


The Existence of Women in the Novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* by Muhidin Dahlan: A Feminist Analysis

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*Linda Yulistiana, Siti Ulfiyani, Muhajir^{abc}

¹²Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: lindaxyz00@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This study examines the existence of women in Muhidin Dahlan's novel *Tuhan, Ijinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* (God, Let Me Become a Prostitute) using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective. The focus of the study is on the representation of female characters within patriarchal power relations, religious ideology, and social pressures that limit their freedom and autonomy. The purpose of this study is to describe the forms of female existence portrayed in the novel. The method employed is descriptive qualitative, with data collected through literature review and textual analysis. The analysis is conducted based on Beauvoir's four strategies of female existence: women as workers, women as intellectuals, women as agents of social transformation, and women who reject otherness. The results indicate that the female characters experience objectification and subordination within the patriarchal system. However, through self-awareness, critical thinking, and reflective actions, they strive to escape these constraints and assert themselves as free subjects. This novel represents women's struggles to construct their existence and freedom amid social and ideological pressures.

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INTRODUCTION

In society, issues concerning the position and roles of women have always been compelling topics of discussion. These issues continue to gain prominence in line with the growing public awareness of the importance of justice and gender equality in social life. This awareness has fostered the emergence of emancipatory ideas as a form of women's struggle to demand justice in terms of rights, responsibilities, and social roles that have long been constrained by patriarchal cultural constructions (Munaris & Nugroho, 2021). However, in practice, gender equality discourse has not yet fully liberated women from the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that continues to dominate social life. This condition indicates that the pursuit of gender equality requires not only structural and policy reforms but also the transformation of values, perspectives, and mindsets deeply embedded within cultural systems (Bourdieu, 2001).

One of the primary obstacles to the realization of gender equality is the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a system that positions men as the center of power and authority in various aspects of social life (Israpil, 2017). Within this system, men are frequently constructed as superior, while women are regarded as inferior and dependent, both within the family sphere and in broader social structures such as religion and the state. According to Evteeva (2024), patriarchal oppression also manifests psychologically through internalized misogyny, whereby women unconsciously reproduce demeaning attitudes toward other women as a result of patriarchal norms deeply internalized within society. Consequently, discriminatory practices and the marginalization of women become normalized and perpetuated through inherited social norms and values (Bearman & al., 2009).

Gender inequality rooted in patriarchal systems is not only evident in social life but is also reflected in literary works as cultural products. Through the depiction of inner conflicts and symbolic resistance of female characters, literary texts construct discourses on women's existence in confronting patriarchal dominance. The literary world, which should serve as a space for human expression and reflection, often reproduces patriarchal biases by portraying women in subordinate positions. In many literary works, female characters are frequently depicted as weak, passive, and subjected to male evaluation. Such representations not only mirror social realities but also reinforce cultural constructions that constrain women's roles. Sugihastuti & Suharto (2016) argue that male dominance in the imaginative sphere generates forms of female subordination manifested through symbolic violence, bodily objectification, and the construction of ideal female images based on male standards. In line with this view, Udasmoro (2009) asserts that literary works do not emerge in a cultural vacuum but rather result from the author's dialogue with prevailing social, cultural, and ideological realities. Thus, literature can be understood as a reflective medium that simultaneously represents and critiques unequal gender relations within society.

In response to such conditions, various intellectual movements have emerged to challenge patriarchal systems and gender injustice, one of which is feminism. Feminism arises as both consciousness and resistance against diverse forms of oppression and objectification of women, whether in social realities or cultural representations such as literature. This movement seeks not only to achieve equality of rights and opportunities between men and women but also to transform societal perceptions regarding women's identities and roles (Anwar, 2015). Within literary studies, feminism functions as a critical approach to interpret texts in a manner that is more equitable toward women. Wiyatmi (2012) emphasizes that feminist criticism centers on women's struggles to attain self-awareness, freedom, and recognition of their existence as subjects rather than mere objects within patriarchal social and cultural structures. Accordingly, through a feminist perspective, women are positioned as active subjects possessing consciousness, agency, and autonomy in determining their life trajectories. Feminist thought continues to evolve through various strands, one of which is existentialist feminism pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir, which underscores the importance of women's struggle to achieve existential freedom amid male domination (Beauvoir, 2016).

