

Adolescent Identity Formation of Raib in the Novel Bumi by Tere Liye: A Study of James Marcia's Identity Status Theory

Dinar Rizqy Al Faqih

Collague Student

Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University
Semarang, Indonesia

Email: dinarfaqih24@gmail.com

Muhammad Hamdan Mukafi S.S., M.A*

Lecturer

Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University
Semarang, Indonesia

Email: muhammadhamdanmukafi@lecturer.undip.ac.id

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Abstract

This article examines the identity formation of Raib, the main character in Bumi by Tere Liye, through James Marcia's adolescent identity status theory. The study aims to describe the dynamics of Raib's identity development through four statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement, while also interpreting Tamus as a symbolic representation of adolescent ego. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literary psychology approach. The data source is the novel Bumi (2014), while the data consist of narration and dialogues related to Raib's psychological development. Data were collected through close reading, note-taking, and classification, then analyzed interpretatively based on Marcia's framework. The findings show that Raib's identity develops gradually: she initially accepts herself as an ordinary teenager (diffusion), then experiences external pressure from Tamus that shapes identity through coercive influence (foreclosure), continues with active self-exploration after gaining knowledge about her origins and powers (moratorium), and finally reaches stable self-acceptance and commitment as a member of Klan Bulan (identity achievement). In addition, Tamus functions symbolically as a figure representing adolescent ego and external pressure in the identity formation process.

Keywords

adolescent identity; Raib; Bumi novel; James Marcia; literary psychology; Tere Liye

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental phase marked by the search for identity, inner turmoil, and negotiation between personal desire and social expectations. In psychological studies, this period is often regarded as a crucial stage in the formation of selfhood because individuals begin to question who they are, what values they will hold, and what position they will occupy within their social environment. According to Leswidianti et al. (2025), adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood. At this stage,

individuals are in the process of searching for their true selves while striving to understand and construct their identities. In literary works, these processes are frequently represented through characters who experience emotional conflict, social pressure, and identity crises. Therefore, adolescent literature can be understood not only as entertainment, but also as a reflective medium for reading the dynamics of psychological development. This study departs from the importance of viewing fictional characters not merely as structural elements of a story, but also as symbolic representations of human psychological experience.

The novel *Bumi* by Tere Liye presents Raib as an adolescent character who undergoes a complex process of identity formation. According to Putra and Yenni (2020), the development of adolescent characters' identity in novels is an important subject of study because adolescence is a transitional phase that plays a significant role in the process of self-identity formation. Her life, which initially appears ordinary, gradually shifts as she discovers the truth about her origins and her extraordinary powers. This transition makes Raib an interesting figure to examine through James Marcia's identity status theory, which classifies adolescent identity development into four stages: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. In general, literary studies on adolescent novels often focus on character conflict, intrinsic elements, or moral values. However, fewer studies specifically analyze identity formation in relation to developmental psychology, especially using James Marcia's theoretical framework.

For that reason, this research is expected to contribute to literary studies by showing that a novel can be read as a representation of adolescent identity dynamics. In addition, the character Tamus, usually read simply as an antagonist, can also be interpreted more deeply as a symbolic representation of adolescent ego, emotional impulses, and external pressure that influence the formation of selfhood. Based on this background, the research questions are: (1) how is Raib's identity formed in the novel *Bumi* when analyzed through James Marcia's identity status theory? and (2) how can Tamus be interpreted as a symbolic representation of adolescent ego within the narrative structure of the novel?

2. Method

This study is a descriptive qualitative study employing a literary psychology approach. According to Sugiyono (2013), descriptive qualitative research is a research method used to understand a phenomenon in depth and as it naturally occurs. A descriptive qualitative method is used because the focus of the research is not on numerical measurement, but on interpreting, describing, and analyzing psychological phenomena represented in a literary text in depth and systematically. Through this approach, the researcher can examine the inner development of characters, especially in relation to identity formation and adolescent ego conflict as portrayed in the narrative structure of the novel.

In this study, the material object is the novel *Bumi* by Tere Liye, published in 2014. The novel is chosen because it presents a strong adolescent protagonist who experiences complex psychological development, particularly in terms of self-discovery and identity negotiation. The formal object of the research is the identity formation of Raib and the symbolic representation of adolescent ego in the

character Tamus.

The research data consist of textual units contained in the novel, including narrative excerpts, inter-character dialogues, monologues, and event descriptions that indicate the characters' psychological conditions. These data are selected because they reveal Raib's responses, emotional changes, decisions, internal conflicts, and social interactions that reflect the process of identity development. In addition, textual evidence related to Tamus is also collected to identify his symbolic function as a representation of adolescent ego and external pressure in the identity formation process.

