

Research Article

## Image of Women Character in Diddo Gaaru Short Story

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### Abstract

This research is conducted to grasp the image of women and gender inequality experienced by female characters in the Diddo Gaaru short story. The method used in this research is a literature study in which primary data obtained from the short story Diddo Gaaru are then analyzed using feminist literary criticism theory and presented descriptively. It is concluded that there are four forms of gender inequality in this short story: marginalization, subordination, stereotype, and violence as for the image of women in this short story, including ten images that, as a whole, describe the image of oppressed women. Behind the image of oppressed women, Diddo Gaaru's short story implies a message about how a woman can be very persistent in fighting for her rights. This can be seen from the role of two female figures who came from two different dimensions of life.

**Keywords:** Woman Image; Kirino Natsu; Diddo Gaaru

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### 1. Introduction

Literature is a form of human thought that uses language to deliver the message of a story. Nevertheless, the notion of literature is that literature as work has many meanings depending on the way people interpret it. Whatever the form of meaning, one thing is specific from literary works: it is the form of human creation. Moreover, that creation makes literary works separate from ideas, views of life, and beliefs humans hold as creators. The views or ideas of the author as outlined in literature can vary, including the author's point of view of women. In literary works, this embodiment of women can be seen from how the author describes a woman character. This depiction of women is also known as the image of women in literary works, and that image depicted in a literary work is usually inseparable from the way society views women. (Sugihastuti,

2009) stated the image of women is all representations of women in physical, mental, spiritual, and behavioral forms depicted in literature. According to feminism theory, the field study that relevant with feminism literature study such as women's literary traditions, female writers and readers, and female character in literature work (Rahmah, 2015)

In literary works, the theme of gender inequality is sometimes described by many authors, especially female authors. This such theme is found in several country's literary including Japanese literary works. One of the female authors in Japan who often raises the issue of women and their equality gender is Mariko Hashioka, known as Kirino Natsuo as her pen name. Kirino often uses issues experienced by women in his country to be brought up in his stories, such as prostitution issues, marriage, and

legal equality for female workers issues (Hemman, 2013). Through an interview conducted by Nippon.com, Kirino said she was inspired by news that raises crimes against women. Although inspired by women who are victims of crime, Kirino does not portray women as weak. The female characters in Kirino's stories are often described as strong and independent, as can be seen from the anthology of Kirino's short stories. The way Kirino described a women struggle in her story makes researchers interested in knowing more details about the image of women in one of Kirino's short stories entitled *Diddo Gaaru*. *Diddo Gaaru*, which means 'Dead Girl', is one of the short stories contained in the *Jiorama* anthology. This short story tells about the "solidarity" and the struggle of a young woman ghost and a sex worker named Kazumi. Through this short story, the author wants to deny the stigma that women are individual creatures and only care about those closest to them. This study aims to describe the image of those women characters depicted in *Diddo Gaaru* short story.

There is some research on the image of women in a literary work, both in the form of essay/theses, dissertations and scientific articles published in national journals, and here are some of them. The first is a study entitled "Citra Perempuan dalam Cerpen *Yuugao no Onna* Karya Hiraiwa Yumie" in 2015. The research conducted by Falentina Rahayu reveals the image of female characters and feminist issues in the short story *Yuugao no Onna*. As a result, her research concludes that the image of women depicted in the short story *Yuugao no Onna* is a highly educated adult woman who is very concerned about her appearance and works as the backbone of the family. Same with that research, the image of women is also the object of research in literary works in the form of poetry, and one of them is a study conducted by I Gede Wirupawan, with the title "Perempuan dalam Kumpulan Puisi

*Onna ni Karya Shuntaro Tanikawa*" in 2015. In this research, the image of women revealed is the image of women, which includes physical aspects, psychological aspects and social aspects. These three aspects are also widely discussed in Indonesian literary works. One of which is a journal article entitled "Citra Perempuan dalam cerpen *Kala* Karya Stefani Bella dan Syahid Muhammad", which was written by Hanif Ivo Khusri Wardani and Rina Ratih. In that article, from revealing the image of Lara's character in terms of physical, psychological and social aspects, it is concluded that the female figure in the novel "Kala" is a picture of a female figure who can equalize her position with men in the public sphere. Another article that also discusses other things about the image of women is the article entitled "Menyibak Citra Perempuan dalam Cerpen *Maria* (Sebuah Kajian Sastra Feminisme)", which was written by Budi Mulyadi. Mulyadi's article focuses on the struggle of "Maria", who is described as a feminist woman fighting for her rights to be an equal man without forgetting her nature as a woman.