The issue of women's existence in literature constitutes a crucial dimension of gender equality discourse. In social and cultural contexts still heavily dominated by patriarchal values, women are frequently positioned as "the Other." According to Beauvoir (2016), female identity is not innate but socially constructed within a system that establishes men as subjects and women as objects. When women assert themselves as fully human, their otherness gradually dissolves. Such dynamics produce unequal relations wherein women lose autonomy over their bodies and consciousness. These conditions manifest not only in lived experiences but also prominently in literary texts, which serve as spaces for representing conflicts of identity, power, and women's freedom.

Given the relevance between existentialist feminist thought and women's social realities, literature becomes an effective medium for both representing and critiquing social constructions of femininity. Through its characters, literary works portray not only women's inner conflicts and struggles for selfhood but also the social values and norms that shape and constrain women's freedom. Reading literary texts through an existentialist feminist lens enables researchers to explore how women are presented not merely as victims of patriarchal structures but also as subjects who actively cultivate self-awareness. Thus, literary research grounded in this theoretical framework holds significant importance in uncovering women's existential struggles amid social, moral, and cultural pressures. One literary work that powerfully embodies such dynamics is the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* by Muhidin M. Dahlan.

The novel's protagonist, Nidah Kirani, is portrayed as a devout young Muslim woman actively involved in campus da'wah movements, who later experiences existential dissonance that compels her to detach herself from the moral and religious frameworks she once embraced. Her decision to "become a prostitute" is not an expression of moral collapse but

The Existence of Women in the Novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur by Muhidin Dahlan: A Feminist Analysis

rather a symbolic act of resistance against norms that regulate women's bodies and choices. From an existentialist feminist perspective, this life choice represents an articulation of existential freedom, whereby a woman rejects socially imposed roles and strives to construct her identity autonomously. Nidah Kirani's narrative aligns with Beauvoir's framework, which emphasizes the necessity of liberating women from externally imposed definitions that restrict self-actualization. Quotations such as "How unjust are the rules born from phallic tendrils... her entire journey is merely punishment for something she cannot comprehend: sin" (Dahlan, 2003) symbolize a woman's critical awareness of a system that unilaterally defines her. The complexity of her psychological conflicts, symbolic resistance, and existential struggles renders this novel not only aesthetically engaging but also academically significant, particularly within feminist literary criticism.

Previous studies examining women's representation in this novel—especially those addressing identity struggles, freedom, and resistance to patriarchal structures—have employed diverse perspectives. Rahmawati (2013) utilized a sociology of literature approach emphasizing social environmental influences. Muslikah (2023) focused on moral dimensions and psychological conflicts through radical feminism. Mustika (2014) applied Sartrean existentialism to analyze Muslim female prostitute identity. Ulviani (2022) compared this novel with *Nayla* by Djenar Maesa Ayu to identify female imagery in literature. Jauhari (2020) explored identity crises through Kierkegaardian existentialism, while Azzahra (2022) and Sagita & al., (2023) investigated women's empowerment in contemporary literature. However, no study has yet comprehensively examined this novel using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework, making the present research both relevant and necessary.

This study offers novelty in two principal dimensions. First, it applies Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework, which has not previously been employed in analyzing this novel. Second, methodologically, it positions women's narratives as those of active subjects constructing life meaning rather than passive objects within social discourse. Consequently, this research not only enriches feminist literary studies but also contributes to strengthening critical perspectives on gender equality in the modern era, while reaffirming the vital role of literature as a medium of social reflection and critique.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method by interpreting observed social phenomena and understanding them based on the data obtained (Creswell, 2019). The results of this interpretation are then presented descriptively to reveal various characteristics of the social phenomena occurring within society (Sukmadinata, 2007). In this study, the data source is the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* consisting of 251 pages and published by Warning Books. The data consist of sentences and dialogues that contain representations of women's existence in the novel. Furthermore, data were collected using observation and note-taking techniques, and subsequently analyzed using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory, which comprises four strategic forms: women as workers, women as intellectuals, women as agents of social transformation, and women who reject otherness. The collected data were analyzed using the referential method, in which extralinguistic elements function as determining tools (Sudaryanto, 2015). The research findings are then presented informally in a descriptive manner.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* by Muhidin M. Dahlan, the author represents the existential journey of a female character named Nidah Kirani as she confronts crises of faith, identity, and the meaning of life. The results of the analysis reveal four forms of women's existence: (1) women as workers, (2) women as intellectuals, (3) women as agents of social transformation, and (4) women who reject otherness. Nidah Kirani's existence as the novel's protagonist is portrayed as that of a devout university student who lives an ascetic life and demonstrates strong religious commitment. Her life aspirations are oriented toward