The primary data source in this study is the novel *Bumi* by Tere Liye (2014). The novel serves as the main source because it contains the full narrative context needed to examine the characters' psychological dimensions. To strengthen the interpretation, the analysis may also be supported by secondary references such as books, journal articles, and theoretical writings related to literary psychology, adolescent identity, and James Marcia's identity status theory. Marcia (1993) identifies four adolescent identity statuses: identity diffusion (a condition in which an individual has neither made a commitment nor engaged in exploration regarding their identity), identity foreclosure (a condition in which an individual has established an identity commitment without undergoing an independent process of exploration), identity moratorium (a phase in which an individual is actively exploring various identity possibilities but has not yet made a commitment), and identity achievement (a stage in which an individual successfully determines their identity after undergoing processes of exploration and commitment). The data collection process in this study was conducted through a qualitative approach by integrating observation, library research, and documentation techniques. Observation was employed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research object, namely the novel as a representation of social and psychological phenomena. Referring to Sugiyono (2013), observation is a method used to understand a phenomenon holistically through careful examination of its elements, including context, actors (characters), and activities within a given situation. In this study, observation is specifically directed toward the narrative dynamics, character interactions, and the development of conflicts related to the formation of the main character's identity.

The primary data source of this research is the novel *Bumi* by Tere Liye, which is selected due to its strong representation of adolescent identity development within a fantasy narrative framework. To support and strengthen the analysis, this study also utilizes secondary data sources, including academic journals, theoretical books, previous research findings, and other relevant written references related to literary psychology and identity theory. The data collection technique is carried out through several systematic steps. First, the researcher conducts intensive and repeated readings of the novel to gain an in-depth understanding of the plot structure, characterization, and emerging conflicts. Second, the researcher reviews and examines relevant literature related to both the material object (the novel) and the formal object (the theoretical framework), in order to establish a solid theoretical foundation. Third, the researcher documents the data by identifying and recording linguistic elements within the text, including words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and larger discursive units that are relevant to the research focus. This documentation process is carried out using both printed and digital (online) sources to ensure that the

collected data are comprehensive and well-supported. Through these stages, the data collection process is not merely descriptive but also analytical, as it is directed from the outset toward identifying patterns related to the development of the character's identity within the literary work.

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach is employed to examine and interpret the data derived from various sources. According to Norman Fairclough (as cited in Ratnaningsih, 2019), critical discourse analysis does not merely focus on textual analysis, but also explores the relationship between text and broader social life. Its implementation in this study is carried out through: (1) an examination of the intrinsic structure of the novel, and (2) an analysis of the psychological aspects of adolescent identity development.

The literature review in this study refers to ten previous studies that are relevant as theoretical and contextual foundations. The first study was conducted by Simmamora et al. in the *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Psikologi* (2025), which discusses adolescent identity formation as a dynamic process influenced by internal and external factors, emphasizing its importance for personality stability. The second study by Ahmad Khoirul Umam, Sri Yanuarsih, and I Wayan Letreng in *Enggang: Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya* (2024) examines social interactions in the novel *Bumi*, identifying various forms such as cooperation, conflict, and solidarity. The third study by Ayu Angely Galingging and Mutiara Fauziah Putrimina in *Enggang* (2023) analyzes social aspects in the novel *Bumi*, including cultural, social, and economic dimensions, reflecting social realities in literary works. The fourth study by Risa Febiola, Muhlis Fajar Wicaksana, and Titik Sudiatmi in *SEBASA* (2023) explores character education values through a literary psychology approach, highlighting aspects such as empathy, honesty, and emotional regulation. The fifth study by Rizkhi Frismadewi and Eko Darminto in *Terapeutik: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling* (2022) investigates the relationship between identity status and self-control in K-Pop imitation behavior, finding that self-control has a more significant influence. The sixth study by Dhirta Satria Hanantha et al. in *BASINDO* (2022) identifies various life values in the novel *Bumi*, such as leadership, courage, and cooperation. The seventh study by Muhti Nur Inayah, Adi Yusuf, and Khotibul Umam in *Jurnal PKS* (2021) discusses identity crises among delinquent adolescents, influenced by a lack of social and family support. The eighth study by Fitriana et al. (2015) from Universitas Tanjungpura examines educational values in the novel *Bumi*, particularly emotional, social, and individual aspects. The ninth study by Beely Jovan Sumakul in *Acta Diurna* (2015) highlights the role of family communication in shaping adolescent identity, showing that effective communication contributes positively to identity development. The tenth study by Paramitha Dhatu Anindyajati in *Character: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* (2013) analyzes the relationship between identity status, parenting style, and juvenile delinquency, revealing significant correlations among these variables.

