



## Household Conflict in the Novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah: A Sociological Literary Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the forms of domestic conflict in Sasa Ahadiyah's novel *Kembali Bebas* using a sociological approach to literature. Household conflicts are a social phenomenon often represented in literary works, yet there remains limited research that systematically examines them in contemporary Indonesian novels. The novel *Kembali Bebas* (2023) was chosen because it deeply illustrates the dynamics of conflict between the characters Tata and Ibra, who have been building a household for more than 28 years. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a sociological literary approach. The research data consists of dialog excerpts and narratives that contain indicators of domestic conflict, collected through reading and note-taking. Data analysis was conducted by identifying, classifying, and describing the data based on Awaru's (2021) family conflict theory. The research findings identified three forms of domestic conflict in the novel. First, arguments characterized by a high tone of voice and shouting at each other, physical gestures of anger, and discussions about divorce. Second, not reprimanding each other, manifested through ignoring the partner's invitation to talk and remaining silent during conflicts. Third, not respecting each other, reflected in belittling remarks toward the partner and ignoring mutual agreements. These three forms of conflict are interconnected and indicate that ineffective communication and power imbalance are the main roots of marital discord. This research contributes to the development of literary sociology studies, particularly in the analysis of family conflicts in contemporary Indonesian popular literature. The findings of the study show that domestic conflicts in the novel do not appear suddenly, but develop due to the accumulation of problems that last for a long time. The novel *Kembali Bebas* not only functions as an entertainment work, but also as a medium of social reflection on the importance of building harmonious and equal family relationships.

*Keywords: household conflict, novel, sociological literary study*

## Konflik Rumah Tangga dalam Novel *Kembali Bebas* Karya Sasa Ahadiyah: Studi Sosiologis Sastra

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk-bentuk konflik rumah tangga dalam novel *Kembali Bebas* karya Sasa Ahadiyah menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis sastra. Konflik rumah tangga merupakan fenomena sosial yang sering digambarkan dalam karya sastra, namun masih terbatas penelitian yang secara sistematis mengkajinya dalam novel-novel kontemporer Indonesia. Novel *Kembali Bebas* (2023) dipilih karena secara mendalam menggambarkan dinamika konflik antara tokoh Tata dan Ibra, yang telah membangun rumah tangga selama lebih dari 28 tahun. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan pendekatan sosiologis sastra. Data penelitian terdiri dari kutipan dialog dan narasi yang mengandung indikator konflik rumah tangga, yang dikumpulkan melalui membaca dan mencatat. Analisis data dilakukan dengan mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan mendeskripsikan data berdasarkan teori konflik keluarga Awaru (2021). Temuan penelitian mengidentifikasi tiga bentuk konflik rumah tangga dalam novel tersebut. Pertama, pertengkaran yang ditandai dengan nada suara tinggi dan saling berteriak, gestur fisik kemarahan, dan diskusi tentang perceraian. Kedua, tidak saling menegur, yang dimanifestasikan melalui mengabaikan ajakan pasangan untuk berbicara dan tetap diam selama konflik. Ketiga, tidak saling menghormati, tercermin dalam ucapan-ucapan yang meremehkan pasangan dan mengabaikan kesepakatan bersama. Ketiga bentuk konflik ini saling terkait dan menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi yang tidak efektif dan ketidakseimbangan kekuasaan merupakan akar utama perselisihan rumah tangga. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan studi sosiologi sastra, khususnya dalam analisis konflik keluarga dalam sastra populer Indonesia kontemporer. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konflik rumah tangga dalam novel tidak muncul tiba-tiba, tetapi berkembang karena akumulasi masalah yang berlangsung lama. Novel *Kembali Bebas* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai karya hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai media refleksi sosial tentang pentingnya membangun hubungan keluarga yang harmonis dan setara.

*Kata kunci: konflik rumah tangga, novel, studi sosiologi sastra*

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## INTRODUCTION

Literary works, especially novels, not only serve as a medium of entertainment but also as a mirror of social reality that reflects various human life issues. As a product of culture, novels present the complexity of human relationships, including family dynamics, husband-wife relations, and the conflicts that arise within them. In the perspective of literary sociology, literature is understood as a social institution that uses language as its medium, and literary techniques are social in nature because they follow the norms and conventions of society (Wellek & Warren, 2016). Therefore, literary works can be a rich source for understanding how society represents, experiences, and responds to social conflicts, including conflicts within the smallest scope of society, namely the family.

