

A Comparison of Women and Prostitution in *Woman at Point Zero* and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*

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ABSTRACT

Everyone has their rights from birth, but not everyone has the same degree of freedom as everyone else, especially if they belong to a minority group. Because of this, women have always been subject to male power and marginalized in all aspects. Due to disappointment toward the gender differences and objectification, many women fall into a profession that is considered taboo and dishonorable by society, that is as a prostitute. This article focuses on the feminist studies regarding women and how they ultimately choose the path of prostitution at last as experienced by the two main characters, that are Firdaus in *Women at Point Zero* and Nidah Kirani in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*. This article aims to compare and describe women's issues related to prostitution in two different countries, which are Egypt and Indonesia. These two countries have the same religious background because both of them have a majority of Muslim population. To complement the research, a comparative literary approach is also employed to identify the similarities and differences to find the factor that determines the female characters to become sex worker. The results indicate that both of the novels tell the life story of a woman who chose to become a prostitute due to their disappointment in man. Despite the similarity, family issues are a significant contributing factor to Firdaus's becoming a sex worker. As for Nidah Kirani in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* the failure to deal with certain issues effectively. Kirani's belief in God and the Islamic organization that she thought would show her the real Islam has misled her and because of her disappointment, she turned to be a sex worker.

Keywords: Comparative Study, Prostitution, *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*, *Women at Point Zero*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality, oppression, violence and sexual harassment are the most concerning issue in feminism these days that turned many women to fight for their rights to seek their own freedom and equality. The most concerning issue is about sexual objectification and violence toward woman that tend to turn them powerless. In reality or even in literary works women and female characters are depicted as a sexual object by the male gaze. The male gaze is a way of portraying woman while gives man an empowerment to lessen and sexualize women (Matschke, 2021). These experience that is faced by women as a second sex and their disappointment toward the gender differences and objectification had made many women fall into a profession that is considered taboo and dishonorable by society, that is as a prostitute. According to Lubin (2012) there are approximately 42

million sex workers worldwide. In order to get the freedom that they desire, they become the freedom themselves despite the judgment they get from society.

The act of prostitution is a direct result of clients providing monetary or other types of compensation in return for sexual pleasure. Sexuality in the context of prostitution is not only a distortion of the concept, but it also mirrors a patriarchal perspective (Crowhurst, et al., 2019). The exploited individuals for prostitution are not in search of sexual intimacy but rather the financial compensation and the financial gain that accompanies it (Jakšić, 2022). Many debates arise whether prostitution should be eradicated as a form of exploitation, or regulated as a profession? (Benoit, et al., 2019). The regulation of prostitution is grounded in two beliefs: firstly, that it is an occupation like any other, and secondly, that it may be opted for or abandoned as readily as any other profession. Conversely, the case for abolition is supported by the notion that prostitution is the most ancient form of servitude globally, and a category of gender-based aggression against females (Eteng & Nnam, 2022).

With the rise of this issue, many literary works have begun to elaborate the theme of prostitution in order to show the downturn of women when they no longer have anything to lose. Some of the literary works that depicts this theme are *Women at Point Zero* by Nawal El-Saadawi and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* written by Muhidin M. Dahlan. The female main characters in both novels are prostitutes. Both of them chose to become a sex worker after many struggles they face because of man and in order to be free and have power over their own body, they value their bodies. The higher the price, the higher their pride becomes.

Women at Point Zero is an Arabic novel written in 1975 by an Egyptian author who is also a doctor (She, 2019). The novel is translated into many languages including Indonesian language by Amir Sutaarga and published by the Indonesian Torch Library Foundation. The novel is a story about a woman named Firdaus who is telling her past story to Nawal in her prison cell where she is awaiting the execution of her death sentence because she killed a man who tried to take advantage of her. It is a story about how Firdaus became a prostitute as a result of various oppression by men and sexual abuse that she has experienced since she was a child. It is about the dark side faced by Egyptian women in the midst of Arab culture which is thick with patriarchal values. Where women still experience inequality of rights and never get the same rights as men.