Overall, previous studies have largely focused on social, educational, and character values in the novel *Bumi*, as well as adolescent identity issues in various contexts. This study offers a novel contribution by specifically examining the identity development of the main character through a literary psychology approach, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically. In the analytical process, James Marcia's 1993 identity status theory is used as the main framework for reading the development of Raib's

character. Each stage of identity is traced through textual evidence showing the character's attitude toward herself, her response to social pressure, her process of exploration, and her final commitment. Meanwhile, the literary psychology approach is used to interpret Tamus not only as an antagonist, but also as a symbolic figure reflecting the unstable dimensions of adolescent ego and the tension between desire, emotion, and self-control.

To ensure data validity and interpretive credibility, this study emphasizes consistency in reading, coherence among selected quotations, and alignment between textual evidence and theoretical concepts. Interpretive validity is strengthened by linking each quotation to the broader narrative context, avoiding isolated readings, and ensuring that every analytical claim is supported by clear textual indicators. The use of James Marcia's theory as a stable conceptual framework also helps maintain analytical precision and theoretical consistency throughout the discussion.

Overall, this research method is designed to produce an in-depth reading of the novel *Bumi* as a literary text that represents adolescent psychological development. By combining a descriptive qualitative method with a literary psychology approach, this study seeks to provide a nuanced and academical grounded interpretation of how identity formation and adolescent ego are articulated through narrative structure, characterization, and symbolic conflict in the novel grounded interpretation of how identity formation and adolescent ego are articulated through narrative structure, characterization, and symbolic conflict in the novel.

3. Results and Discussion

This study analyzes the identity development of Raib in *Bumi* by Tere Liye using the identity status theory proposed by James Marcia (1966). Within this framework, identity formation is conceptualized as the interaction between two central dimensions: exploration (the process of questioning and searching for alternatives) and commitment (the degree to which an individual makes firm decisions about their identity). The combination of these dimensions produces four identity statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. The findings indicate that Raib's identity development unfolds as a dynamic and nonlinear process, shaped by uncertainty, coercion, self-reflection, and eventual consolidation. Each stage reflects not only a psychological condition but also a narrative strategy that reveals the complexity of adolescent identity formation in literary texts.

3.1. Identity Diffusion: Passive Existence and the Absence of Reflective Agency

In the early phase of the narrative, Raib is situated within the *identity diffusion* status, which is defined by the absence of both exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1993). At this stage, Raib does not actively question who she is, where she comes from, or what distinguishes her from others. She lives within a framework of assumed normality, accepting her daily routines—school, friendships, and family life—without engaging in deeper self-reflection. This condition reflects a form of passive existence, in which identity is neither constructed nor examined, but simply inherited from the surrounding environment. Raib's sense of self is therefore externally stabilized but internally unarticulated. She does not experience an

immediate need to define herself because her environment does not challenge her assumptions. In this sense, identity diffusion is sustained not only by internal unawareness but also by the absence of disruptive stimuli that would otherwise provoke self-exploration.

Moreover, this stage can be interpreted as a form of *epistemic limitation*. Raib's inability to explore her identity is closely tied to her lack of access to knowledge about her true nature. Her "normal" identity is, in fact, a constructed illusion maintained by restricted information. This suggests that identity diffusion in the novel is not purely psychological but also structural: the individual remains in a state of non-exploration because the conditions necessary for exploration have not yet been made available. From a critical perspective, this stage raises an important insight: identity diffusion should not always be interpreted as a deficiency. Instead, it can represent a stable yet unexamined equilibrium, where the individual functions adequately within social norms despite lacking a deeper understanding of the self. In Raib's case, this equilibrium becomes fragile, as it is later disrupted by revelations that force her into subsequent stages of identity development.

3.2. Foreclosure: Premature Commitment under External Coercion

The transition to *foreclosure* occurs when Raib begins to form an understanding of herself under the influence of external forces, particularly Tamus. According to Marcia, foreclosure is characterized by strong commitment without prior exploration. Individuals in this status adopt identities that are imposed upon them rather than those that are independently constructed. In Raib's case, this stage is marked by the intrusion of power, fear, and coercion into her identity formation process. Tamus acts as a dominating force that attempts to define who Raib is and what her role should be. Rather than allowing Raib to explore multiple possibilities, this influence narrows her perception of identity into a predetermined path shaped by external agendas.

This externally driven identity formation creates a tension between imposed identity and emerging self-awareness. Raib's acceptance of certain ideas about herself is not rooted in conviction but in situational pressure. As a result, her commitment lacks psychological depth and remains unstable. The identity formed in this stage is fragile because it is not supported by personal exploration or internal validation. Furthermore, this stage reveals the vulnerability of adolescent identity to external domination. It highlights how authority—whether in the form of individuals, systems, or power structures—can prematurely "fix" identity before it has been meaningfully examined. In literary terms, this dynamic enriches the narrative by illustrating that identity formation is not always an autonomous process; it can be shaped, constrained, or even distorted by forces beyond the individual's control.

