



The Process of Identity Formation of the Main Female Character Influenced by Multiculturalism in the Novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* by Mahdavi

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the process of identity formation of the main character through multicultural influences in the novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* by Mahdavi. The study was conducted through a literature study using descriptive qualitative data analysis techniques. The primary data sources used were novel text excerpts and secondary data came from formal objects in the form of data analysis and journal articles containing about the formation of women's identity and multiculturalism. The research population was the main character in the novel, while the data sample was determined through excerpts that describe the process of identity formation of the main character. The research instrument was the researcher herself with the help of a data recording sheet. The data analysis technique was carried out descriptively qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the multicultural context influences the process of identity formation of the main female character through four stages, namely confusion, negotiation, declaration, and reinforcement, which show that female identity is dynamic and formed through the interaction of cultural values, religion, and social experiences. These stages of the identity process become a means for the main character to reconstruct her identity amidst the pressures of a multicultural environment. These findings contribute to the study of literary psychology, particularly in understanding the dynamics of individual identity formation influenced by multicultural experiences in contemporary Indonesian literature.

Keywords : identity formation, main female character, multiculturalism, novel

Proses Pembentukan Identitas Tokoh Utama Perempuan yang Dipengaruhi oleh Multikultural dalam Novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* Karya Mahdavi

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis proses pembentukan identitas tokoh utama melalui pengaruh multikultural dalam novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* karya Mahdavi. Penelitian dilaksanakan melalui studi kepustakaan dengan menggunakan teknik analisis data deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data primer yang digunakan berupa kutipan teks novel dan data sekunder berasal dari objek formal berupa analisis data dan artikel jurnal yang memuat tentang pembentukan identitas perempuan dan multikultural. Populasi penelitian adalah tokoh utama dalam novel, sedangkan sampel data ditentukan melalui kutipan-kutipan yang menggambarkan proses pembentukan identitas tokoh utama. Instrumen penelitian adalah peneliti sendiri dengan bantuan lembar pencatatan data. Teknik analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif kualitatif melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konteks multikultural berpengaruh terhadap proses pembentukan identitas tokoh utama perempuan melalui empat tahap, yaitu kebingungan, negosiasi, deklarasi, dan penguatan, yang memperlihatkan bahwa identitas perempuan bersifat dinamis dan terbentuk melalui interaksi nilai budaya, agama, dan pengalaman sosial. Tahapan proses identitas tersebut menjadi sarana bagi tokoh utama dalam merekonstruksi identitas dirinya di tengah tekanan lingkungan multikultural. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap kajian psikologi sastra, khususnya dalam memahami dinamika pembentukan identitas individu yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman multikultural dalam karya sastra Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata kunci: identitas tokoh utama, perempuan, multikultural, novel

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INTRODUCTION

In the midst of increasingly modern developments, women in various parts of the world still experience forms of gender inequality. Despite various emancipation efforts, women must continue to fight for their rights, such as the right to education, equal employment opportunities, legal protection, and freedom from violence and oppression. In many cases, women remain unfairly positioned and are often reduced to objects constructed to fulfill men's sexual orientation. This condition cannot be separated from the long history of patriarchal social structures that developed from the feudal era to the modern social system, which continues to reproduce unequal power relations between men and women (Wibowo et al., 2022; Elmustian & Jalil, 2015). This condition demonstrates that modernization does not always go hand in hand with the creation of gender equality in social and cultural practices. This inequality reflects the existence of unequal power relations between men and women within the social structure of society, which reinforces male dominance and weakens women's position in various spheres of life (Salsabila, 2023).

In the current socio-cultural context, women are subordinated to men, who hold dominant roles. Women's involvement in decision-making processes is also relatively limited. This is closely related to the strong patriarchal culture that places men in leadership roles, both in the domestic sphere, the business world, and politics. This situation tends to make women passive due to limited access and opportunities to contribute directly to decision-making or occupy strategic positions within organizations. Over time, some women began to adopt a feminist identity and openly reject the patriarchal system. The feminist movement grew rapidly, contributing to broader women's empowerment to fight various forms of oppression and strengthen their independence (Khoirunnisa, 2024). However, as it developed, feminism was also often perceived as a movement that rejected women's natural rights because it was considered contrary to social norms and traditional values, giving rise to debates about the limits of

women's freedom in various life contexts (Navia, 2025).