The second novel was written by an Indonesian author called Muhidin M. Dahlan in 2007. *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* is about a woman named Nidah Kirani who enters an Islamic organization and later finds disappointment in it so she turns to become a prostitute (Mintarsih & Suryaman, 2022). Nidah Kirani's desire to serve God ends tragically. The organization she was proud of led her astray. The organizations that always voice the name of God and use the arguments of the holy Qur'an are nothing more than heretical organizations that teach wrong religious teachings. All the problems that Kiran experienced made her feel disappointed and could not accept the reality that she faces, this is what then made her choose the path of life as a prostitute.

Several studies have also used to explain the rise of prostitution issues in literary works. A study by Gisella Brouwer-Turci and Henk A Van Der Liet in 2018 shows the factors that have impacted the protagonists to become a prostitute and with what consequences. The need to make a living and a negative family model plays an important role in impacting the female characters to become a prostitute in the study (Brouwer-Turci & van der Liet, 2018). The next study is written in 2019 by Jennifer Chisholm which is about whether sex work is empowering or ultimately disempowering for those who engage in it (Chisholm, 2019). Another study that was written in 2022 by Roberto Herrscher explains the light of the development of the Latin American crónica in the second half of

the twentieth century, the paper argues that prostitution is both a subject and a lens allowing us to understand the fundamental changes in non-fiction writing in the continent (Herrscher, 2022).

This article focuses on the feminist studies regarding women and how they ultimately choose the path of prostitution at last as experienced by the two main characters, that are Firdaus in *Women at Point Zero* and Nidah Kirani in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*. This article aims to compare and also describe women's issues related to prostitution between two different countries, which are Egypt and Indonesia through literary works of novels by comparing the similarities and differences between the two main characters on how they became prostitute and how they face society with their choice.

Susan Bassnett in her book called *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* explains comparative literature as a study of cross-cultural texts that has interdisciplinary characteristics and relates to patterns of relationships in literature across space and time (Bassnett, 1993). This means that a comparative literary study must have at least two literary objects to be compared. The two objects of literary works are literary works with different cultural backgrounds (Paulson, 2019). Differences in cultural background itself also differ in space and time. Another definition of comparative literature is in accordance with Remak's opinion that argues comparative literature is a study of literature that is outside the boundaries of a country and the study of the relationship between literature and other fields of knowledge and beliefs, such as art, philosophy, history, social science, science, religion, and others (Daniel & Peck, 2023). In other word, comparative literature compares the literature of a country with the literature of other countries and compares both literature with other fields as a whole expression of life.

The term "Comparative Literature" first appeared in a book by Moriz Carriere in 1854, while in English it was introduced by Matthew Arnold in 1848 (Yacooba & Newberryb, 2019). This study appears in belief that all literature has similarities and differences. The existence of these similarities and differences led to compare and look for causes of the similarities and differences. Comparative literature generally begins with the similarities in literary work that explains the difference in several languages as a determining factor in comparative literature. There are five approaches that can be used in comparative literary research, that are: (1) themes or myths; (2) genre or form; (3) movement or era; (4) the relations between literature and the arts and other disciplines; and (5) the involvement of literature as material for the continuous development of theory (Clements, 1987). Through this argument, the researcher tries to compare two literary works from two different countries that are Indonesia and Egypt and in accordance to comparative literary research, the novels *Women at Point Zero* and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* are the objects to be compared, based on their resistance towards the feminist issues that they face and similarities and differences, using feminist theory as a support in conducting the study.