achieving comprehensive and holistic religious piety. This desire motivates Nidah to join a religious organization known as Jemaat Islam, which she believes to be the path to ultimate truth. However, as her involvement deepens, Nidah begins to experience intellectual and spiritual anxiety. She questions several theological concepts that conflict with her rational reasoning and inner experiences. These critical inquiries do not receive dialogical responses; instead, she encounters rigid and normative doctrines. This condition generates profound disappointment and a sense of alienation, both spiritually and existentially. Nidah no longer finds meaning in the religious system that once constituted the foundation of her life.

This crisis develops into existential emptiness that drives Nidah to make an extreme decision, namely entering the world of prostitution. She chooses to become a “campus escort,” serving clients from the political elite across both right- and left-wing ideological spectrums. This choice is not accompanied by moral remorse but is instead interpreted as a form of protest against God and the religious system that she perceives as having betrayed her. Nidah’s actions in the novel do not merely represent moral deviation but function as a symbolic form of personal resistance against religious authority that constrains freedom of thought and her existential autonomy as an individual.

From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist feminism, Nidah Kirani’s experiences reveal four dimensions of female existence: (1) women as workers, reflected in her independence, as evidenced by her efforts to resolve her own problems, her courage to explore new experiences, and her determination not to burden others; (2) women as intellectuals, demonstrated through her enthusiasm for pursuing education and her lofty aspirations; (3) women as agents of social transformation, manifested in her bravery to question dominant ideologies and articulate existential anxiety toward unequal social realities; and (4) women who reject otherness, as subjects experiencing ideological and spiritual conflict, shown through her inner struggles in confronting religious doctrines, her disillusionment with social realities, and her persistent search for meaning and self-identity amid the pressures of religious and moral norms. These four aspects illustrate the process of constructing female existence as a conscious, independent, and courageous subject capable of determining her own life path. The following section discusses in detail the existential dimensions of the protagonist in the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*.

Women as Workers

In Simone de Beauvoir’s existentialist feminism, work is regarded as the primary means through which women transcend the condition of immanence and move toward transcendence. Through work, women attain economic and existential independence, enabling them to avoid total dependence on others and to affirm themselves as free subjects who are responsible for their life choices (Beauvoir, 2016). In this context, work is not merely understood as formal economic activity but rather as women’s active engagement in the public sphere, which facilitates the realization of freedom and personal autonomy (Tong, 2009).

In the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* by Muhidin Dahlan, women’s existential strategy of working is complexly reflected in the character of Nidah Kirani. In the early phase of her life, Nidah is portrayed as a woman who consciously engages in ideological struggle through her involvement in a religious organization. This engagement indicates that Nidah positions herself as an active subject willing to bear responsibility, risks, and the consequences of her life choices, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

“Apakah kamu bersedia memiliki semua beban dan risiko berjuang di jemaah ini?”

“Aku rela mempertaruhkannya.” (Dahlan, 2023, p. 46)

“Sekarang Mbak Kiran adalah saudara saya... harus bisa melindungi saudara berhijrah sebagaimana Allah beriman.” (Dahlan, 2023, p. 48)

These excerpts demonstrate that, in an existential sense, work does not always manifest in the form of economic labor but may also appear as ideological labor and collective struggle. Nidah does not occupy a passive position as a mere follower; rather, she consciously commits herself to a project of struggle that demands dedication, discipline, and sacrifice. This aligns with Beauvoir’s notion that work serves as a pathway for women to move beyond domestic and subordinate roles into active and meaningful social participation.

The Existence of Women in the Novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur by Muhidin Dahlan: A Feminist Analysis

A more radical transformation of the meaning of work emerges when Nidah chooses prostitution as a form of labor she determines for herself, as depicted in the following excerpt:

"Dengan menjadi pelacur, paling-paling yang kuberikan kepada lelaki hanya sekecumik daging tubuhku." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 205)

This statement signifies a shift in the meaning of work from ideological struggle to labor grounded in bodily control and economic relations. Existentially, Nidah's decision is not interpreted as submission but as a conscious strategy to reclaim control over her body, relationships, and existence. Nidah no longer occupies the position of a woman who "gives freely" based on love and emotion; instead, she places her body within a transactional relationship that she herself governs. Consequently, the body ceases to function as an object of symbolic exploitation and becomes a medium of labor controlled by the female subject.

