

The Challenges Of Modernity And Religious Values In Muslim Women Characters In The Novels *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* By Arumi Ekowati And *172 Days* By Nadzira Shafa

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Abstract

Women's issues have been a compelling theme in literary works, especially when connected to the challenges of modernity and religious values. This study analyzes Muslim female characters in two novels, Merindu Cahaya De Amstel by Arumi Ekowati and 172 Days by Nadzira Shafa, both of which portray distinct yet similarly rooted struggles within contemporary life. The aim of this research is to identify the forms of modernity challenges faced by the female Muslim characters in the two novels and to describe the religious values reflected through their experience. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with reading and note-taking techniques to collect relevant data. The findings reveal that the religious values depicted in both novels encompass four essential relationships: the relationship between humans and God, between humans and others, with oneself, and with the surrounding environment. The modernity challenges in 172 Days include early marriage preparation, adaptation to domestic life, and coping with the loss of spouse. Meanwhile, Missing Cahya De Amstel highlights the influence of western culture and technological development, which shapes attitudes toward women's clothing and leads to issues such as objectification and harassment. Both novels illustrate efforts of Muslim women to uphold religious values amid the pressures of modern change.



Keywords: *challenges of modernity, religious values* .

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of art that depicts human life. Literature contains religious and humanitarian values. The values contained in literary works provide many examples for society. The values contained in literary works can serve as guidelines for daily life, and the teachings they convey can enrich one's soul.

Literary works are the result of the author's imagination, expressing his or her own thoughts, ideas, and feelings about life using imaginative language. As a medium of expression for writers in conveying ideas through their works, literary language has several characteristics, including being an emotive and connotative language, as opposed to non-literary language, especially scientific language, which is rational and denotative (Al-Maruf, 2009:3).

So, literary works are works of art originating from the author who expresses his own thoughts, ideas and feelings in life that are connected with writing or language and meaning in a literary work that the author of the story will usually be the life story of the author of the literary work. Therefore, all literary works have benefits for humans that are obtained through two aspects, namely aesthetics and ethics, which are overall aimed at spiritual satisfaction. Aesthetic quality arouses the passion for life, a sense of love, loyalty, and jealousy, including the spirit of intellectuality and struggle. Ethical quality is moral issues. Social conservation is not solely obtained through religion, the power of law and customs, norms and rules, but also through the system of language symbols (Ratna, 2005: 576).

Novels are a form of literary work. They are long, fictional prose works that present characters and present a series of events and backgrounds in a structured manner. According to Nurgiyantoro (2009:11), novels can express something freely, present something in greater detail, and involve more complex issues. The depiction in a novel is created by the presence of characters with character that follows a coherent and appropriate plot, then ending with a climax.

Characters play a crucial role in a story's plot, while characterization is the process of painting a clear picture of a person featured in a story. The terms character and characterization have different meanings. Characters and characterization are essential intrinsic elements in literary works. In a novel, characters are the actors in a story and play a significant role in the plot, while characterization is the process of painting a clear picture of a person featured in a story.

The female character is a compelling theme in literary works. In novels, a woman is often the main character. Numerous stories depict women's greatness, struggles, and suffering. This is

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because female characters can highlight the role and existence of women in everyday life, both within the family and society.

The times are indeed changing rapidly. Technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated. As good Indonesians, we must be able to take advantage of these developments. We must be able to understand how these developments can change us, both negatively and positively. Therefore, we must practice positive behavior to achieve a positive life purpose. There are countless experiences around us that can be beneficial. One example is learning from stories, films, or novels. We should be able to learn from everything we see.

In this era of globalization, various challenges such as moral decline, promiscuity and minimal understanding of religious values have become increasingly worrying issues, but with character education based on religiosity, it will be a relevant solution to build a generation that is not only intelligent but also intellectual and has moral integrity.

Like the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa which tells the true story of the author in becoming a wife and living her household life, namely Nadzira Shafa. This novel tells the story of the marriage relationship of Nadzira Shafa with her husband Amer Azzikra which lasted for approximately until the age of marriage only reached 172 days. In the novel, the author pours out many things about the journey of their household life, starting from how Ameer taught many things such as respecting parents, how she loved herself and loved God, and how to communicate more intimately with God before he died.

Religious is a term that refers to anything related to religion or spiritual beliefs held by an individual or group. Within religious teachings, religiousness describes the depth of a person's faith in their beliefs and their commitment to practicing their teachings.

The religious values in the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa highlight various human relationships with God and others as a theme that provides a deep understanding of moral values in a modern context with studies showing that literary works not only function as entertainment but also as a medium to convey ethical and moral values that are important for the character development of the reader.