Since birth every human has their own right but not everyone has the same amount of freedom as others. Some people can face discrimination, especially when they are a part of a minority group based on race, religion, gender and other aspects. This reason is the main idea why women are always positioned subordinated to the power of men and marginalized in any scope. This is because they are considered the "minority" in society. Simone de Beauvoir, a philosopher from France explains in her book *The Second Sex (Le Deuxième Sexe)* on the way society views women as a second-class society that incidentally is lower than men in capacity so it is considered that they are unable to work and think independently as men (de Beauvoir, 2023). Men objectify women and position women as 'liyan' (others) (Afdholy, 2017). Women are always demanded to meet the standards of society that

they lay within and never given any choice or chance to form their own decision. In order to change the state of women in the society, many feminist movements emerged as a sign of demanding emancipation and equality. Feminism is an understanding or a flow that continuously demands equality or equalizes the rights of women with men (Sangster, 2021). With the development of time, the feminist movement also developed in many aspects. Nowadays feminist have several ways in expressing their movement, such as literary works written by women writers and literary works written by men writers with the theme of feminism. These feminist novels can be born from authors who are indeed women and write about women's struggles or injustice experienced by women, as well as from male authors who created the main female character by raising issues concerning women's problems. One of the male authors who writes novels with the theme of feminism is Muhidin M. Dahlan with a novel entitled *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*, which is also the object of comparative literature in this study.

Patriarchy is a term used to refer male domination in power relationships where men dominate women and women are kept subordinate in a number of ways (Hossen, 2020). In a society with a strong patriarchal system, many important roles are engaged by men because of the assume that they have more strength and are capable of doing everything and women are considered a weak sex and unproductive in everything. Sylvia Walby in her book entitled *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Walby, 1990) argues about the condition of gender inequality in the concept of patriarchy. Walby expresses a summary on how feminism is related to the state, how is the perspective of feminism spread, how is anti-essentialism attempting to improve the image of feminism, how is the distribution of recognition and the changing context of neoliberalism explained and even predictions within the framework of post feminism. In the book it is explained how patriarchy can change and migrate from a narrow sector such as home which is private to a wider sector that is society that is considered public. Women are no longer or are still being exploited by their own family members such as their fathers or husbands but are also exploited by people in their public space in their profession and work (Dinan, 2023). In her latest book *Gender Transformations* that was published in 1997, Walby also describes how patriarchy transforms by changing the shape of the face which is accelerated by globalization. A group of young women in the new generation are more advanced educationally than their older mothers. These young women have more space in the struggles for social democracy, protection of nature, and against human trafficking. But this new group of women still have the characteristics of being oppressed when they become a single mother or as single women, or are still completely dependent on their husbands, and so on, which then makes it difficult for them to achieve a better position in the working structure of capitalism. Walby also underlines patriarchy as a system where men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

In order to compare both literary works, a study written by Javad Yoosefi Lebni entitled *Exploring the reasons for women to engage in sex work in Tehran, Iran: A qualitative study* (Lebni, et al., 2021). In conducting the data, 22 individuals were selected through snowball sampling. Data was then gathered through in-depth interviews, and a traditional content analysis was conducted to analyze the data. In evaluating the data Graneheim and Lundman's approach is used then Guba and Lincoln's criteria is utilized to assess the research. The result shown that there are several categories and sub categories that determine a sex worker that are family instability (family breakdown, seeking revenge for the husband's infidelity, failure to meet sexual needs in the family, addiction), social pressure (poverty, lack of proper context for marriage, the dominance of materialistic values over moral values), Materialism (Daydreaming and aspiring to wealth, the bitter experience of first sexual intercourse, Unwanted sex work), Insecurity in society (Excessive demand for sex, problematic social

learning, insecurity in occupational environments, lack of talents and job skills) Insecurity in society (Excessive demand for sex, Problematic social learning, insecurity in occupational environments, lack of talents and job skills, failure to deal with issues effectively, low self-esteem), passive and inefficient personality (excessive attachment, diversity seeking, narcissism).

Therefore, through feminist theory approach and sex worker determinant, the author tries to compare two literary works in the form of novels with the theme of feminism between two different countries, that are Egypt and Indonesia. These two countries have the same religious background because both of them have a majority of Muslim population. However, through the comparison of the novels it will be seen that there are differences regarding the issues of feminism that appear in the novels which are caused by various factors. Moreover, both novels are based on the true story that was experienced by both main characters, so the story of the female character's life is a reflection of the real life regarding social life and the role of men in issues of feminism in both countries that are Indonesia and Egypt.