From the perspective of existentialist feminism, this form of work indicates that Nidah is constructing her existential autonomy through deliberate choice, despite the moral and social controversies surrounding such a decision. Theoretically, the emphasis lies not on moral justification but on Nidah's position as the subject who determines her own life choices. Here, work functions as a tool of existential liberation, as Nidah no longer depends on emotional relationships, patriarchal love, or male protection for survival. Thus, the existence of women as capable workers in this novel is represented not only through formal or economically productive labor but also through ideological labor and bodily labor that carry existential significance. Nidah Kirani embodies a woman who employs work as a strategy to escape dependence, build independence, and assert herself as an autonomous, free, and responsible subject of her own life.

Women as Intellectuals

Simone de Beauvoir emphasizes that critical thinking and women's engagement in intellectual activities constitute primary strategies for liberating themselves from subordinate positions within patriarchal systems. Through thinking, discussion, and reflective engagement with experience, women are able to move from immanence toward transcendence, a condition in which individuals become free, autonomous subjects responsible for their own life choices (Beauvoir, 2016). In line with this, Tong (2009) argues that women's involvement in intellectual spaces plays a crucial role in cultivating critical consciousness and producing knowledge that challenges masculine dominance. In the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* by Muhidin M. Dahlan, women's existence as intellectuals is represented through the character of Nidah Kirani, who actively engages in discussion, ideological reflection, and existential contemplation.

The representation of Nidah as an intellectual woman becomes evident from her early experiences at Pondok Ki Ageng, as reflected in the following quotation:

"Rahmi, yang menjadi teman cakupku di Pondok Ki Ageng, memang seorang muslimah yang taat beribadah. Dari gerak-geriknya, aku melihat ada pembawaan yang lain dari teman-teman putriku yang lain yang selama ini kukenal." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 26)

This excerpt demonstrates Nidah's observational ability and intellectual sensitivity in perceiving the character of others. She does not merely view Rahmi as an ordinary student but recognizes her distinct spiritual and intellectual depth. Such observation forms the foundation for dialogical relationships that later develop into critical discussions. This intellectual awareness further evolves through her habit of engaging in intensive discussions:

"Aku pun menjadi kerap mengajak Rahmi untuk berdiskusi lebih jauh, lebih jauh, dan semakin jauh, hingga terkadang diskusi itu jatuh pada jauh malam di Pondok Ki Ageng." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 29)

The discussions that extend late into the night reflect Nidah's serious commitment to seeking knowledge and questioning the religious values she has internalized. This activity illustrates her effort to move beyond passive acceptance toward critical consciousness. From an existentialist feminist perspective, discussion functions as a vital means for women to actualize themselves and construct their existence as thinking subjects.

Nidah's intellectual role becomes increasingly prominent when she actively participates in academic forums on campus:

"Aku pun seperti srikandi dalam forum itu. Menguasai segala-galanya. Mulai dari membuka diskusi, melontarkan soal, menjawab keluhan, dan segala macam." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 33)

This quotation represents Nidah's position as a central intellectual actor in the public sphere. She not only participates but also leads discussions, raises critical issues, and offers solutions. This portrayal reflects a shift in women's roles from passive objects to active subjects possessing intellectual authority, consistent with Beauvoir's assertion regarding the importance of women's participation in productive and creative activities.

Furthermore, Nidah demonstrates initiative in establishing a forum for Islamic studies on campus:

"Maklum, di Kampus Berek yang berada di bawah naungan Kampus Ungu ini belum mempunyai forum studi keislaman. Kini aku mempunyai aktivitas baru dalam kampus." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 33)

Her action in founding a study forum reflects structural awareness and the courage to create new intellectual spaces. Rather than passively accepting existing conditions, Nidah seeks to transform them through academic engagement. This attitude embodies the spirit of transcendence, whereby women actively shape their social realities. Nidah's intellectual consciousness further develops through her involvement in an ideological organization, as reflected in the following quotation:

"Dari sini kuceritakanlah tentang Jemaah yang kumasuki yang bersikukuh mendirikan Daulah Islamiyah..." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 73)