One of the forms of social conflict that is closest to everyday life is domestic conflict. Household conflict is a disagreement that occurs between individuals who are married and live together in the same household (Sutanto et al., 2022). This phenomenon not only occurs in reality but is also widely depicted in literary works. The novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah (2023) is a contemporary Indonesian literary work that deeply explores domestic conflicts. This novel tells the story of Tata and Ibra's marriage, which has lasted for more than 28 years. However, behind the apparent harmony lie various issues, such as role imbalances, a lack of communication, and a loss of space for the wife to express her identity. The conflict in this novel is not only personal but also represents broader social issues regarding power relations and the division of gender roles within the family.

Research on domestic conflicts in novels is important for several reasons. First, domestic conflicts are a universal issue experienced by almost every couple, yet they often remain unspoken. Through literary studies, these conflicts can be identified, analyzed, and understood more systematically. Second, the novel *Kembali Bebas* was published in 2023 and has yet to receive much

attention in academic studies, even though it was selected as a finalist in the Gramedia Writing Project. Third, the sociological approach to literature, informed by family conflict theory (Awaru, 2021), allows for a more structured analysis relevant to contemporary social realities. Several previous studies have examined family conflicts in novels using a sociological literary approach. Sijabat, Harahap, & Marsella (2024) examined the forms of family conflict in the novel *00.00* by Ameylia Falensia and found that family conflict occurs not only due to differences of opinion but also due to an imbalance in power relations. Another study by Fadilah & Nadifah (2024) examines domestic conflicts in the novel *Ati Dudu Watu* by Bambang Saparyono, focusing on infidelity as the cause of the rift. Both studies use a sociological literary approach, but their objects and focuses differ. This research complements previous studies by comprehensively examining forms of domestic conflict arguments, lack of communication, and lack of respect in a newer and less-studied novel.

The novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, the object of study is the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah (2023), which has not yet been examined academically through a sociological literary approach. Second, this research employs the family conflict theory by Awaru (2021), which has not been widely applied in literary analysis. Third, unlike previous studies that tend to focus on one type of conflict, such as infidelity, this research examines three forms of conflict simultaneously, namely arguments, not speaking to each other, and not respecting each other, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of domestic conflict in literary works.

Based on the above description, the problem formulation in this research is: What are the forms of domestic conflict in the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah? This research aims to analyze and describe the forms of domestic conflicts depicted in the novel through a sociological literary approach. Theoretically, this research is expected



to enrich the study of literary sociology, particularly in the analysis of family conflicts in contemporary Indonesian novels. Practically, this research is beneficial for academics and literary researchers as a reference, as well as for the general public, helping them understand that domestic conflicts in literature reflect complex social realities.

This research uses a sociological approach to literature supported by Awaru's (2021) family conflict theory. Sociology of literature views literary works as social products that reflect the realities of society. As explained by Didipu (2024), literary sociology is an interdisciplinary approach that combines sociology and literary studies to examine the reciprocal relationship between literature and society, including interactions within the family. As Wiyatmi (2013) notes, literary sociology, which examines literary phenomena in relation to social aspects, is an interdisciplinary approach to reading and understanding literature. As for the analysis of household conflicts specifically, this research draws on Awaru's (2021) concept of family conflict. Awaru divides family conflict into three main forms, namely: (1) quarrels as a form of problems arising from disharmony, often triggered by small matters but can negatively impact household stability; (2) not reprimanding each other between husband and wife, a communication breakdown that causes the relationship to become distant due to lack of openness; (3) lack of mutual respect when the attitude of respecting each other disappears, leading to blame and belittlement of the partner. This concept is relevant because it provides clear indicators for identifying forms of conflict in literary texts.

## METHOD

This research uses a sociological literary approach with a descriptive qualitative research type. The sociological approach to literature was chosen because this research aims to uncover the relationship between literary works and social reality, particularly the representation of domestic

conflicts in novels. As Sujarwa (2019) states, the sociology of literature, as a science in its application, never stands alone because it inherently encompasses various fields of knowledge. Meanwhile, descriptive qualitative research is used to depict phenomena in depth through narrative descriptions rather than numbers. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive qualitative research enables researchers to explore the meanings individuals or groups attach to a social or humanitarian issue. In this context, the researcher seeks to describe the forms of domestic conflict as depicted in the dialogues, narratives, and characters' attitudes in the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah.