2. METHOD

The method used in this paper is descriptive qualitative based on literature study. Qualitative methodology as a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written words or speech of the observed object (Nassaji, 2020) This research was conducted using the method of observing (observing method). The note-taking technique is used in carrying out the method seen in this study. The primary data used as the object of this study are the novels *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El-Saadawi that was published in 2007 and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* that was published in 2017, while the secondary data are other texts related to the research objective to support and develop this research data. Bryman explains that qualitative research data are in the form of words or the pictures are done using the approach inductive which aims to interpret a reality social (Bryman, 2016). According to this idea the objects are words or sentences in the form of expressions or events that describe the main character experiencing feminist issues. The approach used in studying this research is comparative literary studies by explaining the forms of similarities and differences in both novels. Literary studies that are carried out in comparative literature generally begin from the similarities contained in a literary work that comes from different cultures. Therefore, the study explains how both main characters as women are portrayed in the novel. The study is also supported by a feminist approach that is used to analyze how the feminist side of the main character fights various issues of injustice between women and men, especially in terms of feminist issues that are often carried out by men.

In analyzing the data, there are steps taken. The first step is reading and understanding both novels several times. The second step is explaining the portrayal of women based on both female characters in both novels. The next step is analyzing the data by focusing on the theory and using comparative literature as an approach. The fourth step is comparing between the results conducted from both novels that is related to prostitution and the last step is interpreting and concluding the study based on the data analysis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Woman Portrayed in *Woman at Point Zero*

Firdaus, as the main character in this novel is admirable. She became a symbol of breaking the power of men in oppressing women. In the novel, Nawal Saadawi doesn't consider Firdaus as a woman who doesn't deserve respect because of her profession as a prostitute. Precisely as a

prostitute, she is able to give essence to herself, managed to find her own existence and make herself a subject. She bravely faced the bad events that befell her. Finally, she was able to define herself, find the depravity of a male-dominated society and then do something to show that as a woman she can exist.

The story begins with Firdaus as a prisoner that is waiting for her execution because she killed a man that was trying to exploit her. Doctor Nawal El-Saadwi has tried several times to meet her but Firdaus kept refusing till one day she allowed her to come to her cell to tell the story about her past and what made her end up in the prison. She was born from a poor family. Her father was a farmer who only had the ability to grow crops and the ability to implement the patriarchal culture to his own family. This is shown in the quotation below.

“My father, a poor peasant farmer, who could neither read nor write, knew very few things in life. How to grow crops, how to sell a buffalo poisoned by his enemy before it died, how to exchange his virgin daughter for a dowry when there was still time, how to be quicker than his neighbour in stealing from the fields once the crop was ripe. How to bend over the headman’s hand and pretend to kiss it, how to beat his wife and make her bite the dust each night.” (El-Saadawi, 2007:10)

In a young age where Firdaus she was forced to do duties that even considered hard for an adult, her mother taught her on how to walk while carrying a heavy earthenware jar full of water so it doesn’t spill and working in the fields. Her father didn’t even care about her existence and her sisters. He valued his son more than his daughters.

“When one of his female children died, my father would eat his supper, my mother would wash his legs, and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that died was a boy, he would beat my mother, then have his supper and lie down to sleep.” (Saadawi, 2007:17). From this quote we can also see how important boys are so that girls become completely worthless. It can also be concluded that gender inequality is already applied when they were born. Women have always been seen as a subordinate sex. Firdaus has experienced various difficulties in her life. She even was sexually harassed by her male friend at the field by pretending to play a game where she became the bride and he became the groom. Even her uncle who is way older than her sometimes harass her as the quotation below.