Western feminism has a long history of championing gender equality, particularly in European regions such as Germany, where women have historically faced limitations in politics, education, and the economy, and have been largely relegated to the domestic sphere (Meylawati & Supriatna, 2023). This condition shows that the patriarchal system has been deeply rooted in the social structure, which then gave birth to the feminist movement as a response to gender injustice in various aspects of life.

In understanding women's struggles against gender inequality, it is important to explore and understand the background that shapes that identity. Gender inequality does not simply arise; it is influenced by various interrelated historical, social, and cultural factors. This demonstrates that women's experiences and identities are not universal but are shaped by diverse social and cultural contexts. Through norms, customs, and religious interpretations, local cultural contexts often serve as the basis for determining gender roles. This reality demonstrates that the issue of gender inequality cannot be separated from the surrounding cultural context.

In some communities, women still face various restrictions legitimized by customs and social norms, which indirectly limit their freedom, freedom of movement, and access to basic rights such as education, employment, and political participation. Therefore, understanding the cultural context is crucial in formulating strategies for women's empowerment so that they can be implemented in a more inclusive and equitable manner.

Multiculturalism is an ideology that recognizes and values cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity as essential elements shaping the identity and dynamics of a society (Hanum et al., 2023). Conceptually, multiculturalism encompasses not only cultural diversity but also the value systems, social practices, and power relations that develop within a heterogeneous society. From this diversity, the concept of



multiculturalism emerged: an attitude that accepts, appreciates, and respects differences as a natural part of living together. By embracing multicultural values as the basis for interaction, society can coexist peacefully, strengthen solidarity, and minimize social conflict, particularly in representing the experiences of women who exist at the intersection of various cultures and value systems. In the long term, this supports the creation of a harmonious and stable social life, where every individual has an equal opportunity to develop without losing their cultural identity (Rizqi & Suyatno, 2024).

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, women's experiences cannot be understood as uniform or universal. Mohanty emphasizes that women's identities are formed through a complex interaction between social, cultural, historical, racial, class, and religious factors, making them dynamic and contextual. In her critique of Western feminism, Mohanty rejects the generalization of Third World women as a group that is always oppressed and lacking independence. She argues that such representations have the potential to ignore the complexity of women's experiences living in diverse cultural contexts (Puspita et al., 2024). Accordingly, women's identities are understood as social constructs that continually evolve through social experiences and cultural relations.

The values of multiculturalism can be found not only in social reality but also represented through literary works. One form of literature capable of depicting the complexity of social life is the novel (Hanum et al., 2023). Through the narratives and conflicts presented, novels can represent various social issues experienced by their characters, including issues of identity, culture, and power relations within society. Thus, novels function not only as aesthetic works but also as a medium for social reflection, enabling readers to understand various life phenomena more deeply (Ernawati & Julianti, 2024). As a communication medium for authors, novels play a role in conveying ideas and messages to readers through communicative storytelling and the use of light,

accessible language (Khairunnisak, 2024). In this regard, novels serve not only as entertainment but also as a representation of the dynamics of human life, including the process of searching for and forming characters' identities within specific social contexts (Qadriani & Khatimah, 2023).

One literary work that addresses this issue is Mahdavi's novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*. The novel features a female protagonist named Charlotte, who is depicted as possessing feminist views and a multicultural background. Charlotte grew up in a family with two different faith backgrounds: a liberal Jewish father and an Evangelical mother. This background shapes Charlotte's identity struggles as she navigates various cultural, religious, and ideological values, which influence her perspective on women's position in society. Through the character's journey, the novel depicts how women's identities are formed through interactions with various social values, such as different religions and cultures.

In analyzing the formation of women's identities in a multicultural context, this study uses the postcolonial feminist perspective proposed by Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Mohanty emphasizes that women's experiences cannot be universally understood, as women's identities are shaped by diverse social, historical, cultural, racial, class, and religious contexts, making them dynamic and contextual. Furthermore, in the context of a multicultural society, culture is understood as a complex and dynamic value system that shapes individual perspectives and identities (Rahimah, 2025). Women's identity in this context is not solely determined by gender but also by the intersection of various cultural influences that interact in social life.