The research data consists of excerpts from the novel that illustrate forms of domestic conflict, including character dialogue, the author's narrative, and event descriptions that depict arguments, communication breakdowns, or a lack of respect. The data source is the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah, published in 2023 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, with a total of 256 pages.

The data collection technique used is library research, which involves a series of activities related to collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and processing research materials (Zed, 2014). The steps taken by the researcher include: repeatedly reading the novel to thoroughly understand the story, identifying sentences or paragraphs that align with the research focus by coding the data, classifying the data into a data corpus based on research findings, and presenting the discovered data for analysis.

The data analysis is conducted in six stages, adapted from Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014). First, read the novel *Kembali Bebas* thoroughly and repeatedly to gain a complete understanding of the plot and character conflicts. Second, identify relevant data by marking and noting quotes related to forms of domestic conflict. Third, classify and group the data into the three categories of conflict forms identified by Awaru (2021). Fourth, analyze the data descriptively by linking each quote to the

story's context and the theory used. Fifth, interpret the findings to see how these forms of conflict represent social reality. Sixth, draw conclusions and present the analysis results systematically as a narrative description supported by representative quotes. The entire analysis process is conducted with objectivity and data traceability (auditability), as required in qualitative research (Allsop et al., 2022).

## RESULTS

Based on the text analysis of the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiyah (2023) using Awaru's (2021) family conflict theory, three forms of domestic conflict experienced by the characters Tata and Ibra were found, namely: (1) quarrels, (2) not reprimanding each other between husband and wife, and (3) not respecting each other. Here is a description of each form of conflict along with representative data quotes.

### 1. Quarrel

Arguments in this novel are indicated through three sub-forms: (a) high-pitched voices and shouting at each other, (b) physical gestures that show anger, and (c) discussions about separation when the conflict peaks.

#### 1.1 High-Pitched Tone and Yelling at Each Other

The following quote shows how Ibra responds to Tata with a shout when asked to reduce his gaming habit:

"Clearly not just asking for a divorce like an immature young person!" "Are you really asking for a divorce just because I like playing games?!" Ibra shouted. (Ahadiyah, 2023)

This quote shows that communication between husband and wife has shifted from an equal dialogue to a confrontational argument. The word "bentak" emphasizes that the words were delivered in a high and pressured tone, indicating a loss of emotional control. Ibra's response no

longer tried to understand Tata's intentions, but instead directly cornered and belittled Tata's reasons. Communication patterns like this are characteristic of arguments that can damage household stability because they are not oriented toward problem-solving, but rather toward self-defense and verbal attacks.

#### 1.2 Physical Gestures that Indicate Anger

Arguments are not only conveyed verbally but are also reinforced by aggressive body language, as seen in the following excerpt:

"No!" Ibra retorted loudly while slamming the wall. (Ahadiyah, 2023)

The act of slamming a wall is a physical gesture indicating an uncontrollable outburst of anger. This gesture serves as an amplifier of the verbal message and as a form of emotional release that cannot be expressed in words. In nonverbal communication, such actions indicate that the conflict has surpassed the boundaries of rational communication and entered the realm of aggressive physical expression. This reinforces the idea that the argument between Tata and Ibra is not only verbal but has also affected their psychological state, as evidenced by concrete actions. Gestures like this also indicate that the argument is highly intense.

#### 1.3 Discussion About Separation During Conflict

The peak of the argument is marked by the emergence of divorce discourse as a resolution option, as in the following quote:

"I'm serious. I want a divorce." The more earnest Tata spoke, the hotter Ibra's face felt. (Ahadiyah, 2023)

Tata's statement indicates that the conflict has reached a critical stage. Divorce is no longer just a rhetorical threat, but has become a serious consideration for ending the relationship. Ibra's reaction, depicted through a change in facial



expression (angry), shows that the discourse triggers ongoing tension. Divorce is a separation in life that occurs when a couple is unable to fulfill their roles optimally. In the context of the novel, the emergence of discussions about divorce suggests that repeated arguments fail to find common ground, leading one party to see separation as the only way out. This confirms that unresolved conflicts can lead to divorce.

## **2. Not Addressing Each Other Between Husband and Wife**

The second form of conflict is marked by two indicators: ignoring the partner's invitation to talk and remaining silent during arguments.