This excerpt indicates Nidah's capacity to comprehend and narratively articulate ideological constructions in a reflective manner. She is not merely a follower but a subject capable of consciously expressing ideological ideas. At a later stage, however, her critical awareness compels her to question the political dimensions of the movement:

"Buat pengetahuanlah tentang sisi melik jemaah ini." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 82)

"Ini politiknya bagaimana dan ke depannya seperti apa, aku sama sekali tak tahu dan aku ingin sekali tahu." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 82)

Nidah's curiosity regarding political aspects signifies a significant development in her intellectual awareness. She begins to recognize the power interests embedded within religious doctrines, which in turn fosters a reflective and critical stance. From Beauvoir's perspective, such awareness constitutes a crucial step for women in liberating themselves from ideological constraints that restrict freedom of thought.

The culmination of Nidah's intellectual existence is evident in her profound reflection on her religious experiences:

"Kurenung-renungkan, betapa bodohnya aku... telah memakan mentah-mentah dogma agama..." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 228)

This quotation represents Nidah's intellectual transformation from a subject who passively accepts doctrine into an individual capable of evaluating, criticizing, and reconstructing her beliefs. Such reflection marks her attainment of existential awareness as a free subject responsible for her life choices.

Thus, the entirety of these excerpts demonstrates that Nidah Kirani represents women as active, critical, and reflective intellectuals. Through discussion, leadership in academic forums, persistent knowledge-seeking, and existential contemplation, Nidah transcends her subordinate position and affirms her existence as an autonomous subject, as articulated in Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework.

Women as Agents of Social Transformation

From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, women do not struggle solely for their own freedom but also possess the potential to act as agents of social change through active engagement in the public sphere and collective activities (Beauvoir, 2016). Women's existence as agents of social transformation is reflected in the character of Nidah Kirani through her involvement in various intellectual and social activities within the

campus environment. Textual data indicate that Nidah does not confine herself to domestic roles or private spaces. Instead, she takes the initiative to create collective spaces as a means of fostering social awareness, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

"Maklum, di Kampus Berek yang berada di bawah naungan Kampus Ungu ini belum mempunyai forum studi keislaman. Kini aku mempunyai aktivitas baru dalam kampus." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 33)

This excerpt demonstrates Nidah's awareness of the absence of intellectual and spiritual spaces within her campus environment. Her action in establishing an Islamic studies forum constitutes a concrete form of resistance to social passivity and reflects her concern for collective conditions. Nidah not only reflects on her personal existence but also endeavors to generate change by cultivating critical awareness among students. Within the framework of existentialist feminism, this action represents women's efforts to move from immanence toward transcendence through meaningful social engagement.

Furthermore, Nidah's spirit of social transformation is evident in her ideological missionary motivation. She perceives her struggle not merely as a personal endeavor but as a collective mission to rescue the community from moral and spiritual degradation, as reflected in the following excerpt:

"Aku ingin berdakwah, aku ingin berjuang menyelamatkan akidah umat Islam." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 47)

This statement reveals that Nidah's actions stem not only from personal interests but also from social consciousness aimed at influencing society. This aligns with Beauvoir's view that women can become historical subjects who actively shape social reality through conscious action and collective involvement (Beauvoir, 2016). However, Nidah's social transformation efforts do not occur within entirely free spaces. Her identity and roles remain regulated by patriarchal and religious ideological structures, as indicated in the following statement:

"Kini Mbak Kiran sudah resmi berhijrah sebagaimana Allah beriman." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 49)

This excerpt signifies social legitimacy accorded to Nidah's role within the community. She is acknowledged as part of a collective movement of transformation. From Beauvoir's perspective, women's participation in such social communities reinforces their position as active subjects in shaping social structures rather than mere objects of patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, as her internal conflicts and ideological disillusionment deepen, the nature of Nidah's social transformation undergoes a radical shift.

Nidah's role as an agent of social transformation reaches its highest intensity when she begins to indoctrinate her immediate surroundings, including her family:

"... kurasuki hati dan pikirannya dengan doktrin-doktrin Jemaah.... satu per satu mereka masuk.... Termasuk kedua orangtuaku dan dua saudaraku yang lain." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 72)

This quotation represents Nidah's strategic role as a primary actor in ideological dissemination. She does not merely become an object of influence but emerges as a subject who shapes the consciousness of others. The social transformation enacted by Nidah is direct and personal, beginning within the family circle before extending to broader social spaces. From Beauvoir's perspective, this action signifies women's success in transcending passive positions and assuming roles as agents of social change.