From an analytical standpoint, foreclosure in Raib's journey underscores the risks of unexamined commitment. It demonstrates that identity formed without exploration may provide temporary clarity, but ultimately lacks resilience when confronted with new information or internal conflict.

4. Moratorium: Intensive Exploration and Psychological Tension

The *moratorium* stage represents the most critical and transformative phase in Raib's identity development. In this status, individuals actively engage in exploration but have not yet reached a stable commitment (Marcia, 1966). For Raib, this stage begins when she starts to question her origins, her powers, and her place within a broader and more complex reality. This phase is characterized by heightened psychological tension. Raib experiences uncertainty, doubt, and emotional instability as she navigates conflicting possibilities about who she is. The previously accepted sense of normality is dismantled, and in its place emerges a multiplicity of potential identities that must be examined and evaluated. Importantly, this exploration is not purely cognitive but also deeply emotional. Raib's journey involves confronting fear, confusion, and even resistance toward the truths she uncovers. The process of questioning her identity destabilizes her sense of self, creating a condition in which certainty is temporarily suspended. However, this instability is not a weakness; rather, it is a necessary condition for authentic identity formation.

Moratorium can therefore be understood as a space of *productive crisis*. It is within this tension that meaningful self-definition becomes possible. Raib actively negotiates between different interpretations of herself, weighing external information against her internal responses. This process reflects a higher level of psychological engagement compared to previous stages, as it requires critical thinking, emotional resilience, and openness to change. From a broader perspective, this stage highlights the importance of uncertainty in identity development. The novel suggests that confusion and doubt are not obstacles to identity formation but essential components of it. Without the willingness to question and explore, the individual cannot move beyond superficial or imposed identities.

4.1. Identity Achievement: Reflective Commitment and Provisional Stability

The final stage, *identity achievement*, is reached when Raib successfully integrates her exploration into a coherent and stable commitment. According to Marcia, this status is characterized by high levels of both exploration and commitment, indicating that the individual has carefully considered alternatives before making a decision about their identity. In this stage, Raib demonstrates a clear understanding of her origins, her abilities, and her role within the Klan Bulan. Unlike in the foreclosure stage, her commitment is not imposed but consciously chosen. This distinction is crucial, as it reflects the transformation from externally driven identity to internally validated self-definition.

Raib's acceptance of her identity is accompanied by a sense of clarity and direction. She no longer experiences the same level of confusion or ambivalence that defined the moratorium stage. Instead, she exhibits confidence in her decisions and a willingness to take responsibility for her role. This indicates a more mature and integrated sense of self. However, this study argues that identity achievement should not be interpreted as a final or permanent endpoint. Rather, it represents a *provisional stability*—a temporary resolution that may be revisited as new experiences and challenges emerge. In the context of the narrative, Raib's world continues to evolve, suggesting that her identity may undergo further transformation beyond the scope of the current analysis. This perspective challenges the assumption that identity achievement is a fixed state. Instead, it emphasizes the ongoing nature of identity formation, even after a period of apparent

resolution. Thus, Raib's achievement is best understood as a moment of consolidation within a continuous developmental process.

4.2. Tamus as a Symbolic Catalyst in Identity Formation

In addition to functioning as an antagonist, Tamus plays a crucial role as a symbolic catalyst in Raib's identity development. His presence introduces conflict, disruption, and pressure, all of which are necessary for the progression from one identity status to another. Rather than viewing Tamus solely as an external enemy, this study interprets him as a representation of destabilizing forces that challenge the formation of identity. He accelerates Raib's transition from diffusion to foreclosure, and ultimately to moratorium, by forcing her to confront realities she would otherwise avoid.

From a theoretical standpoint, Tamus can be understood as an embodiment of external pressures that interact with the individual's internal processes. His role highlights the fact that identity formation does not occur in isolation but is shaped through continuous interaction with conflict and opposition. This interpretation adds a deeper layer to the analysis by suggesting that antagonistic forces are not merely obstacles but also essential components of identity development. Without such challenges, the individual may remain in a state of diffusion or foreclosure, never reaching the level of exploration required for identity achievement.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the identity formation of Raib in the novel *Bumi* develops gradually in accordance with James Marcia's four identity statuses: identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement. Raib's character development shows that adolescent identity is not formed instantly, but through a dynamic process involving confusion, external pressure, self-exploration, and eventual commitment to a more stable sense of self. In addition, Tamus can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of adolescent ego and external pressure that may influence identity formation. His presence in the narrative reinforces that literary characters can function not only as plot devices, but also as symbolic manifestations of psychological dimensions. Therefore, the novel *Bumi* can be understood as a literary representation of adolescent identity development and inner psychological conflict.

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