## 2. Methods

This research is library research because it takes materials and supporting data from written sources. The primary data of this research is in the form of the short story *Diddo Gaaru* by Kirino Natsuo published in 1998 by Shinchousa, and secondary data in the form of supporting data obtained from books, scientific research published or not, articles on the e-journal, and other written sources. The research will focus on the female characters in the short stories to examine the gender injustices they experience and the image of women they show. The theory used to analyze these female characters is the theory of ideological feminist literary criticism. Ratna (2004) stated that etymologically feminist comes from the word *femme* (woman), means woman(singular) who fights for fight for

women's rights (plural) as social class. According to Humm (in Heriyadi, 2007:783) feminism is the firmness of the link between theory and practice, public and private. In feminism, theory and practice have a special relationship that is packaged in "the personal in politics".

Anwar (2012) stated that feminist literary criticism is a branch of literary studies that focuses on the representation of women in literature. In literary life, there is an assumption that the activeness of women in literature is a manifestation of social awareness. It is because women and men have different social awareness and social control. Then Selden (in Al-Maruf and Nugrahani, 2017) revealed that there are five essential points related to the approach of feminist literary criticism in literary studies, namely: 1) That women are often positioned as biologically inferior; 2) There is an assumption that women's experience is only the experience of giving birth and breastfeeding; 3) Women are considered to have a lower ability of language than men; 4) Through women's activities as writers, women have undermined the authority of men in the world of literature; 5) In the literature works, women authors present different social demands from men.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Gender and Woman's Image**

##### **3.1.1 Gender Injustice**

In a society that adheres to a patriarchal understanding, where the male gender is superior to the female, it is known that women more often experience injustice based on their gender. The concept of gender is a system where women and men are attached to a specific trait represented by a feminine and masculine phrase. By identifying women and men in these two traits, they are then given their respective roles that are considered following these characteristics, such as men as household leaders or as breadwinners who are supposed to deal with affairs outside of domestic tasks.

In a patriarchal society, the position of women is only as a companion to their male partner and is responsible for all domestic household tasks. Women are not allowed to take part in public spaces as decision-makers. That role limits the space for movement and freedom of women and makes women experience gender injustice both within the scope of their own family and in their community. According to Fakhri (in Sawiji, 2020), there are at least five forms of injustice experienced by women because of this gender concept, namely, marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence (physical and verbal) and workload.

##### **3.1.2 Woman's Image**

The image of women in literary works can be interpreted as a picture that gives a mental impression or visual image through words, phrases, or sentences that exist in a work of prose and poetry. The depiction described by the author in this work influences shaping the reader's perspective in viewing a woman. Two aspects can be used to analyze women's self-image as objects of discussion, namely the aspects that make up female self-image and social images.

###### **1) Woman Self Image**

A woman's self-image is the state and view of a woman that comes from within herself. This woman's self-image can be seen from the stance and choices in activities to fulfil her personal and social needs. Sugihastuti (2005) stated that women's self-image includes two aspects, namely physical aspects and psychological aspects.

The physical aspect in women's self-image describes a woman's physical form that is different from men. This difference is based on the biological aspects of a woman from childhood to adulthood. Biological differences between women and men make women experience things that are not experienced by men biologically, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and soon. This difference also affects the mindset and pattern of life experienced by

women. Psychological aspects of women's self-image include mental and spiritual images of women. In doing this, women cannot be separated from the femininity factor within them. Femininity is a tendency that exists within a woman. These tendencies include relatedness, receptivity, love, honing various life potentials, communal orientation, and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Like the physical aspects that developed and grew, the psychological or spiritual aspects of women also can be grown up and be developed along with their physical aspects. The development of this psychological aspect is formed from the environment and family.

#### 2). Woman's Social Image

The social image of women can be interpreted as an image that arises from the social relationships that women do with their environment, which is influenced by the norms and value systems in society. A social relationship can be seen from a woman's role in society, which is grouped into the role of women in the family sphere and women in the community. The role of women in the family sphere, for example, as a wife, mother or other family members in the family. For example, a woman's role in society is as a worker, an individual, or as a member of a particular community in society.