Several previous studies have shown a tendency that the formation of women's identity in literary works cannot be separated from cultural dynamics and social change. Research by (Rahimah, 2025) shows that the formation of character identity in a diaspora context is influenced by the tension between traditional cultural values and the liberal values of modern society. Similarly, research by (Hanum et al., 2023)

reveals that character identity in literary works cannot be separated from local cultural dynamics and social change that shape the process of searching for identity in a pluralistic society. In the context of the novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*, research by (Susanto et al., 2021) highlights the representation of postcolonial Islamic feminism that challenges colonial stereotypes of Muslim women through the cultural symbolism and religiosity of the characters. Meanwhile, research by (Ernawati & Julianti, 2024) found that the novel contains Islamic educational values that affirm the position of women in Islam as revered beings. Research conducted by (Kusuma, 2017) also demonstrated discursive tension between Western and Islamic feminism in the same novel through a semiotic approach, particularly in examining power relations and gender inequality.

Although various studies have examined the novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* from the perspectives of feminism, Islamic education, and discourse representation, these studies still tend to focus on the aspects of values and ideology separately. Therefore, this study offers a different focus, namely the process of identity formation of the main female character in a multicultural context using the perspective of Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial feminism.

Based on the above description, the research problem is formulated as follows: How is the process of identity formation of the main female character influenced by the multicultural context in Mahdavi's novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*? This research is important to understand how the interaction between cultural values, religion, and social experiences shapes the main character's feminist consciousness and influences her perspective on female identity.

This study aims to analyze the process of identity formation of the main female character through multicultural influences in Mahdavi's novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*. This research is expected to contribute to literary studies, particularly from a postcolonial feminist perspective, and to enrich understanding of the

relationship between female identity and the multicultural context in literary works.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to describe and analyze data in the form of words, sentences, and texts in the novel. This approach is used because the research focuses on understanding the meaning and depiction of social phenomena contained in literary works.

The data in this study are text excerpts from Mahdavi's novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*, which demonstrates the influence of multiculturalism on the identity formation of the main female character. Data sources consist of primary data in the form of the novel itself, as well as secondary data in the form of books, journal articles, and other references related to Mohanty's postcolonial feminism and multiculturalism.

Data collection techniques were carried out through reading and note-taking. The researcher read the novel thoroughly to understand the plot, characters, and sociocultural background, then noted sections of the text related to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized data relevant to the research. Next, the data was presented in descriptive form for ease of understanding (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Razak, 2017; Bandur, 2014).

The final stage was drawing conclusions using Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial feminist perspective. Data validity was strengthened through theoretical triangulation, using Mohanty's theory as the basis for data analysis.

RESULTS

1. Confusion

The quotes below demonstrate the process of identity formation of the main female character in the novel *Ratu yang Bersujud*, who is in a phase



of confusion as she accepts the various multicultural influences around her.

Data 1

Indicates the confused response experienced by Charlotte when confronted with the understanding of the hijab as a symbol of respect for women. This is evident in the following quote:

"The hijab is not just a head covering. It is a symbol of how Allah grants women high status and respect."

Charlotte expressed confusion. How could a hijab, which she had always understood to be restrictive of women's freedom of expression, be perceived by Muslims as a form of respect for women? (Mahdavi, 2012:68)

Charlotte's response is demonstrated through the narrative, "Charlotte wore a confused face," indicating a conflict between her initial understanding (a Western feminist perspective) and the new perspective she encountered. This led her to question the old paradigm she had long believed in. Thus, multicultural interactions serve as a formative factor, while identity transformation continues within the main character's internal realm.

Data 2

"She continued to shout loudly, voicing what she believed to be the feminist struggle. But the more she studied and tried to understand, the less she understood. This put her at a crossroads and made her question her true direction" (Mahdavi, 2012:112).

Charlotte began to question the direction of the feminist struggle she had long believed in. This confusion marked the beginning of identity deconstruction. However, she did not immediately abandon her old perspective but instead critically reflected on it, marking a turning point in her identity formation. So Charlotte began to experience a phase of confusion after accepting a different perspective she previously believed without knowing its truth, as follows.

Data 3

"Charlotte's thoughts wandered elsewhere; she no longer had the same interest and enthusiasm as before. Her saturation point had reached its climax. This was truly the sediment of boredom stemming from the unanswered questions that arose from the depths of her heart. Was what they were really fighting for the dignity and worth of women? Or was this merely camouflage for a small group's desire to teach taboos. To establish freedom for women, thus depriving them of their true identity, dignity, and worth. Freedom was the universal language of these dictators."