In this modern and developed era, literary works are certainly an integral part of human life. For example, the novel *"Merindu Cahaya De Amstel"* explores many issues and topics, with its story beginning with a European Muslim woman accidentally photographed by a non-Muslim photographer. Through this encounter, they eventually get to know each other, and their story offers numerous lessons that can inspire many, especially in religious matters.

From the novel, we can conclude what kind of social interaction is prescribed by Islam and



also what kind of tolerance we should have, which is very necessary to maintain harmony in social life if we have an environment with different religious backgrounds.

Furthermore, the rapid development of information technology, along with the times, poses a challenge to modernity for adolescents, particularly in their reading. The themes they read, both electronically and in print, have both positive and negative impacts on the nation's future generations. Young people who can filter positive content and use it as role models will positively impact their character development. Conversely, if young people are influenced by negative influences, the positive values instilled in them will be lost. The current situation is increasingly far removed from the roots that made Islamic civilization bright a thousand years ago, as the current condition of the community misunderstands jihad as a struggle by the sword, not by means of the kalam (knowledge and technology).

The novels *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* by Arumi Ekowati and *172 days* by Nadzira Shafa are among the religious novels that are able to attract the attention of readers through the characters in the story, as well as the values that can be found through extrinsic elements, especially religious values and also the opposition to modernity in the novel. Thus, what motivates this research is the values of the religious aspect in the novel *Merindu Cahaya. De Amstel* by Arumi Ekowati and *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa. In this regard, this study aims to examine how religious values are maintained or displaced in the face of the various challenges of modernity, and how these two novels reveal inner conflicts. Thus, this study not only offers an understanding of the development of contemporary literature but also provides insight into how today's young generation facing the challenges of modernity which are constantly changing and the religious values contained within it.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs qualitative research that will produce descriptive data based on the research findings. The type of research used in this study is descriptive research. The data sources described are: is character data figure main in the novels *Longing for Light in Amstel* and *172 days*. Type study This chosen Because in study This described the data that becomes center attention, namely in the form of characters and characterization in In the novels *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* and *172 Days*. As for what becomes The data sources are the novels *Longing for Light in Amstel* and *172 Days*. The research data in the form of quote paragraphs, dialogue, or sentence in stories that contain characters and characterization in this novel. For technique data collection used technique reading and technique record. Data collection applies technique analysis text after



that's the data from each novel is produced , stages furthermore done comparison of data between novels.

The data collection technique used in this study is analysis, namely document analysis that focuses on data. The validity of the data used in this study is theoretical triangulation . This use technique non- interactive data analysis or This data analysis technique goes through three flows , namely: Data reduction, Data presentation, and Conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results obtained from the researcher focused on religious values in the novels *172 Days* and *Merindu Cahaya de Amstel* with how religious values can be expressed in the novel. Novels as works of fiction have building elements including themes. In writing a novel, the theme becomes the main idea or idea of the theme's thoughts in the story in the novel. In addition, there are also characters in the novel who are the actors in the story in the novel. In the novel *172 Days* and *Merindu Cahaya de Amstel* are related to life experiences and have religious values.

The problems raised in this research through discussion and analysis are actual and contextual problems and also awareness to appreciate and apply the meaning of the messages contained in the novel excerpts and increase the knowledge obtained but still within the content of the novel which of course can be useful for oneself and the wider community.

The female characters in the novel "172 Days," with the main character, Zira, are depicted as intelligent, religious, and a good wife. Zira's character reflects a steadfast attitude in maintaining her Muslim identity amidst a diverse environment, both in terms of values and culture. She remains a critical and reflective individual, upholding Islamic values in her daily life. For example, Zira maintains her hijab and values of modesty in her dress, interactions, and decision-making.

The challenges of modernity in the novel *172 Days* can be seen through the character Zira, who faces them in the context of her personal life. The challenges of modernity are the pressures, values, and lifestyles dominant in the contemporary era, which often conflict with religious and traditional values.

Overall, the novel *172 Days* shows that amidst the fast-paced and secular currents of modernity, there are religious values and personal commitments that can be a source of authentic strength and happiness. This novel is a personal reflection on how faith and love can help someone overcome complex life challenges, both those originating from within and from the pressures of the modern world. The challenges of modernity in the novel *172 Days* include identity



relationships and the search for identity, modern romanticism and Islamic marriage, social pressure and stigma, and also the role of social media in personal life.