“My Galabeya often slipped up my thighs, but I paid no attention until the moment when I would glimpse my uncle’s hand moving slowly from behind the book, he was reading to touch my leg. The next moment I could feel it travelling up my thigh with a caution, stealthy, trembling movement.” (Saadawi, 2007:13).” This act did not stop here, when both her parents died, Firdaus moved to Cairo to live with her uncle. At that time her uncle was only a college student and could not afford a big house, so they stayed in a small apartment and shared the bed. Nothing happened at first till the day he kissed her. Firdaus was still naive that she thought it was an act of love and start to fall in love deeply to her uncle and longing for his touch. When her uncle has finished his study, he starts to go out a lot and Firdaus felt the big distant between them, till she discovered that he was getting married to his college teacher daughter. Firdaus moved to her uncle’s house with his wife. Things were normal till her uncle’s wife start to treat her as a servant and beat her.

“Once back I swept the house and washed the floor, the dishes and the clothes. My uncle’s wife only did the cooking, leaving the pots and pans for me to scour and clean. Later, my uncle brought home a small servant girl who slept in my room. The bed was reserved for me, so she slept on the floor. On a cold night I told her to come and sleep

with me in the bed, but when my uncle's wife entered the room and saw us, she beat her. Then she beat me also." (El-Saadawi, 2007:23)

The first thing her aunt did was persuade her uncle to move her to a boarding school. Since that day, Firdaus continued her secondary study at the boarding school. She was a brilliant student, but neither her uncle nor her aunt came to visit her even once. Even on the day she graduated, she received a reward as the smartest student but no one from her family was in sight. After graduation, Firdaus came back to her uncle's house and once again her aunt persuaded her uncle to marry Firdaus off to her old uncle.

'My uncle, Sheikh Mahmoud, is a virtuous man. He has a big pension and no children, and he's been on his own since his wife died last year. If he marries Firdaus she will have a good life with him, and he can find in her an obedient wife, who will serve him and relieve his loneliness. Firdaus has grown, your holiness, and must be married. It is risky for her to continue without a husband. She is a good girl but the world is full of bastards.' (El-Saadawi, 2007:37)

When Firdaus's uncle agreed, Firdaus tried to stop the marriage by running away thinking she could survive with her secondary school certificate. The next day she ran away with her belongings and walked down on the streets with no aim. Being outside and alone for the first time has made Firdaus terrified of everything that she decides to get back to her uncle's house. Firdaus was not even nineteen and she got married to Sheikh Mahmoud who was already over sixty with a stingy personality. He forces himself on Firdaus every night, makes her work like a servant day and night at his big house and starts beating Firdaus on a small reason such as finding leftover food in the trash bin or pressing the spoon too much on the ghee.

"On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My face and body became swollen and bruised. So, I left the house and went to my uncle. But my uncle told me that all husbands beat their wives, and my uncle's wife added that her husband often beat her". (Saadawi, 2007:46). When she came back to her husband's house, the beating started to become violent till one day Firdaus had enough and ran away after was beaten and rushed to the streets with blood all over her. She wandered alone at the street and asked for a glass of water at a coffee shop but the servant drove her away. When she starts crying the owner came and sight and gave her a glass of water out of pity. He then helped her and took her to his house. His name was Bayoumi and he promised Firdaus to find her a job. At first Firdaus helped with the house chores and cooked for him till she realized it is been a while and Bayoumi did not even offer her any real job. When she told Bayoumi about her intention to move out and look for a job by herself, he got angry, hit her and lock her in his house. He even starts to rape her every night as the quotation, *"He would come back in the middle of the night, pull the cover away from me, slap my face, and then bear down on me with all his weight. I kept my eyes closed and abandoned my body.*" (El-Saadawi, 2007:53)