### 3.2 Woman's Image In Diddo Gaaru Short Story

Diddo Gaaru's short story is set in a patriarchal society with women as the main characters. The image of female figures who work as sex workers makes their position very low in their community, so they often experience gender injustice in living their lives. The analysis results found that the two female characters in the short story tried to fight against four forms of gender injustice they experienced. That two female characters try to escape from marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, and violence. The marginalization

experienced by them is giving them jobs that are discriminatory and trivial as Office Lady and impoverishment when they become sex workers. Subordination is experienced when doing work. They gain a lower position than their male colleagues and lose the power to resist or oppose the behaviour of customers who use their services. The stereotypes experienced by the female characters are weak and low-status female stereotypes. The violence experienced by the female characters is in the form of prostitution, beatings, physical violence that causes death, intimidation, and verbal violence. From depicting those two female characters, the woman image is attached to the two main characters. Here is the explanation.

#### 3.2.1. Woman Self Image

A woman's self-image is the state and view of a woman that comes from within herself. The self-image of the female characters in the Diddo Gaaru short story will be divided into physical and psychological aspects.

##### 1) Woman's Self Image in Physical Aspects

The self-image depicted through the physical female character in Diddo Gaaru's short story is a young woman. That image can be seen through the following sentence:

.....部屋の入り口に若い女が立っていて、こちらを見ているのに気づいたからだった。(Kirino, 1998: 15)

.....A young woman was standing at the entrance to the room, and he realized that she was looking at him.

In the sentence above, the physical aspect of the female character is clearly described through the word 若い女 (wakai onna), which means young woman. The depiction of this young woman is also seen in the character of Kazumi. Although Kazumi's young age is not explicitly stated in the story, the depiction of Kazumi working in two jobs at once, like an Office Lady and a sex worker, shows that Kazumi still has good enough stamina to do these two jobs. In addition to young women, the physical aspect described by the female character in

this short story is a woman with congenital talipes equinovarus (CTEV) foot disorder or often also called "O foot". The depiction is as shown below,

女はしつと唇に指を当て、共犯者の顔でバスルームを見る仕草をした。金ボタンが左右に並んで黒のミニドレスを着ている。O型に湾曲した細い足に、馬のひづめのような分厚い底のショートブーツ。(Kirino, 1998: 16)

The woman gestured by placing her finger to her lips, followed by a face towards the bathroom. She wears a short black dress with gold buttons lined on the right and left. On her tiny, curved feet in the shape of the letter O were boots with thick soles like a horseshoe.

The word O型に湾曲した細い足 which means "curved legs like the letter O" clearly gives a physical description of the young female ghost character who becomes Kazumi's friend. In the short story, it is implied that the embodiment of the curved legs as in the story was probably the shape of that young woman legs when she became a murder victim and her body was placed under the bed in the Love hotel's room where Kazumi was at that time.

## 2). Self-image of a woman in the psychological aspect

The self-image of a woman in the psychological aspect is seen through mental and spiritual images of women. In Diddo Gaaru's short story, there are at least four images of a woman in this psychological aspect, namely,

### 2.1) Strong-minded

The image of a woman with a solid mind can be seen in the character Kazumi and young women dealing with various events in their lives. A young female character who has experienced verbal violence from her father and neglect by her mother and older sister does not become a female figure who surrenders to circumstances. Although, in the end, she was defeated by fate and died at the hands of her customers, the positive traits possessed by this young female

character made her able to withstand all forms of gender injustice and had a significant role in determining the direction of her life.

Kazumi's mental solid character is shown through her persistent and reckless nature with her male customers. The tenacity she puts into trying to convince her male customers about the stench she smells shows does not give up quickly in the face of challenges of anger and violence that the male customers she is with are likely to do. His recklessness was seen when he tried to take the business card of a customer who abused him. Although his actions did not help him get justice for the violence he experienced, it showed that she was not resigned to the changes in attitude shown by his male customers at that time. That character can also be seen as a form of professionalism of Kazumi in carrying out his work.

The most substantial evidence that shows these female characters have a steely mentality is how they have to endure customers' various characteristics and behaviours every day. The following conversation shows how difficult it is for them to carry out this profession.

「わかるよ。この仕事って、だんだん疲労するんだよ。何に疲れるって相手を値踏みするのに疲れちゃうんだ。客を見極めるのも結構大変な仕事じゃない。金を持ってそうな奴、無り奴、持ってそうな客の中でも、金払いのいいのとかケチなのとか、いろいろいるじゃん。その中でも優しい奴、気の弱い奴、荒れてる奴とか。変態とか、すぐぶっキレる客もいるから、そんなのに当たらないように注意しなくちゃならないしさ。万が一当たったら、どう相手するか考えておかななくちゃならないじゃん。毎日毎日、することっていったら客の品定めばっか。……」 (Kirino, 1998:20-21)

"I see. The longer it goes on the more tiring it gets. I'm getting really tired of estimating how boring my guests will be. Isn't identifying a customer quite a difficult job?"