### **2.1 Ignoring The Partner's Invitation To Talk**

Ignoring the Partner's Invitation to Talk Tata tries to build communication, but her invitation does not receive an equal response, as in the following quote:

"Bra... honeymoon, shall we?" Tata tried to talk to Ibra, who was already engrossed in playing a game." (Ahadiyah, 2023)

This quote shows that Tata has the initiative to create togetherness and warm communication. However, Ibra did not respond to the invitation at all because he remained focused on his personal activities. The attitude of ignoring the invitation to talk reflects a breakdown in two-way communication. Poor communication causes small issues to escalate into major conflicts. When one party continues to make an effort but the other party does not respond, the function of communication as a means of building closeness becomes paralyzed. This condition shows that not reprimanding each other in a household can manifest as a passive attitude that does not allow for dialogue.

### **2.2 Silence as a Response to Arguments**

When conflict arises, one party chooses silence as a form of avoidance:

"Ibra rolled his eyes. He preferred to rush to the bathroom rather than continue arguing with his wife. (Ahadiyah, 2023)

Ibra's attitude of rolling his eyes (a sign of discontent) and then leaving the conversation shows a refusal to engage in problem-solving. Silence and leaving the room are forms of stonewalling or withdrawal from interaction. Stonewalling is a strong predictor of relationship breakdowns because it obstructs constructive communication. In the novel, Ibra's silence does not serve as a pause to calm himself, but rather becomes a pattern of avoidance that prolongs the tension. Tata is left in a situation of uncertainty, so the conflict is never fully resolved. This shows that not reprimanding each other does not always mean there is no communication at all, but it can also mean communication that is not substantive and ends without resolution.

## **3. Not Respecting Each Other**

The third form of conflict manifests in two indicators: belittling remarks toward a partner and neglecting mutual agreements.

### **3.1 Disparaging or Belittling Remarks Toward a Partner**

In a heated conversation, Ibra uttered disparaging words toward Tata:

"Aren't you ashamed?! You're already old and talking about divorce!" We just married off our child, you know!" (Ahadiyah, 2023)

This statement contains a negative judgment directed at the partner, linking household issues to age factors and family situations (the child's wedding). Utterances like this are not aimed at finding a solution, but rather at cornering and humiliating the partner. Not respecting each other can lead to blame and contempt, which ultimately results in disharmony. In the context of the novel, this derogatory remark shows that respect for the partner's position and feelings has been lost.

Communication is no longer based on respect, but rather on the desire to win arguments by belittling the other person

### 3.2 Ignoring the Mutual Agreement

The disregard for the agreement is evident when Ibra asks Tata to stop working, even tho they had previously agreed otherwise:

“But, before we got married, we agreed, Bra. I can still work after getting married and having children.” Tata still found it hard to digest that request. (Ahadiyah, 2023)

This quote shows that the initial agreement, which served as the basis for carrying out household roles, was not implemented consistently. Ibra unilaterally changed the decision without involving Tata in the renegotiation. This attitude reflects an imbalance in power relations, in which one party feels entitled to change the rules because of their position as the head of the family. The author’s narrative reinforces this finding:

“Enforcing the rules with Ibra often feels futile.” In the end, the man always renegotiates the rules to suit his will... After all, he is the head of the family. The final decision is his, isn’t it? “ (Ahadiyah, 2023).

The neglect of this mutual agreement has become a source of conflict because Tata feels undervalued as an equal partner in the household, but rather as someone who must conform to her husband’s wishes.

## DISCUSSION

This discussion aims to interpret the research findings on the forms of domestic conflict in the novel *Kembali Bebas* using a sociological literary approach and family conflict theory as outlined by Awaru (2021). The three forms of conflict found arguments, not reprimanding each other, and not respecting each other do not stand alone; rather,

they are interconnected and reflect the dynamics of relationship breakdowns that occur gradually.

### Arguments as a Form of Open Conflict

Research findings indicate that the arguments between Tata and Ibra are characterized by raised voices, angry gestures, and discussions about separation. Theoretically, Awaru (2021) explains that ongoing arguments, even when triggered by trivial matters, can undermine household stability. In the novel, the arguments are triggered by trivial matters such as Ibra’s habit of playing games, but because they are never fully resolved, the tension keeps recurring. This is in line with the opinion of Purwaningtyas et al. (2020) that poor communication tends to exacerbate differences of opinion because it does not produce constructive solutions. A high tone of voice and shouting indicate that communication has shifted from an equal dialogue to a confrontational argument.