Bayoumi even let his friend to take turn to rape Firdaus in turns each night. With the help of her neighbour who forced to open the door, she escaped and met a woman Syarifah Salah Eldien who Firdaus thought knows everything about her. She took Firdaus to her apartment cleaned her and made her feel like a new person. This woman turned out to be a prostitute and taught Firdaus how to value herself as a woman. *"Of course. Nobody can touch me without paying a very high price. You are younger than I am and more cultured, and nobody should be able to come near you without paying twice as much as what is paid to me."* (Saadawi, 2007:59). Syarifah used Firdaus to gain money, and when Firdaus realized that she was fooled, she ran away again on the streets. When she was

walking in the rain a car stopped beside her and the man inside offered her a big price to sleep with her, without any hesitation she jumped on and slept with him. When Firdaus got the money, she realized how much money she can earn. Since that day she became a high-paid prostitute and chose who she would sleep with carefully. One day a man called her an unhonourable woman and made her realize what was she doing all this time and decided to get a decent job with her school certificate. But she realized that no matter when and where man will always be man. Her colleagues and several high-positioned men in her office tried to seduce her but she stood by her choice to be an honorable woman till she fell in love with one of her colleagues. She slept with him and gave him all that she had in the name of love but she was abandoned and this wound made her realize that being a high-paid prostitute is way more valuable than being a low woman. *“A successful prostitute was better than a misled saint. All women are victims of deception”*. (El-Saadawi, 2007:94)

Firdaus got back to what she was before and she held all men that wanted her between her hands. All men from various occupations and even a prince wanted to sleep with her and yet she refused whoever she felt didn't suit her standards. When Firdaus was on top, a man who refers to himself as Marzouk the pimp wanted to protect her by marrying her and being her master. *“How can you be one of the masters? A woman on her own cannot be a master, let alone a woman who's a prostitute. Can't you see you're asking for the impossible?”* (El-Saadawi, 2007:104). Firdaus kept refusing the idea and when she had enough, she decided to look for another job but Marzouk started to beat her, and this time Firdaus dared to stab Marzouk several times till he died and felt free.

3.2 Woman Portrayed in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Jadi Pelacur*

The main character in the novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* is Nidah Kirani. She is a village girl who studies in Yogyakarta. She comes from a simple family. Kiran was originally a pious woman with good morals. She was obedient and every day was filled with reading the Qur'an, praying both obligatory prayers and sunnah prayers. She had good faith and wanted to change into a better person in life. She had an intention to understand true Islam because the Islam she knows doesn't have a concept nor a purpose.

“Aku ingin memeluk Agamaku kembali dengan rasa dan bersiap masuk islam kembali. Dan islam yang kumasuki itu ialah Islam yang berkonsep hamba. Totalitas menyerahkan dirinya, harta bendanya kepada Islam. (Dahlan, 2007:46)

“I want to embrace my religion again with feeling and be prepared to re-enter Islam. And the Islam that I have entered is Islam with the concept of servants. Totally surrendering oneself and one's possessions to Islam. (Dahlan, 2007:46)

With this intention, Kiran decided to enter a Radical Islamic organization that wanted to change Indonesia to become an Islamic country. She wanted to convert to Islam in the perfect way. Therefore, she believes to deepen her knowledge she must get involved in the organization. But the organization justifies everything even if it is prohibited by Islam just as the quotation below.

“Uang semester, uang buku dan sebagainya. Kita boleh berbohong, sepanjang itu berkaitan dengan kepentingan Islam dan kerahasiaan perjuangan. Bahkan boleh menipu, mencuri, merampok, menjual barang-barang pribadi, maupun melacur. (Dahlan, 2007:60)

“Semester fees, book fees and so on. We can lie, as long as it is related to Islamic interests and the secrecy of the struggle. We can even cheat, steal, rob, sell personal items, or prostitute. (Dahlan, 2007:60)

Kirani's mistake in practicing the knowledge of Islam made her choose the wrong way in life. It is forbidden in Islam to take what does not belong to you. But because of this organization, Kiran chose the path that she thought was right because of her thoughts was always indoctrinated by this heretical religion. At last, she was disappointed with the organization since it doesn't have a clear goal and made Kiran quit the organization and rebel against the religion.

