

# GENDER INEQUALITIES AND EMANCIPATION STRUGGLE IN THE NOVEL ISINGA

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**Abstract:** This research was to describe the gender inequalities in the novel Isinga. His goal was to expose the gender inequalities experienced by women Irewa, a character in the novel. The theory of gender inequalities include subordination, violence, marginalization, stereotype, and the double burden, then emancipation struggle.

novel Isinga showed the injustice women Papua who are represented by the cast of Irewa. Irewa experienced marginalization because the role and functions of women only complement that determine all decisions and policies are men. Therefore the subordination against women figures into an event that lets because he only plays a role in the world and domestic reproduction. Irewa stereotype women as weak, make it accept physical violence and inner with resigned. Irewa very heavy workload because he had to meet all the needs of the family, her husband does not help in the least because Meage already handed over some pigs as a dowry that made him have no responsibility in the family. The implications of this novel shows behind all the injustice received Irewa make it rise helps fellow women. However, the Irewa were not able to penetrate the world of patriarchy represented by her husband, Meage.

**Keywords:** gender inequality, novel, patriarchy, emancipation struggle

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The novel is a work of imagination offering a wide range of human's problem in life. Author appreciate the various problems earnestly then reveal them through the means of fiction in accordance with his or her views. Novel produced by an author who has sensitivity on seeing any situation, circumstance, and having touched feeling experience. The novel is not born from emptiness tradition. Authors who are at particular communities see and experience it, which resulted in the appearance of great works and touching hearts readers. This is in line with the opinion of Altenbernd and Lewis in Nurgiyantoro [1] which says that narrative prose is imaginative, but contains truth that dramatizes the relationships between people. However, it is done selectively and it is formed in accordance with the objectives which also incorporate elements of entertainment and enlightenment of the human experience. The

selection of the life experience is obviously subjective.

Problems faced by women from time to time is always interesting to talk about both by women and men. Women's problem in society and culture largely due to differences in men and women. Then, those different roles and characteristics that establish a culture considered to be a natural by public order [2]. Once discussing woman, the woman's relation to gender culture is the most appropriate topic. This is because gender is described as a difference of behavior between the sexes resulted from the construction of society. It is neither biological thing nor God's nature. Instead, it is created by the community through a long process of social culture. Hence, the gender change from time to time, from place to place Gender as a social consciousness is awareness among citizens that things originated or derived from the distinction between male and female are social culture or something that is formed by the public order. Furthermore, the distinction between men and women has been the cornerstone of the inequality

since the society views woman is lower than man. Gender as a social culture issue is the gender inequality that resulted in various forms of injustice and oppression based on gender and women are those who are more vulnerable as victims.

The novel discussed in this study is *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany. *Isinga* novel is a novel set in Papua which talks about the oppression of women. Women faced persecution because of religious beliefs and customs perpetually participated in patriarchal dogma and discrimination. The imagination of Indonesia authors considers that Papua has not unfinished yet unraveling women's issues. Hosniyeh stated that Irewa as the figure in *Isinga* novel is an extraordinary woman who is able to come out of oppression and even help enhance the dignity of other women [3]. Moreover, Andi Nur Faizah M in the article "Isinga: Stories of Women alienated from her Sexuality, Motherhood, and Intellect" stated Irewa experienced three forms of alienation: the alienation of sexuality, motherhood, and intellect [4]. Furthermore, the author is not only exposing gender inequality experienced by Irewa but also uncover her fights reaching gender equality.

*Isinga* describes the life of people in Papua who are very thick with customs. The author state about rituals of tribal people in Aitubu and Hobone village that is rarely known to the general public. Book by Dorothea Rosa Herliany is not only invited the reader to understand the story alone but also to be pampered with a cultural knowledge that is very thick with singing, dancing as well as rich meaning advice. Dorothea Rosa Herliany presents the stage of Papua's imagination through the publication of the novel *Isinga*; Papua's romance. This novel invites the reader to explore the universe of Papua through tragedy and romance of Meage and Irewa with the background conflict of socio-cultural, gender issue, and activism. *Isinga* which means a mother or a female comes from the language of Aitubu village. It depicts a woman (Irewa) from Aitubu village. Irewa is one of Aitubu people living in outback Irian traditionally (not dressed, still wearing a loincloth). Existing health center has been built by missionaries (Christian) though the police station is so far away which needs two days trip away to be reached. The only transportation is water transportation using very simple boat [5].

The backwardness of a remote area can lead to gender inequality and oppression. However, we

found Irewa's efforts to achieve equality. Therefore, this article discusses gender inequality and emancipation's struggle in the novel of *Isinga*.

