

The Character Values Instilled by the Main Character in the Novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fittriyu Siregaru

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the main characters in the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fittriyu Siregaru and to identify the character values instilled by the protagonist. This qualitative descriptive research focuses on two main objectives: (1) to describe the main characters in the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara*, and (2) to examine the character values embedded by the protagonist throughout the narrative. The data source for this study is the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* itself. The findings reveal that the protagonist embodies and promotes several key character values, which are grouped into three categories: (a) politeness, (b) diligence in worship and prayer, and (c) responsibility. These values are consistently portrayed through the protagonist's actions and interactions, making the novel a potential medium for character education.

Keywords: Protagonist; Character Values; Novel Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are imaginative and fictional creations that express the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of the author. Literature evolves alongside human life and societal changes, continuously expanding not only in volume but also in style, form, and thematic depth. Today, novels featuring themes of adolescence, love, and even sexuality are increasingly prevalent in circulation. While these themes are often commercially appealing, they sometimes fall short in delivering educational

or moral value to readers in general. In social life, human beings, by their very nature as social creatures, are constantly engaged in interaction. Language plays a fundamental role in this interaction, serving as the most essential and refined tool for communication. Not a single day passes without the use of language in human interaction, making it a crucial element in daily life and societal development.

Literature, in its essence, is a creative work that conveys the author's intentions and messages. It is not merely a theoretical or ideological expression but rather a complex amalgamation of ideas, perspectives, and philosophies. All these elements are derived from the author's creative mind and are woven into the narrative to reflect broader human experiences. Within the context of Indonesian literature, particularly in the form of novels, short stories, and poetry, the portrayal of characters becomes a central element of literary expression. A novel, as a long-form prose narrative, typically explores the intricacies of human relationships by highlighting the traits, behavior, and emotional dynamics of its characters.

Character, in a literary sense, refers to the psychological, moral, and ethical attributes that distinguish one individual from another. It plays a fundamental role not only in literature but also in shaping real human behavior. As Jamal Ma'mur Asmani (2011:1) suggests, character is the core of human life the essence that distinguishes human beings from animals. Without character, a person loses their humanity. Individuals with strong and virtuous character, both personally and socially, are those who possess commendable morals. Given the importance of character, it becomes a crucial element in literary works, especially in novels. Characters are intentionally created by authors to convey their thoughts, values, and emotions about life and society. These characters often drive the narrative and serve as vessels for the author's message. Through the characters' experiences and challenges, authors can explore and communicate meaningful ideas about human nature and the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Studies

Yuliasti (2005) conducted a study titled "Analysis of the Main Character's Traits in the Novel Hayuri by Maria Etty." The research aimed to describe narrative elements such as characterization, plot, and setting, and to explore the physical, psychological, and social representations of the main female character and her relationships with other female characters.

Imawan (2010) investigated "The Main Character Patricia's Approach to Life in the Novel Perempuan Kedua by Mira W." This study analyzed three aspects: physical traits (e.g., beauty and grace), psychological traits (e.g., fearfulness, responsibility), and social status (e.g., as a respected woman or a mistress). It also explored the social factors influencing her position.

Ikbar (2011) examined “Character Analysis of the Main Character in the Novel *Rembulan di Tanah Melayu* by Matha Sinaga.” The study revealed the main character, Rembulan, as a resilient and compassionate woman who inspired her fellow women. Rembulan’s traits—kindness, patience, and sociability—reflected the ideal characteristics of a woman both personally and socially.

Character

Character refers to a set of psychological traits, moral qualities, or virtues that distinguish one individual from another. A person with character is considered to have a personality and behavior pattern shaped by consistent values and principles. According to Asmani (2001), character bridges knowledge and skills, forming motivation through a dignified method and process. It is not merely external behavior but represents deeper, implicit attributes of a person. This aligns with the definition of character as “who you are in the dark.” Good character, therefore, encompasses understanding, empathy, and action based on ethical values and integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of moral life. Character is essentially a system of values that influences a person’s thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in a consistent manner. It includes three interconnected elements: moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions. Character can be seen as a stable and firm personal trait, shaping one’s behavior in a spontaneous and self-directed manner without external influences or the need for deliberation.

Elements of Character Formation

According to Mu’in (2011), the formation of character is influenced by various psychological and sociological dimensions of human existence. These elements help shape the character traits of individuals and ultimately aim at continuous self-development and self-mastery. The key elements include:

1. **Attitude.** Attitude reflects character, as it demonstrates how individuals respond to circumstances around them. Positive attitudes are associated with good character, while negative attitudes reflect poor character.
2. **Emotion.** Emotion represents dynamic human experiences and affects consciousness and behavior. Without emotion, human life would feel incomplete, as emotions are closely tied to the intensity of feelings and experiences.
3. **Belief.** Belief is a cognitive component that significantly shapes character. It is formed through authority, experience, intuition, and evidence, playing a vital role in reinforcing moral values and interpersonal relationships.
4. **Purpose.** The aim of character education is to guide individuals particularly children in developing a strong sense of commitment, doing what is right, and having life goals. Families and communities also play essential roles in nurturing children's character through upbringing and environmental influences.