"Even a mother is not noble in the eyes of some. She is noble if she can determine the right to have a pregnancy. Women have full power; they can choose to become pregnant, or they can choose not to. Other feminists position women as slaves who need to be liberated from men. They expect women and men to be directly confronted, as if they were enemies, not beings who should live side by side in harmony and complement each other. It's a vengeful ideology, yet they often accuse others of being vindictive." (Mahdavi, 2012:125-126)

Charlotte experienced a phase of crisis and internal negotiation regarding the concepts of feminism and women's freedom in a multicultural context. She doubted the universality of the idea of freedom, which had long been positioned as the primary goal of women's struggles. This narrative demonstrates that freedom as a universal language is being deconstructed, because in practice it is seen as having dominant tendencies.

2. Negotiation

Data 1

"So, life has nothing to do with limiting women's potential, restricting them from social interaction?" Charlotte truly understood one of the reasons for the hijab in Islam. This was so different from what she had previously

understood about the hijab: as a symbol of women's oppression in social interaction. (Mahdavi, 2012:70)

Charlotte began to enter a phase of identity reconstruction. She negotiated old understandings with new perspectives on the reasons for the hijab in Islam, influenced by the multicultural context, after going through a phase of confusion. This process confirmed that Charlotte's identity formation was not simply an individual response, but the result of a reflective interaction between her previous identity construction and the multicultural influences she experienced through interactions with other figures.

Data 2

"But as I went along, I saw a discrepancy between my ideals and the methods adopted by my community. There were many things that made me disagree with their agendas, especially based on the paradigm they had built, because they contradicted my heart. Ultimately, I was truly in doubt." (Mahdavi, 2012:157)

Charlotte began to feel a misalignment between her personal values and the values of her feminist community. This marks a phase of deep reflection, with a critical awareness of the values she previously believed in, which then transforms into an understanding that begins to see the inconsistency between her idealistic principles and the methods adopted by her community, which employs a paradigm that conflicts with her conscience.

Data 3

"You're right, Melati. Sometimes inner experiences are shaped by suggestion, cultural background, beliefs, and so on. Feelings can be very subjective."
"That's what I mean," Charlotte emphasized.
"So?"
"I can't accept Islam simply because of my feelings. If I'm going to accept Islam, it must

be with all my potential as a human being." (Mahdavi, 2012:158)

Charlotte emphasizes the importance of rational consideration before accepting a new faith. In this narrative, Charlotte demonstrates a transitional phase in identity negotiation. This internal process demonstrates a critical awareness of inner experiences and cultural background. Thus, this quote represents a crucial stage in the process of identity formation for the main female character, which is influenced by social and cultural dynamics and then interpreted through inner reflection.

Data 4

"A husband will be held accountable for his justice in the afterlife. This is a very difficult matter. From this verse, Allah wants to emphasize, by touching the hearts and minds of men, that they must be careful, because they will not be able to act justly, as justly as possible."

Charlotte closed her eyelids. Her face began to droop, absorbing Lale's explanation. "It turns out it's not what I thought it was. All your explanations make so much sense. In fact, I can't help but agree. This is completely different from what I've always understood. Everything is actually so protective of women."

"That's how it is, Melati."

Charlotte accepted the new explanation about Islam and realized the difference between it and her previous understanding of polygamy, which she had previously understood as a patriarchal framework. This signified a critical awareness of erroneous understandings. She had previously understood Islam through the Western feminist discourse she embraced, but when she came face-to-face with a different explanation from a Muslim perspective on polygamy in Islam, she began to experience a process of negotiating meaning that resulted in a shift in her identity.



3. Declaration

Data 1

"I feel like I no longer fit in. I feel like this isn't my place anymore and it doesn't align with my life's purpose."

"Listen, Charlotte, you need to think this through. Now go home and rest! Then, come back with an open heart. I know you've done a lot for us, you need a little peace."

"Professor, I might not be coming back. I've found what I'm looking for."

"What is it?"

"I'm a Muslim now!" Charlotte struggled to find an excuse, but finally, spontaneously, she said that she was a Muslim. That answer was her conscience. She firmly stated it.