## II. GENDER AND EMANCIPATION

Definition of sex and gender is indeed not clearly distinguished. Whereas the definition and the term of these two words should really be distinguished. Gender is a division of the two sexes of the human who refers to the biological characteristics of each gender, i.e. male and female. The man is a human who has a penis and has sperm, while a woman is a human who has reproductive organs such as uterus, fallopian and vagina for childbirth, has ovum for producing eggs, and has tools for breastfeeding [6].

The word of gender in Indonesian dictionary often means the same as sex gender. According to the concept of gender, the understanding of gender is different from the sex gender. Sex gender is also called genital or reproductive organs. Sex gender refers to the nature of sex, which is owned biologically by the human. Penis, testis, and prostate are the characteristics of the main gender possessed by a male. The biological function of these tools is to produce sperm, fertilize and impregnate. Chest hair, hands or feet thick, Adam's apple, deep voice, muscular body posture, mustachioed are secondary characteristics of a male. Vagina, ovaries, and uterus ovum are characteristic of the main gender owned by the female. The function of these tools is to have menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. The bark is smooth, sound softer or high pitched, large breasts, smaller posture are typical of secondary characteristics of female [7].

Furthermore, Crapo also says that gender is a social identity that consists of someone who is expected to rule as masculine or feminine (gender). In all cultures there is two common gender, i.e. female is synonymous with the rules or the features of women and a male who identified rules or the features of men. The biological differences in gender only look in terms of sex gender, i.e. male and female. However, there are also other traits between the sexes, for example, men are stronger than women.

Crapo's view seems not only by associating the gender with biological differences, but also by

relating to how men and women differ in nature, characteristics, and skills possessed.

Yoce Aliah Darma states, gender as the appearance is different between men and women in terms of values and behavior. For example; women are known as the gentle, beautiful, emotional and motherly. While men are considered strong, rational, manly and powerful. The characteristics of the properties can be exchanged, for example, there is a meek man, a strong, rational and mighty woman. Changes of these characteristics may occur from time to time and from place to place [8].

Moreover, Mosse explains that fundamentally, gender is different from biological sex. Biological sex is a gift; we are born as a male or female. However, the way that makes us masculine or feminine is a combination of the building blocks of basic biological and biological interpretation by our culture. Every community has a variety of "script" to be followed by its members as they learn to play the role feminine or masculine, as well as each community, has its own language [9].

Later, Darma makes more specific sense, namely, Gender is a "nature" that is attached to the men and women who are socially and culturally constructed. Gender is defined in terms of the angle of non-biological between men and women. Gender is the construction of socio-cultural or social categories (femininity and masculinity) which reflected in the behavior, beliefs, and social organizations. Therefore, gender is a social concept [10].

If it is viewed as a general authority, women are slightly lower than men because of her role only in the domestic sector (households), while the role of men in the public sector (the workforce). Therefore, his role that is outside the home can produce the material. Thus, all matters in the household are submitted to men as the head of household.

Gender refers to the qualities attributed by society to men and women differently. The properties of emotional, tender, shy, timid and patient attached to the types of women (feminine), while properties such as rational, strong, dashing, and protective affixed to the kind of men (masculine). The properties can thus be modified, arranged or shaped by human beings through education, training or engineering. Understanding gender according to Fakih was an understanding

through a trait, behavior, roles, and responsibilities of particular being labeled to men and women differently, but can be exchanged labeling and not fixed, it can change from time to time and from place to the place [11].

Gender inequalities are often encountered in the form of discrimination, marginalization, subordination, and the double burden of violence. The fifth form of discrimination is a gender bias, which is a view that distinguishes the role, position, and responsibilities of men and women in family life, community and country.

The gender difference is in fact not a problem as long as it doesn't cause gender inequality. However, the problem turns out that the gender difference has spawned a variety of injustice, both for men and especially for women. Gender inequalities is a system and a structure in which both men and women are victims of the system.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Research of this method uses qualitative approach through content analysis techniques. Content analysis is the study which will discuss the contents profoundly towards the written or printed information of mass media. "Content analysis is a research technique produces replica and valid conclusion from the data of a context. This technique is really suitable for taking a conclusion on contextual variables and text-based [12].

### IV. DISCUSSION

A novel of *Isinga* sets in a township named Aitubu. People in this village are known by wearing nose ornaments. People in Aitubu has lived in the central section of Papua for hundred years. This spot is situated at an altitude of 1,500 meters, in the valley of Megafu mountain range. The sun shines in the underneath valleys. The air is very cold at night. Rain comes almost every afternoon then stop in the morning. Light, bright, and fresh air throughout the day though the sun's heat against the skin.

