unaffected by the perspectives of society at large, and not needing men as a source of dependence, as believed by the female protagonist in the novel *HSP*, cannot always be upheld.

In the end, the female protagonist in the novel cannot completely ignore society's views, cannot completely escape feelings of love, and cannot continue to pretend to be strong when there is hidden fragility within her. Similarly, the male protagonist in this novel, who initially strongly adhered to the construction of men as the first gender class and women as the second class, ultimately cannot continue to uphold his beliefs.

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