"Are you crazy?" Shock gripped Prof. Angelica. She considered it the craziest and most unreasonable thing to do to become a Muslim woman. (Mahdavi, 2012:134)

Charlotte began to mark the ideological distance between herself and her feminist community by redefining things that were no longer aligned with her life goals. Charlotte spontaneously declared her new identity as a Muslim woman after much reflection. This response demonstrated an internal affirmation of the identity she had chosen for herself after a long process of internal negotiation.

4. Reinforcement

Data 1

"You may not be Jewish, but at least you still have other options: Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, or Buddhist. You can even be an atheist. But you can't be Muslim!"

"Why don't you practice a religion like the respectable people? You damned thing! Why did you have to embrace the religion of those slaves!"

Charlotte chanted dhikr, not responding in the slightest to her father's hurtful insults. She buried her face in her mother's embrace. She was already filled with a strong, deeply ingrained faith. Even

if ten lions were brought to her, forcing her to renounce her Islam, she would not.

Despite strong rejection and external pressure from her father, Charlotte maintained her new identity. This demonstrates the phase of identity strengthening after her decision to become a Muslim. The narrative, "Charlotte chants dhikr," demonstrates that her chosen religious identity is no longer in the search stage but has undergone consolidation. Thus, external pressure becomes a moment of strengthening, not weakening.

DISCUSSION

1. Confusion

Confusion is the initial stage in the identity formation process when an individual begins to experience conflict between old beliefs and new perspectives, leading to doubts and critical questions about previously held values. Here are some quotes that illustrate the confusion phase:

"The hijab is not just a head covering. It is a symbol of the high dignity and respect God places on women."

Charlotte looked confused. How could a hijab, which she had always understood to be restrictive of women's freedom of expression, be perceived by Muslims as a form of respect for women. (Mahdavi, 2012:68)

The quote above demonstrates a phase of confusion that triggered the cognitive aspect of Charlotte's self-identity formation. This phase marked the transformation of her understanding from the hijab as a form of restraint to the hijab as a form of respect in Islam. This indicates that the identity construction she brought from a Western feminist perspective began to experience turmoil. In line with Mohanty's concept that female identity is a socio-historical construct that is not universal, her old understanding that the hijab was a symbol of restraint for women began to shift when confronted with a different multicultural perspective. Through this new understanding, Charlotte experienced internal turmoil, as seen in the following quote:

"She continued to shout loudly, voicing what she believed to be the feminist struggle. But the more she studied and tried to understand, the less she understood. This put her at a crossroads and made her question her true direction" (Mahdavi, 2012:).

This quote demonstrates a reaction of confusion. It is depicted through Charlotte's inner struggle as she begins to question the direction of her feminist struggle. This marks a phase of identity deconstruction, in line with Mohanty's idea that female identity is a socio-historical construct and not universal. Charlotte confronts a contradiction between her previously held feminist ideals and the reality she encounters, leading to an internal negotiation of meaning. However, she does not immediately abandon her old perspective but rather reflects critically on it, marking a turning point in her identity formation. As she explains:

"Charlotte's thoughts wandered elsewhere; she no longer possessed the same interests and enthusiasm as before. Her saturation point had reached its climax. In reality, this was the sediment of boredom stemming from the unanswered questions that arose from the depths of her heart. Was what they were really fighting for the dignity and worth of women? Or was this merely camouflage for a small group's desire to teach taboos. To establish freedom for women, thereby depriving them of their true identity, dignity, and worth. Freedom was the universal language of those who were so dictatorial."

"Even a mother is not noble in the eyes of some. She is noble if she can determine the right to have a pregnancy. Women have full power; they can choose to become pregnant, or they can choose not to. Other feminists position women as slaves who need to be liberated from men. They expect women and men to be directly confronted, as if they were enemies, not beings who should live side by side in harmony and complement each other. It's a vengeful ideology, yet it often accuses

the other party of being vindictive." (Mahdavi, 2012:125-126)

The quote above represents a critical reflection on the feminist values she previously accepted. Charlotte began to doubt the universality of the concept of freedom, which had long been positioned as the primary goal of women's struggles. The narrative of freedom, which had always been the primary reason for feminist struggles, in Charlotte's view, was not what she was fighting for. This narrative depicts a deconstruction of the idea of freedom, positioned as a singular and universal value. This aligns with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of Western feminism, which tends to be homogenous and ahistorical in its view of women's experiences.

Through this process of reflection, Charlotte reshaped her identity. He views the relationship between men and women not as a conflict, but as a complementary relationship that can coexist harmoniously.