Giant mountains layered with pass-gap stands firmly. The height is approximately 5000 meters. There are big rivers, valleys, marshes, forests, cliffs, lakes, and waterfalls. When we stand in a high place then we can see the neighbor village, Hobone. The habits and daily life of the two villages are the same. This township-village located in the remote area. They are made from several

groups separated by steep valley so that the communication among them is often hampered. Aitubu has about 15,000 people inside.

The theme of *Isinga* novel tells about the women's struggle in Papua who face the patriarchal system in the economy and social life. Irewa as Papua's woman is a very miserable wife who married with a husband named Malom. He has highly no mercy and respect for women.

#### A. Marginalization

Marginalization can be caused by the differences of sex (gender differences). Female forms of marginalization also occur in the household, society, culture and even country. Marginalization means a process of marginalization of gender differences which resulted in poverty.

The misery of Irewa's life began when Irewa was kidnapped by Malom, whereas ritually Irewa already becomes a wife of Meage. She just waits for her menstrual time so that she could stay at in the same home with Meage. Malom kidnapped Irewa and brought her to Hobone. Aitubu's men wanted to attack the Hobone village because of the kidnapping case. However, the two villages have agreed that Irewa would become *yomine*, a peaceable tool between these two villages.

In agreement with the village, Irewa becoming a *yonime* is a provision that cannot be contested. Irewa is not being consulted and is not given the opportunity to choose to accept or reject it. A decree approved by men is mandatory to be filled by women. The marriage with Malom brings misery to her because she does not love him. However, the marriage must be accepted as she becomes *yonime* or a tool for peace.

#### B. Subordination

Attitudes put women in a position that is not important because of the properties of women's emotional and irrational [13]. Thus, subordination means a judgment or presumption that a role performed by one sex is lower than the others.

Malom treated Irewa harshly and even beat her because he did not appreciate Irewa. Irewa only a tool to satisfy the lust of Malom. Malom wants to have Irewa for her beauty. Irewa cannot deny Malom's prompting. In fact, Malom will blindly hit

Irewa if she does not do what he wants. Even when Irewa is sick, she must fulfill all wishes of Malom.

This has to do with the opinion of Simone de Beauvoir [14]. Women are the patrimony of men, first from her father, then from her husband. Under the harsh patriarchal line, women do not have the rights of herself. The women can live well, educated and so on is because of the generosity of the father. When the daughter is married, the father handed over his power relay, to the husband. Husband feels his wife is his own thing. He can treat her according to his wishes because he has redeemed her by giving up cash or other objects that become the requisite to her family.

#### C. Double Burden

Double burden means the workload acceptable by one gender is more than the other gender. Irewa accepts more workload in her family. She took care all the needs of the family, ranging from farming to plant corn and vegetable, then having the harvest of sago and vegetable, cooking and others. Malom would not help with household work because it was the responsibility of women. Irewa goes to farm by holding her child to harvest taro, sago, and others to the needs of the family.

In Aitubu's culture, there is known that Aitubu woman is an "Iko" woman, which is a strong woman. In Papua, a woman who has married must bear all the needs of the family, such as raising children, taking care of her garden, taking care of food and getting the fortune for daily life.

"A woman should be able of gardening. Diligent on pulling weeds. Throws caterpillars and removes the damaged leaves or yellow leaves eaten by mice, or fungi. Clever looks for firewood squeezes sago, cooks, and works the other household chores." - Advice Mama Kame (Pg. 23).

Thus, by bringing a baby into the camshaft, Irewa walks to the garden, lake, and river. She works on a normal work day. Everything should be managed and prepared by Irewa including the food. It also happens to all the women in Hobone. Grandmothers who are old, young woman while waiting on her sister who was also still a kid, all women works in the garden. That is the

main activity of women at Megafu Mountains. (P. 69)

### C. Violence

Violence is an invasion or attacks on the physical and mental integrity of a person's psychology. It is committed against particular gender and women generally become the object as a result of gender inequality. Forms of violence are rape and beatings, harassment, and creating dependency. Violence against women is caused more by power and inequality in society [15]

Irewa experienced oppression in her marriage since Malom was very rude and did not appreciate her. He would beat and trample Irewa if she cannot fulfill all his needs. Malom overcharged Irewa with various household duties. Malom would not help with the chores because he always says that it is women's work.

"Malom slaps Irewa's head. Irewa falls easily. Malom kicks Irewa body that had fallen to the ground. Irewa belly is stepped on with both feet. "(P. 79)

When Irewa was sick, Malom kept telling her to work into the garden because the household life is her responsibility.