Meanwhile, the characterization of the Muslim female character in the novel "*Merindu Cahaya de Amstel*," with Kadijah, demonstrates the transformation of a Muslim woman in facing modern life in the West, where Islamic values are often at odds with freedom of thought and behavior.

Kadijah initially experienced many internal conflicts between academic demands, the free lifestyle among her friends, and the Islamic teachings she adhered to. However, as she grew older, Kadijah began to understand Islam more personally and patiently, embracing the importance of maintaining her Muslim identity and its role as a form of moral strength. In terms of the challenges of modernity, Kadijah often faced negative problems and was tempted to abandon her Islamic identity in order to adapt to her environment. However, through reflection, dialogue, and the search for meaning, Kadijah became increasingly steadfast in her choice as a devout Muslim woman. With the value of religiosity, Kadijah's character is often seen through an internal struggle that finds the light of guidance amidst the darkness of doubt. Kadijah becomes a symbol of religious awakening that is not easy but rather through a process of contemplation, life's trials, and emotional experiences.

The relationship between research results and relevant previous studies.

The results of this study indicate that the religious values in *172 Days and Merindu Cahaya de Amstel* are primarily seen through the female characters who face the challenges of modernity. This finding aligns with research by Sholihin (2023) and Fitri Aisyah (2022), which both highlighted the moral and religious messages of the characters in *Merindu Cahaya de Amstel*.

This research also strengthens Neneng Munajah's (2021) theory regarding the clash between religion and modernity, because both characters (Zira and Kadijah) are struggling to maintain their Muslim identity in a modern environment.

In addition, this study complements the studies of Nilawati (2023) and Putri Ayu Khairunisa (2024) by showing that religious values are not only in the form of faith, worship, and morals, but are also apparent in identity relationships, social pressure, and the process of spiritual transformation of characters.

The research strengthens the findings by expanding on broader religious values and providing concrete examples of how modernity challenges religious figures, providing a deeper understanding of how religiosity grows through conflict, modernity, and inner experience. Furthermore, the research provides additional analysis, specifically addressing the challenges of



modernity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research that has been conducted in the research on the novel *172 Dyas* and *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* and also after explaining and analyzing the discussions put forward, the researcher obtained the following conclusions:

1. The novel *172 Days* is a true story from the author himself. It is told that Nadzira Shafa decided to migrate in the process she met her husband, Amer Azzikra. The story in the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa in the novel is presented with many stories with characters that can be presented in a real life with what they feel will lead them through religious messages. Religious values are a person's behavior that is in accordance with strong religious teachings with human hope in their God, standards accepted through the inner self that connects with God, submission, obedience to the Almighty. Thus religious values include (1) the relationship between humans and God, (2) the relationship between humans and humans, (3) the relationship between humans and themselves, and also (4) the relationship between humans and the surrounding environment.

The form of modernity in the novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa is seen from the combination of strong religious values such as hijrah and taaruf with the mindset, lifestyle and use of technology that are often used in the modern era. This novel also does not oppose the existence of tradition, but in this novel shows how these traditions can be adapted and lived by the younger generation growing up in the midst of modern society. The novel *172 Days* by Nadzira Shafa explores various life challenges, including readiness to face early marriage, adaptation to a household life full of tests and trials to facing the bitter reality of loss in marriage.

2. The results of the analysis of the novel *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* in religious values Khadja is a convert and studies Islam in a place where not many people embrace religion like her even though she thinks and continues to try to act like a Muslim woman. From the results of the research, many religious values are found in the novel *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel* with Islamic values that are widely shown in the novel because in this novel many describe the attitudes of the main character who always carries out his obligations as a Muslim and always carries out his religious orders for example by praying on time, fasting and also praying.

In the modernity of the novel *Merindu Cahaya De Amstel*, the increasingly advanced development of technology has resulted in many people who cannot be separated from their



gadgets or cellphones with features and applications that are very diverse, making people increasingly complacent in using their cellphones. Many people are the latest trends from western culture, all of which make many people influenced by attitudes, manners, and interests in learning, ultimately this will have an impact on the behavior or character or character of society and have a bad impact on all aspects of life. Khadija offered dates as a way to show her concern for others, but in contrast to today's life, many people only care about themselves and feel indifferent to the condition of those around them.

In contrast to today, especially with the development of Western culture and technology, many women expose their private parts to attract attention. For example, many women now wear short or less material clothing. This is to appear fashionable and in keeping with current social life, to appear modern and up-to-date, and also to be seen as attractive by the street. This practice actually harms many women because many men look at women only for lust, and it also leads to many cases of harassment against women.

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