Literature

Yudiono (2007) explains that Indonesian literature generally refers to written works in the Indonesian language, including poetry, short stories, novels, romances, and plays. However, this definition can be expanded to encompass all literary works that have developed within the Indonesian context. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (2007), literature is defined as written compositions that possess artistic value, emphasizing originality, creativity, and expressive language. Literature can be recognized through its use of language, often differing from everyday usage, and it includes various forms such as prose, drama, epics, and lyrical texts. It also serves as a medium for expressing philosophical, religious, political, and social reflections, revealing profound thoughts on human life.

Characteristics of Literature

Rumidjan (2013) identifies two key aspects of literary characteristics: linguistic and literary. Linguistically, literature is marked by structured sentences, word choices, and stylistic devices (such as figurative language). Literarily, it involves elements such as plot, characters, and themes. Typically, literary plots are structured chronologically with causal relationships. Characters may be human, animal, or even plants, and are often depicted with clearly defined good or evil traits. Themes in children's literature, for example, tend to be singular and straightforward. Literature also integrates various components, including (1) aesthetic quality, (2) contemplative value dealing with philosophical or religious thought, (3) linguistic structure, and (4) intrinsic elements of literary creation. Fictional works often present imaginative narratives, complex dialogue, and sequences of events that depict human experiences in creative and engaging ways.

Fiction

Nurgiyantoro (2009) defines fiction as the result of the author's imagination, dialogue, and contemplation of life and the environment. Although fiction is imaginative, it is not mere fantasy but a conscious and responsible expression of the author's worldview. Fiction is an artistic creation that represents idealized versions of life, embodying aesthetic principles and creativity. Fiction may take the form of essays, poems, dramas, or philosophical texts and serves to reflect the author's interpretation of life. It distinguishes itself from historical narratives by presenting imagined realities rather than factual ones.

According to Nurgiyantoro (2009), a fictional work is a narrative construction created by the author, using language as its primary medium. Fiction consists of words that evoke possible worlds, and the meaning must be derived from the entire text rather than isolated parts. Similarly, Tarigan (in Purba, 2014) defines a novel as a lengthy fictional prose narrative that explores daily life. It is one of the more modern literary forms, following poetry and drama. A novel typically presents an extended story, often exceeding 50,000 words, and emphasizes human experiences

and imagination. As described in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (2007), a novel is a long prose composition focusing on a character's life and surroundings, highlighting the traits and development of the characters involved. In summary, a novel is a form of fiction written by an author using language as a medium, often inspired by real-life experiences or the author's personal journey. A good novel delivers positive impacts on readers by provoking thought, emotion, and reflection.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design, in which the researcher acts as the main instrument in the process of data collection and analysis. As stated by Sugiyono (2019:24), qualitative research positions the researcher as the primary instrument who must possess a broad theoretical understanding and insight in order to analyze and interpret data meaningfully. The sample in this study consists of textual data taken from the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fitriyu Siregar as the primary data source. Additionally, supporting data were obtained from various written sources such as academic textbooks, articles, research journals, theses, and dissertations available in libraries and online. The sample was selected purposively, based on its relevance and appropriateness to the research focus.

Instrument and Procedures

As a qualitative study, the researcher serves as the main instrument. To maintain credibility, the researcher relies on theoretical knowledge and analytical skills to interpret data, construct questions, and understand the observed phenomena. The data collection procedure involved several stages. First, the researcher collected the main document in the form of the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* along with supporting documents such as journals, articles, and related literature. The next step involved in-depth reading to identify data aligned with the research objectives. The researcher then carried out a process of coding and categorization of key elements such as themes, characters, and moral messages presented in the text.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study uses a qualitative content analysis approach. The first stage is data reduction, which involves selecting and extracting relevant parts of the novel and supporting literature related to character depiction and moral messages. Next, the data are displayed in categorized forms to facilitate analysis, such as character traits, emotional elements, and life values portrayed in the story. The final stage is drawing conclusions, where the data are interpreted according to the research objectives and synthesized to understand how characters and values are conveyed in the novel. The entire process is carried out iteratively and interpretatively to achieve a deep understanding of the context and content of the story.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research questions and objectives, this study focuses on analyzing the characterization of the main character in the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fitriyu Siregaru. The analysis specifically examines two main aspects: the description of the main character's traits and the elements of character values conveyed through the main character's actions and development in the narrative. After conducting a thorough content analysis of the novel, the findings can be detailed as follows.