There are different types of customers, there are men who seem to have a lot of money, some don't, and even though the customer looked like he had a lot of money, sometimes some paid well, some were stingy. Besides that, there were also gentle men, some were shy, some were rude. There were also impatient and perverted customers, we have to be careful not to get caught in such a situation. And if we ever get caught in such a situation, we have to think about how to deal with such a person. Every day we have to go out and continue to choose customers..."

### 2.2) Rebel

The image of a rebellious woman is shown by a young female character who is stubborn when she refuses to obey the orders of Kazumi. Nonetheless, she showed her concern for Kazumi. The caring nature of this young woman at first glance does not show her rebellion. However, it comes to her work as a sex worker and the Japanese society in which she lives. Her sense of concern for Kazumi is a rebellion against an individualist environment. That environment makes people compete for profitable opportunities for themselves, such as customers, for example. In addition, another rebellion is shown by the young female character through an emotional nature that often appears when she rebels against things that are not following her feelings.

### 2.3) Independent

The image of independent women is depicted through the characters of Kazumi and young females. The independence of these two figures can be seen from the way they survive, by working both as OL and sex workers. By working, these two figures show that they are economically independent. Apart from being economically independent, these two figures are also personally independent. As young women, they choose to be single and try to provide for themselves. The statement of these two figures regarding their life choices can be seen in the following sentences:

「彼氏はいなかったの」

「いないよ。ウリやったりや、出来っこないじゃん。彼氏出来ればウリなんかできないし。そんなことどうでもいいんだよ。わかってるくせに。あんただってないだろう？」

カズミは黙っていた。彼氏が欲しいなんて思うことは、もうほとんどなかった。それは中学生の頃の幼稚な夢だ。今の男たちには何も期待していない。

(Kirino, 1998: 27)

"Don't you have a boyfriend?"

"No. Because I'm a sex worker I won't be able to have a boyfriend. If I had a boyfriend I wouldn't be able to be a sex worker. I don't care about stuff like that. Even though they're two different things. You don't have one, do you?"

Kazumi was silent. It almost no longer occurred to her to have a boyfriend. It was her childhood dream when she was in junior high school. She did not expect anything from men these days.

Based on the sentences above, the choice of Kazumi and the young woman to be single is their own decision, and they seem to have gotten used to their solitude. Throughout the story, these two characters are not described as receiving moral or material support from their families as long as they work as sex workers, so that these two characters are shown to only rely on themselves to live both in earning a living and making decisions.

### 2.4) Depression

Kazumi and young women experience the image of women with psychological disorders in depression. According to Atkinson, people who suffer from depression usually have the characteristics of being hopeless and heartbroken, feeling excessively helpless, unable to make decisions about what to do, unable to concentrate, having no enthusiasm for life, are always tense, and even trying to commit suicide (Sawiji 2020: 89). With jobs that treat women workers discriminatory and vulnerable to violence, these two figures

show some of the characteristics mentioned by Atkinson. The young woman feeling can be seen in the following scene:

「.....。仕事面白くないし、会社のオヤジは狡くて大嫌いだし、どこにも行くところないっていうか、そういう虚しい感じ」(Kirino, 1998: 20)

".....The job isn't interesting, I also really hate male bosses at the company who are sneaky, have nowhere to go, and feeling empty, like that."

The scene above was a young woman's answer when she was asked why she chose to stop working as an OL. For her, OL is a tedious job and makes her empty. Besides that, she also has no place to go. Through the young woman's answer, it was seen that she felt helpless and lost her zest for life. Her choice to work as a sex worker supports her feeling as another manifestation of the despair she feels. She has said that sex workers make her feel like a person who likes to torture herself, making her feel scared and unpleasant. However, working as a sex worker makes her accept the situation she is in, so it can be said that she deliberately chose a dangerous job to test her destiny, and it can be classified as an indirect suicide form. From this description, the young female character has three characteristics of depressed people: feeling helpless, losing the will to live, and attempting suicide.

In Kazumi's character, this psychological disorder can be seen from the following statement:

「会社にいると死にそうになるんだ。何もかもつまらないし、何もかも嫌い。男が嫌いっていうより、あたしの周りがすべて嫌なの」(Kirino, 1998: 25)  
"When I'm in the company I feel like I'm going to die. I feel like I have no interest in anything and hate everything. When it comes to hating men, I hate everything around me more."

There is a Kazumi's statement about the reason why she works as a sex worker at night. From her words, it was clear that Kazumi seemed hopeless and lost her zest

for life. Although Kazumi felt this when she worked as an OL, she worked as a sex worker. In addition, in some parts of the short story, some descriptions show that Kazumi feels self-loathing when she meets customers who do not appreciate her and makes her feel very weak and sad.