Furthermore, physical gestures such as slamming walls and tables, as well as wide-eyed expressions, show that the argument is not only conveyed verbally but also reinforced by body language. From the perspective of nonverbal communication, Nuraflah et al. (2019) state that facial expressions, body movements, and tone of voice are important in conveying messages in conflict situations. Aggressive physical gestures indicate that emotions have taken over. The most critical issue is the emergence of discussions about divorce. Hertina & Nelli (2007) explain that divorce results from the couple’s inability to fulfill their roles optimally. This confirms Awaru’s (2021) view that unresolved conflicts can lead to prolonged arguments and even divorce. This finding is also in line with the research by Sijabat et al. (2024), which found that family conflicts in the novel 00.00 reached the stage of separation as an option.

### Not Addressing Each Other as a Form of Communication Avoidance.

The second finding shows that not addressing each other is indicated by ignoring invitations to



speak and maintaining silence. Awaru (2021) states that not addressing each other is a form of communication breakdown that becomes the main trigger of conflict. In the novel, Tata repeatedly tries to start a conversation, but Ibra prefers to end the discussion. This attitude reflects interpersonal communication barriers within the family (Enjang & Dulwahab, 2018). Silence in response to arguments can be understood as stonewalling or withdrawing from interaction, which, according to Gottman (as cited in Nuroniyah, 2023), is one of the strongest predictors of marital relationship breakdown. Silence does not function as a pause to calm oneself, but rather becomes an avoidance pattern that prolongs tension. These findings reinforce the research results of Fadilah & Nadifah (2024) that broken communication triggers household conflicts.

### **Not Respecting Each Other as the Root of Relational Conflict**

The third finding shows that lack of mutual respect is manifested through derogatory remarks and disregard for agreements. Awaru (2021) emphasizes that a lack of mutual respect can lead to attitudes of blaming and belittling each other. In the novel, Ibra accuses Tata of being shameless for discussing divorce at an older age, while Tata mocks Ibra as a spoiled man. Susan (2014) explains that conflict is a disagreement arising from differing opinions; in the novel, the disagreement is exacerbated by a lack of mutual respect in how it is conveyed. The neglect of mutual agreements also became a significant finding. The initial agreement on household chores and the division of childcare tasks is often neglected. Hertina & Nelli (2007:46) explain that in the traditional family construct, the wife is positioned as the party responsible for domestic affairs, creating an imbalanced power relationship. These findings are relevant to the research by Sijabat et al. (2024) on the imbalance of power relations as a source of conflict.

### **Integration of Findings in the Perspective of Literary Sociology Overall**

The three forms of conflict not only depict personal disputes but also reflect broader social realities. As Kurniawan (2012) argues, the sociology of literature analysis is related to the social analysis of literary works, including the author's social ideology and worldview; the influence of societal structures on literary works, and vice versa; and the social function of literature. This emphasizes that the sociology of literature approach focuses on understanding literary works through the social aspects that underlie them. In this novel, Tata's conflict reflects the position of women who must sacrifice their careers and identities, while Ibra represents the traditional relational pattern that places men as the holders of authority. Literary sociology studies the reciprocal relationship between literature and society, including interactions within the family. The novel *Kembali Bebas* presents a portrait of contemporary Indonesian families that are still marked by gender inequality, ineffective communication, and a lack of appreciation for wives' contributions. Thus, the forms of conflict found confirm Awaru's (2021) theoretical framework and are supported by various recent studies.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis and discussion of the novel *Kembali Bebas* by Sasa Ahadiah, using the sociological approach to literature and family conflict theory from Awaru (2021), it is concluded that the forms of domestic conflict in this novel fall into three main categories. First, arguments are indicated by raised voices and shouting at each other, angry physical gestures, and discussions about separation or divorce when the conflict peaks. Second, not reprimanding each other between husband and wife, manifested in ignoring the partner's invitation to talk and remaining silent as a response to arguments, leading to a breakdown in communication and a widening rift in the relationship. Third, not respecting each other, reflected in belittling or demeaning remarks toward

the partner and neglecting mutual agreements in the household, indicating a loss of mutual respect and an imbalance in the power dynamics between husband and wife. The three forms of conflict are interconnected and develop gradually, from ineffective communication to a crisis that can lead to divorce. The novel *Kembali Bebas* successfully represents the social reality that household conflicts are a complex phenomenon influenced by the quality of communication, mutual respect, and consistency in adhering to joint agreements. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of literary sociology by applying the latest family conflict theory to contemporary Indonesian popular literature. Practically, the results of this research can serve as a reflection for readers and society on the importance of building healthy communication, mutual respect, and equal cooperation in household life. Further research is recommended to examine the factors causing domestic conflicts in the same novel or to conduct a comparative study with another novel that addresses a similar theme.

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