"On the fourth day, Irewa has not recovered yet from her illness. Malom began to scold her. Irewa said that she has no energy to work. Though Malom said sweet potatoes should always be present. He was hungry. The pigs must be fed. Afterward, Irewa explained about her illness then Malom became upset. Irewa was considered as a talkative woman so that he slapped her mouth while she was speaking. Malom said that tomorrow she should've gone into the garden again. "(P. 73).

Malom, as well as the understanding of other men in Papua, assumes by giving dozens of pigs to the woman's family as dowry means that men can treat women according to their wishes. The men think that they already have the women or their wife completely and they can be treated in accordance with men's wishes.

The violence experienced by Irewa was physical violence such as beatings of her body. She was sometimes unable to walk or stand up after being hit by Malom. Inner Violence has been

received since the beginning of the marriage for Irewa did not love Malom. Subsequently, Malom presence in the house was torture and caused anxiety in Irewa's mind. Irewa experienced sexual violence as Malom refuse to understand her health conditions after two days of miscarriage. He instead forced her to "serve".

### E. Stereotyping

All forms of gender inequality above are actually rooted from the same source of error. It is the gender stereotypes of men and women. Stereotype itself means giving a raw image, label or stamp to a person or group that is based on wrong or misguided assumption. Labeling is generally carried out in two or more relationships and is often used as an excuse to justify the actions of one group of the others. Labeling also shows unequal power relation or unbalanced aiming to conquer or dominate another side. Negative labeling can also be given based on the assumption of gender. However, negative labeling is often inflicted upon women.

In this village, there was a school established by priest Ruben. The lessons given are related to reading, writing, and any matters about agriculture. The school is intended for young men of Aitubu who were already at the age of 12. The time to study is for a year. Nevertheless, there is no school for women due to the wild nature. In addition, women are needed more in the house to work in the garden or take care of the family. Irewa as one of the women who goes to school there since her house is not too far from the school is really happy to acquire new knowledge.

The above statements show that education is for boys, while girls' influence is more needed in the house to take care of families and garden. Thus, the education is given to boys, while girls do not need education.

### F. Emancipation struggle

Emancipation struggle is carried out to obtain the acknowledgment of women's rights in life. Emancipation is a recognition of women's presence to be respected as a human being, who have the body and the feelings.

Irewa increasingly aware that Malom cannot be expected to sustain the life of their family. Malom has sold many of their land to foreigners who come to the village, and the money from the sale of the land was spent by Malom for drinks and hired prostitute's women.

Irewa becomes more open-minded because she often sells vegetables to the city district, District Yar. For that reason, Irewa sells the land where she lived and buys a house in the city district. She rented a stall to sell vegetables. The sale of vegetables does very well. Many neighbors entrust their vegetables on Irewa's stall to be sold. Irewa doesn't care about what has been done by Malom. She only thinks about how to find the money for her children's tuition.

On the other side, when the regeneration is entered into the coast of Papua in the capital district, Malom acquainted with prostitutes coming from Surabaya. When each ship anchored, he would always come to the district to look for new prostitutes. Hence, Irewa got syphilis several times.

Irewa with the help of her twin sister, dr. Jengi, has the opportunity to know the virtual world (internet). Jengi teaches Irewa how to use email. When Jengi went to Germany, they were exchanging email. It also extends the horizons of Irewa.

The wife of district head saw the hard work, persistence, and "intelligence" of Irewa. Later she invites her to work together on creating useful activities for women in the neighborhood. The wife of district head concerned about the women in her district who did not have the knowledge, skills and so on. She and Irewa managed the association "Marya Space" for the advancement of women.

Irewa had never thought any more about the whereabouts of Malom that sinks deeper into the world of prostitution. In Irewa's life, she only thinks about how to have the money to send her child to school so that she or he will not suffer just like her.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Irewa experienced gender inequality because the patriarchal system is very high in her society. Marginalization happened because the women in the region does not have the right to speak, and the function of the woman is only within the domestic space. The subordination experienced by Irewa in her marriage is because Malom did arbitrarily, and did not appreciate Irewa as a woman and wife. The

hard work of Irewa is to fulfill all needs of her family life which become her responsibility. Irewa experienced a double burden for a living, fulfilling needs of her family, and taking care of the house. Negative stereotype carried Irewa because women are creatures that its existence is in the domestic world, so they have never been involved in a public space.

Irewa often goes to the district market. She finally decides to move to the city district to light up her life. Irewa teaches women to be aware of her rights and be educated women. Irewa no longer concerns with what Malom does, because she is too busy to develop herself and earn a living to pay her child tuition.

What has been done by Irewa is a step up from a woman of Aitubu. However, as part of Aitubu's society, she still cannot break down the injustice of Aitubu's women. In fact, Irewa is not successfully parsed from Malom power as a husband. She is only able to escape from his husband.

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