From the quotations above, the symptoms of depression shown by the young woman and Kazumi related to their work are inseparable from gender inequality in society. Women feel gender injustice which indirectly affects their psychological development.

### 3.2.2 Women's Social Image

Women's image arises from the social relationships that women do with their environment, which is influenced by the norms and value systems in society. In Diddo Gaaru's short story, the social image of a woman is seen through the role of female figures in the short story in the family and community spheres. In the family sphere, the role of these women figures shows their social image as a mother and child, while in the community sphere, their role shows a social image as a worker, as a member of society with low social status, and woman who are influenced by patriarchal understanding. The following is an explanation of the social image of women based on this role:

#### 1) As a mother

The mother figure in Diddo Gaaru's short story comes through the mother character of a young woman. Although it is not told about this character's life as a mother, the young woman tells about the character of the mother, who is described as someone who is not responsible.

#### 2) As a child

The image of a woman as a child is depicted through a young female character and her older sister. It is said they had to live with their father after their mother left them. Living without their mother makes both of them accept verbal violence through insults from their father, who holds anger and

resentment towards their mother. This condition made them have to separate because her older sister, who could not stand her father's character, chose to leave her father and sister (the young woman). Not long after that, the young woman decided to go and stop filial piety to her father.

### 3) As a worker

This image is also shown by Kazumi and Young Woman as two main characters in Diddo Gaaru short story. These two characters are described as working as Office Lady and sex workers. The description of the two figures as workers can be seen in the following conversation:

「ね、あんたもウリでしょう？ いつ頃からやってんのよ」

「あんたが信用するかどうかわかんないけど、お金をもらうようになったのは去年からよ。...」

「去年からなの？」

「だって、あたし昼間は仕事してるんだもん」

「何の仕事」

「OLよ。ワープロ叩いたり、ファクス流したり電話番したり。誰にでもできるくだらない仕事だけだね」

「へえ、あたしもそういうことしたことあるよ。今は何もしてないけど」

(Kirino, 1998: 19)

"Hey, you're a sex worker too aren't you? Since when did you do that?"

"Whether you believe it or not, I did this to earn money starting last year. ..."

"Since last year?"

"That's because during the day I work."

"What kind of job?"

"OL (Office Lady). Like processing data, sending and receiving calls and faxes. Well, even if it's a job that anyone can do."

"Oh yeah? I've done work like that too. But I'm not doing anything now."

In the conversation above, an image of a working woman can also be seen from the places in the short story where these two characters carry out their work.

4) As a member of society with low social status

Poverty and low social status become the social image of the female characters in this short story. That image can be seen through the work done by Kazumi and the young woman as sex workers. This image can also be seen from the stereotypes that society attaches to them as female sex workers. The social system, which is dominated by capitalist society, often makes Kazumi and the young woman try to eliminate these stereotypes by adjusting their identity and lifestyle according to the demands of society. This situation can be seen in one of the scenes where a young female character influenced by patriarchy states that the identity of a woman attached to her makes her have to adapt to her identity. As seen in the following quote:

「こんな安物着てやがる。金もねえくせに、女なんか買うんじゃないよ！」

(Kirino, 1998: 18)

"I don't like wearing cheap stuff like this. Even if I don't have the money I have to buy it anyway, because I'm a woman."

The young woman's words who forced herself to buy something even though she had no money shows that her identity as a woman is required to have certain goods just because it is a common thing in a patriarchal society. The compulsion implied in the young woman's words above shows that she disagrees with the demands placed on the female identity attached to her, but her fear of negative stereotypes from society does not prevent her from buying the item because she thinks it is something she should do.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, many parts of the story show gender injustice experienced by female characters in the work environment and the family environment. The gender injustice received by these female characters then impacts the image of women displayed in the short story, especially the psychological and social images of the female characters.



The issues about gender injustice experienced by female characters, it can be concluded that the overall image of women shown by female characters in Diddo Gaaru's short story is the image of oppressed women. That image can be seen from five forms of gender injustice. Four are described as a life experienced by the female characters in the story. The stories also support the image of oppressed women, both expressed and implied, showing women oppressed by the patriarchal culture in their society. However, behind the image of oppressed women, Diddo Gaaru's short story implies a message about how a woman can be very persistent in fighting for her rights. This can be seen from the role of two female figures who able to work-well together against the injustice of a patriarchal society, even they come from two different dimensions of life.

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