Thus, the character of Nidah Kirani represents women as agents of social transformation through her involvement in ideological preaching, the establishment of academic forums, and the dissemination of religious ideology. These roles demonstrate that women possess the capacity to act as active subjects capable of shaping, influencing, and transforming social consciousness, as articulated in Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective.

Women Rejecting Otherness (The Other)

The concept of otherness (the Other) constitutes the core of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist thought. Beauvoir explains that within patriarchal social structures, men are positioned as the Subject (the Self), whereas women are constructed as the Other, namely

those located outside the center of power, lacking autonomy, and predominantly positioned as objects within social relations (Beauvoir, 2016). This positioning as the Other deprives women of existential freedom, as their identities and roles are determined by hegemonic social, religious, and cultural norms.

In the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* by Muhidin M. Dahlan, the process of rejecting otherness is powerfully reflected in the inner dynamics and life choices of the character Nidah Kirani. In the initial stage, Nidah still occupies the position of the Other, obedient to the construction of ideal female identity shaped by religious and social systems. She embodies the image of the ideal woman according to religious norms: devout, disciplined in religious rituals, and limiting her critical thinking in the name of obedience. This condition is reflected in the following excerpt:

"...Sehari-hari dalam aktivitasku kuisi dengan membaca Alquran lengkap dengan terjemahannya. Kujalani ritual salat dengan mantap..." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 40)

This quotation illustrates Nidah's total obedience to religious rituals performed with discipline. Such spiritual activities not only signify piety but also reflect the internalization of social norms concerning the ideal image of women: obedient, submissive, and unquestioning of authority. From Beauvoir's perspective, this condition indicates women's entrapment in immanence, namely a mode of existence governed by external regulations with minimal space for subjective freedom.

This obedience becomes more evident when Nidah rejects discussion and critical dialogue that might destabilize her ideological convictions, as seen in the following excerpt:

"Iya, tapi jangan ... jangan berdiskusi denganku. Sekarang ini, jangan." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 53)

Her refusal to engage in discussion reflects fear of the collapse of the identity construction she has long embraced. She strives to preserve a sense of security within a system that positions her as the Other, despite its restrictions on her intellectual and existential freedom. Within the existentialist feminist framework, this condition signifies the internalization of oppression, wherein women accept their subordinate position as natural and even regard it as an expression of piety.

Over time, however, Nidah begins to experience profound intellectual and emotional unrest. She gradually becomes aware that many religious teachings and historical narratives position women as inferior. This awareness motivates her to think critically and question male dominance within religious systems:

"Kitab suci, aku curiga, jangan-jangan juga bagian dari ideologi falus ini... Tak bisakah perempuan berprestasi sama dengan lelaki?... Aku tidak mendapatkan cukup banyak alasan membenarkan penunjukan lelaki sebagai pengemban misi suci." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 203)

This excerpt signifies a major shift in Nidah's way of thinking. She begins to realize that male dominance in religion is not always grounded in competence but rather rooted in patriarchal socio-cultural constructions. By questioning this, Nidah starts to move beyond the position of the Other and develops consciousness as a thinking subject. This critical awareness intensifies when she recognizes that her mind has long been shaped by religious rationalizations:

"Aku curiga bahwa paham dunia falus berada di balik penunjukan dan pengangkatan nabi-nabi itu... pikiran kita telah direcoki oleh pelbagai dalih ayat." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 203)

Through this reflection, Nidah understands that many teachings she has internalized are not neutral but laden with ideological interests. This awareness marks the initial stage of her mental and spiritual liberation.

Subsequently, Nidah explicitly asserts her refusal to be controlled:

"Aku bukan perempuan biasa saja dan gampang dikendalikan." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 141)

The Existence of Women in the Novel Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur by Muhidin Dahlan: A Feminist Analysis

This statement reflects Nidah's courage to define herself independently. She rejects stereotypes of women as weak, passive, and obedient. In the context of existentialist feminism, this stance constitutes a claim to subjectivity and existential freedom.