2. Negotiation

Negotiation is a reflective stage when individuals begin to weigh, compare, and integrate different perspectives through rational consideration and inner experience in order to form a new understanding. Here are some quotes that illustrate the negotiation phase:

"So, life has nothing to do with limiting women's potential, restricting them in social interactions?" Charlotte truly understands one of the reasons for the hijab in Islam. This is very different from what she had previously understood about the hijab: as a symbol of women's oppression in social interactions (Mahdavi, 2012).

The quote above demonstrates a new understanding of one of the reasons why Muslim women are commanded to wear the hijab in Islam. This depiction demonstrates Charlotte's identity reconstruction. She begins to negotiate her previous understanding, which defined the hijab as a form of restraint and limitation of women's



potential, with a new perspective influenced by a multicultural context after going through a phase of confusion. She gained this old understanding from multicultural circles, including her feminist community.

In line with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's thinking, women's identity is not singular and universal, but rather is shaped through specific social, cultural, and power-relations contexts. In this case, Charlotte no longer views the hijab through the homogenous lens of Western feminism, but begins to understand its meaning within the context of Muslim women themselves. This process demonstrates a cross-cultural negotiation of meanings that allows for the formation of a new, more contextual and less ahistorical awareness.

This, in turn, opens up space for transnational feminist solidarity, namely the ability to understand and position oneself within the framework of women from different cultures. From this process, Charlotte then openly explains her inner struggle to her cousin, Lale, as follows:

"But as I went along, I saw a discrepancy between my ideals and the methods adopted by my community. There were many things that made me disagree with their agendas, especially based on the paradigms they had built, because they contradicted my heart. Ultimately, I was truly in doubt." (Mahdavi, 2012:157)

This quote demonstrates a critical awareness of the values she previously held. Charlotte began to compare them with her conscience and personal beliefs. The narrative depicts an intense inner conflict, culminating in her admission that she was "in doubt." This doubt was not simply confusion, but a transitional phase in identity negotiation. In line with Mohanty's perspective, which understands female identity as a socio-historical construct formed through experience, power relations, and the surrounding social context, Charlotte's doubts reflect that her identity is not essential or fixed, but rather dynamic and open to change.

This demonstrates that Charlotte's identity formation takes place through a complex internal process, not through passive acceptance of collective norms. Doubt becomes a crucial point in the formation of her subjectivity, as it is through this phase that she begins to renegotiate her position within the social structure and values around her. Thus, this quote represents a crucial stage in the process of identity formation for the main female character, which is influenced by social and cultural dynamics, then interpreted through inner reflection. To accept this change, Charlotte also considers it carefully before officially declaring her new faith, Islam. As follows:

"You're right, Melati. Sometimes inner experiences are shaped by suggestion, cultural background, beliefs, and so on. Feelings can be very subjective."

"That's what I mean," Charlotte emphasized. "So?"

"I can't accept Islam just because of my feelings. If I'm going to accept Islam, it must be with all my potential as a human being." (Mahdavi, 2012:158)

The quote above represents an awareness that inner experiences can be influenced by suggestion, cultural background, and beliefs. This indicates a critical awareness of the subjectivity of feelings. Charlotte does not simply absolutize her spiritual experiences as unquestionable truths, but rather examines them rationally, with intellectual awareness and reflective consideration in her decision-making process.

In accordance with Mohanty's concept, women are understood as historical subjects with agency in shaping their identities, not as passive entities determined by emotions or external influences. Charlotte represents a female subject actively negotiating her identity through a process of critical reflection. She does not accept an identity based on emotional impulses, but rather through rational and independent self-awareness.

This reflective attitude demonstrates that Charlotte's process of accepting her new identity

is not solely emotional, but rather through rational consideration and intellectual dialogue. Therefore, she began to question several issues regarding Islam that she had previously understood from an external perspective, particularly those related to the position of women. This search for answers was evident when Charlotte began discussing various Islamic teachings with Lale, as in the following quote:

“A husband will be held accountable for his justice in the afterlife. This is a very difficult matter. From this verse, Allah wants to emphasize, by touching the hearts and minds of men, that they must be careful, because they will not be able to act justly, as justly as possible.”

Charlotte closed her eyelids. Her face began to droop, absorbing Lale's explanation. “It turns out it's not what I thought it was. All your explanations make so much sense. I can't even disagree. This is completely different from what I've understood so far. Everything is actually so protective of women.”