Description of the Main Character in *Semesta Cinta Zahara*

The first key focus of this study is to describe the personality and characteristics of the main character, Zahara. Zahara is portrayed as a resilient, thoughtful, and morally grounded young woman. Throughout the novel, Zahara faces various personal and social challenges, yet she consistently responds with grace, emotional intelligence, and a strong sense of purpose. Her character embodies a strategic depiction of values and ethical decision-making, making her a compelling role model for readers, particularly young adults. The analysis reveals that Zahara's character evolves in a realistic and inspiring way, shaped by her interactions with her family, peers, and the surrounding social environment. Her resilience in the face of emotional pain, her empathy towards others, and her unwavering principles become central to the story's thematic development. Thus, the main character is not only a fictional persona but also a vessel for conveying important life lessons and positive character traits.

Elements of Character Education Instilled by the Main Character

The second focus of the analysis lies in identifying and describing the elements of character education embedded within Zahara's personality and actions. The study finds that Zahara promotes two major character values:

Politeness and Respect for Others

Zahara consistently demonstrates polite behavior in her speech and actions. Whether interacting with elders, friends, or even those who oppose her, she maintains a respectful tone and avoids confrontational or offensive language. This reflects the cultural value of politeness, which is emphasized in many traditional and religious teachings in Indonesia. Her actions serve as a model for readers, particularly in fostering respectful communication and emotional control in difficult situations.

Religious Devotion and Spiritual Discipline

Another significant character trait Zahara exhibits is her commitment to religious practices. She is portrayed as diligent in her prayers (shalat), often finding strength

and clarity through her faith. Her spiritual discipline is not only a personal characteristic but also a source of moral guidance in her decision-making throughout the narrative. Zahara's portrayal thus emphasizes the value of religiosity, especially the importance of consistent worship as part of a disciplined and purpose-driven life.

The results of this study indicate that the main character in *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fitriyus Siregaru is intentionally crafted to reflect key moral and spiritual values, particularly politeness and religious devotion. This aligns with the broader goals of character education, which aims to shape individuals' behavior, attitudes, and worldview in accordance with cultural and ethical norms.

Zahara's character demonstrates the effectiveness of literature as a tool for moral instruction. Her calm demeanor, respectful communication, and unwavering faith illustrate not only individual virtues but also collective values embedded within Indonesian society, such as courtesy and piety. These values, while culturally rooted, are universal in their relevance and can serve as behavioral models for adolescent readers. This supports the argument by Samani (2012) that character education is not limited to formal instruction but can be integrated across all learning domains, including literature.

In Zahara's case, the literary depiction goes beyond surface-level storytelling. Her challenges, introspections, and responses to adversity reveal how character is shaped through experience and reflection. This echoes Lickona's (1991) concept of moral character development, which emphasizes the internalization of values through role models, dialogue, and life experiences. Zahara functions as such a role model within the novel, subtly guiding readers to understand the impact of one's values on personal choices and relationships.

Moreover, the inclusion of spiritual discipline as a core trait highlights the unique intersection between literature and religious education. Zahara's commitment to daily prayers and her reliance on spiritual strength reinforce the idea that religious practice can be a stabilizing and empowering force. This finding resonates with Sulistyowati's (2012) argument that religious values are one of the foundational pillars of character education in Indonesia. In this sense, *Semesta Cinta Zahara* serves as both a narrative and a pedagogical tool for spiritual reinforcement. From an educational perspective, the novel provides rich material for character education programs in schools. Teachers can use Zahara's character to facilitate discussions about moral dilemmas, empathy, integrity, and personal discipline. The story also opens opportunities for integrating literature-based learning with religious and civic education, promoting holistic development among students.

However, while the novel effectively portrays individual virtues, it does not extensively explore broader social issues such as justice, gender equality, or diversity. Future research could examine how literary texts can balance personal character development with societal transformation. Additionally, classroom-based

studies could assess how students interpret Zahara's character and whether such narratives effectively influence their own attitudes and behaviors. In conclusion, the character of Zahara is a literary embodiment of moral and spiritual values. Through her journey, readers gain not only emotional engagement but also ethical insight, demonstrating the power of literature to support character formation in meaningful and culturally relevant ways.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the novel *Semesta Cinta Zahara* by Fitriyu Siregaru. First, the novel portrays the main character, Zahara, as a figure who embodies politeness and respect. This is evident through various interactions in the narrative, such as when Zahara speaks gently and respectfully to her father, particularly when she apologizes while he is reading the newspaper. This moment highlights Zahara's courteous nature and illustrates the value of respectful communication within familial relationships. Second, the characterization of Zahara reflects two significant moral values: politeness and religious devotion. The first is shown through her consistently respectful speech and behavior, reflecting the value of *kesopanan* (politeness). The second is demonstrated through her commitment to performing religious duties, especially her regular practice of prayer (*shalat*), indicating her piety and spiritual discipline. These two elements form the foundation of Zahara's character and represent the core values that the novel seeks to communicate to its readers. Overall, *Semesta Cinta Zahara* not only tells a compelling personal story but also serves as a medium for promoting moral and character education.

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