Her rejection of otherness is also evident in her refusal of marriage:

"Aku tak mau menikah denganmu." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 193)

Within patriarchal cultures, marriage often functions as a mechanism for the domestication of women, compelling them to submit to husbands and domestic roles. Nidah's rejection represents an effort to preserve her autonomy and avoid re-entrapment in systems that restrict her freedom. Furthermore, Nidah resists domestic spaces traditionally associated with female control:

"...menghindari ruang di mana biasanya perempuan dikendalikan: kamar. Aku tak mau tinggal di kamar dan tak akan pernah." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 178)

Here, the room symbolizes not merely physical confinement but women's entrapment within private spaces. Nidah's decision to avoid this space reflects her desire to live freely, move within public spheres, and determine her own life trajectory.

Her resistance is also evident in her relationship with her male lecturer, Pak Tomo, who exploits academic power relations:

"Akan kutaklukkan engkau Pak Tomo dengan cara seorang Nidah Kirani." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 197)

This quotation reveals Nidah's conscious strategy in confronting male domination within educational contexts. She no longer positions herself as a submissive female student but as an active subject who dares to resist injustice.

The culmination of Nidah's rejection of otherness appears in her decision to become a prostitute:

"Aku tidak ingin lagi memberikan sesuatu secara cuma-cuma kepada lelaki..." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 205)

This decision constitutes an extreme form of resistance against the exploitation of women in the name of love and morality. Nidah seeks full control over her body and choices. She refuses to remain an object of utilization and instead asserts herself as a subject who governs her own existence. Despite its controversial nature, this choice reflects Nidah's intense effort to reclaim existential autonomy.

Nidah's existential consciousness reaches its apex when she resolves to free herself from all ideological constraints:

"Aku bekerja sekuat-kuatnya untuk melupakan dan membebaskan diri dari semua ikatan itu." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 228)

"Memutus semua itu agar jiwaku tidak terus-menerus terkungkung dalam jiwa yang jumud." (Dahlan, 2023, p. 228)

These quotations demonstrate Nidah's determination to begin a new life as a free, independent, and conscious individual. She strives to escape oppressive systems in pursuit of life's meaning.

This rejection of otherness is not merely symbolic but is enacted through concrete and controversial actions, including Nidah's decision to pursue a life path that contradicts prevailing social and religious norms. Such extreme choices may be interpreted as resistance to systems that have historically oppressed and marginalized women. Her body and life become mediums of struggle to reclaim self-autonomy. Within existentialist feminist discourse, Nidah's actions reflect women's courage to transcend normative boundaries that confine them. She no longer accepts imposed identities but constructs a new self based on subjective awareness. Although her choices entail moral paradoxes and contradictions, they nonetheless represent an existential struggle to escape the constraints of otherness.

Thus, Nidah Kirani's character illustrates a prolonged journey of women in rejecting positions of weakness and powerlessness. This process begins with obedience, evolves into critical awareness, and ultimately transforms into resolute resistance. This confirms that women's existence in the novel *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur!* is dynamic and marked

by intense inner conflict. The rejection of the other position becomes the culmination of Nidah's struggle to assert herself as a free, independent subject in control of her own life.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the novel *God, Allow Me to Become a Prostitute!* by Muhidin M. Dahlan through the perspective of existentialist feminism developed by Simone de Beauvoir, it can be concluded that the character Nidah Kirani represents a woman's existential journey in confronting crises of faith, identity, and the meaning of life within patriarchal social structures. Her life trajectory illustrates a gradual transformation from obedience and conformity toward critical awareness and existential resistance against ideological, social, and religious systems that attempt to define and control women's roles. Nidah's existence is articulated through four interconnected dimensions: women's capacity to work as a form of economic and existential independence, women as intellectuals who engage in critical reflection and knowledge production, women as agents of social transformation who actively participate in public discourse and social criticism, and women's rejection of otherness as the culmination of self-awareness and autonomy. These dimensions demonstrate that Nidah is not merely portrayed as a passive victim of patriarchal oppression but as an active subject who consciously negotiates and reconstructs the meaning of her life choices, even when those choices appear controversial within moral and social frameworks. Through Nidah Kirani's complex psychological conflicts and symbolic resistance, the novel ultimately presents a profound reflection on women's struggle for freedom, identity, and self-determination, affirming that women possess the capacity to transcend imposed roles and become autonomous subjects responsible for shaping their own existence.

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