“That's how it is, Melati.”

This quote demonstrates a process of internal reflection. A deconstruction of her understanding of Islam, particularly regarding the issue of polygamy, which she had previously understood within a patriarchal framework, is taking place. This is evident in the realization that her previous understanding was not absolute truth, but rather the result of a particular construction.

In the context of Mohanty's theory, female identity is not essential and fixed, but rather shaped by the surrounding social and historical context. Charlotte's prior understanding of Islam as a system that disadvantages women was shaped by the Western feminist discourse she embraced. When she confronted a different explanation, a process of negotiation of meaning occurred, resulting in a shift in identity.

3. Declaration

Declaration is the stage when an individual consciously and firmly declares their new identity

choice as a result of the previous process of reflection and consideration. The following quote illustrates the declaration phase:

"I feel like I'm no longer on the same page. I feel like this isn't my place anymore and it doesn't align with my life's purpose."

"Listen, Charlotte, you need to think about this carefully. Now go home and rest! Then, come back with an open heart. I know you've done a lot for us; you need a moment of peace."

"Professor, I might not be coming back. I've found what I'm looking for."

"What is it?"

"I'm a Muslim now!" Charlotte struggled to find an excuse, but finally, spontaneously, she said she was a Muslim. That answer was her conscience. She firmly stated it.

"Are you crazy?" A sense of shock gripped Professor Angelica. She considered it the craziest and most unreasonable thing to do to become a Muslim. (Mahdavi, 2012:134)

The quote above illustrates Charlotte's declaration of her new identity as a Muslim, marked by critical reflection on the environment that had previously shaped her. Charlotte directly stated to Professor Angelica that she was beginning to disagree with her community. This disagreement was not merely an interpersonal conflict, but rather marked a shift in her value orientation and life goals. Charlotte demonstrated an identity affirmation that had undergone a process of internalization. Although expressed spontaneously, the text emphasizes that this decision was a voice of conscience accompanied by steadfastness.

This aligns with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's view, which views female identity as a socio-historical construct shaped through power relations and specific experiences. Charlotte's attitude can be read as a form of repositioning herself within the ideological structures that had previously protected her. She did not simply leave the community but negotiated with previously accepted values.



4. Reinforcement

Reinforcement is the next stage in which an individual maintains and affirms their chosen identity, despite facing pressure, challenges, or Rejection from the external environment. The following quote illustrates the strengthening phase:

"You may not be Jewish, but at least you still have other options: Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, or Buddhist. You can even be an atheist. But you can't be Muslim!"

"Why don't you have a religion like the respectable people? You damned bastard! Why did you have to embrace the religion of those slaves!"

Charlotte chanted dhikr, not responding in the slightest to her father's hurtful insults. She buried her face in her mother's embrace. She was already filled with a strong, deeply ingrained faith. Even if ten lions were brought to her to renounce her Islam, she would not.

This quote illustrates the phase of identity strengthening after Charlotte decided to become a Muslim. This strengthening phase is illustrated by Charlotte's response to her father's harsh rejection and insults; she chose not to retaliate but to chant dhikr. This indicates that her chosen religious identity is no longer in the search stage but has undergone consolidation.

In line with Mohanty's thinking, women's identities are formed through interactions with social structures and power relations, yet they retain agency. Charlotte is no longer a subject shaped entirely by the discourses around her, but has taken a conscious stance on her identity. Thus, the quote above represents the phase of identity stabilization and confirmation following the previous process of reflection.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the multicultural context in Mahdavi's novel *Ratu yang Bersujud* significantly influences the identity formation process of the main female character through dynamic and reflective stages. This process occurs through four main phases: confusion, negotiation, decla-

ration, and reinforcement. In the confusion stage, the character experiences a conflict between old understandings influenced by Western feminist perspectives and new perspectives gained from multicultural interactions. This stage then develops into negotiation, where the character critically considers, compares, and reconstructs meaning through rational considerations and inner experiences. Next, in the declaration stage, the character consciously establishes her new identity as a result of a process of in-depth reflection. This process reaches the reinforcement stage when this identity is maintained despite external pressures. Thus, the multicultural context is not merely a setting but plays a major role in shaping the character's identity through the interaction of cultural values, religion, and social experiences that are critically internalized.

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