"Aku berteriak-teriak berontak dan menyumpah-nyumpai Tuhan, sebab aku sudah tak kuat menerima perlakuan seperti ini. Di satu sisi aku tak bisa terima bapakku diperlakukan seperti itu, di sisi lain hubunganku dengan Tuhan berada di rentang tegang yang hampir-hampir tak terdamaikan. Aku tak tau dan tak lagi peduli Tuhan itu seperti apa. (Dahlan, 2007:177)

"I screamed in rebellion and swore at God, because I couldn't stand being treated like this. On the one hand, I couldn't accept my father being treated like that, on the other hand, my relationship with God was in a tense range that was almost irreconcilable. I don't know and no longer care what God is like. (Dahlan, 2007:177)

Kiran was disappointed in God because her wish was not fulfilled. In the end, she rebelled after experiencing many problems and trials in her life. When her father got sick, her disappointment toward God increased felt that her relationship with God is no longer in a peaceful state. As a sign of rebellion and to avenge what God did to her, she started to leave her duties as a *Muslimah* such as praying and reading the Qur'an. She starts to feel empty which leads her to drugs and sex to fill herself. But every time she did those things, she felt full for a moment then back to emptiness. Because of this, she chose prostitution, so God can answer her desire. At first, she slept with each guy from her college without any cost, she takes them in her lap by turn until she fell in love with one of them. When she realized she was taken for granted, she was numb again and her father's death made her more sorrowful. Kiran tried to kill herself by taking pills, but then she had the urge to live and tried so hard to live. She then wanted to fix herself by finishing her thesis, but it turned out her lecturer wanted to sleep with her. Kiran promised herself to never sleep with an old man that is married, so the lecturer then offered her to be her pimp, her bridge to money with important people. Kiran agreed due to her anger and disappointment to man and religion. She even whispered to God that she wanted to love him in another way. She asked permission to become a prostitute.

"Dan tentang duniaku yang baru, dunia pelacuran, aku sudah berkali-kali pamit baik-baik dengan Tuhan, tapi jawaban tak juga bersahut. Suara Tuhan seakan lenyap dalam cakrawala kesadaranku. Malah yang kudapatkan aku seperti bayi yang berada di rimba belantara bumi. (Dahlan, 2007:232)

"And regarding my new world, the world of prostitution, I have said goodbye to God many times, but he still hasn't answered. God's voice seemed to have disappeared in the horizon of my consciousness. Instead, what I found was that I was like a baby in the wilderness of the earth. (Dahlan, 2007:232)

3.3 Prostitution in *Woman at Point Zero* and *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*

Both of the novels tell the life story of a woman who chose to become a prostitute due to their disappointment in man. Firdaus has experienced many conflicts and pressure starting with her father's behavior when she was a child, her uncle's attitude that was changing along with her adolescence, her abusive husband, and being scammed by many people whom she just met. She experienced the disappointment of loving and the peak of the conflict was when she met a pimp that

used her as a money-making machine. Her disgust for the man ends up killing the pimp and she got to prison with a death sentence. She refused any form of remission because she thought that death was the only way to get true freedom.

On the other hand, the conflict experienced by Nidah Kirani arose when she was at the boarding school at a university in Yogyakarta. She wanted to live a Sufi life but it made her more depressed and struggled with her friends and she chose to join a radical Islamic organization. However, the conflict began when she was confused by the goal of the organization because she did not see any specific movement from the organization and decided to quit. She then got involved in the nightlife of Yogyakarta and brought her to sleep with several men as a sign of rebellion. But all of that made Kiran feel empty and hatred grew for her religion. She thought God never listened to her and at last she chose to become a prostitute with the help of her lecturer.

The path of prostitution chosen by both female character in the novels has some similarities due to the conflict they experience that are caused by men. The hatred that they grow started from their disappointment with men who are only concerned with the body of women as a means of satisfying lust, to their disappointment in men who are loved for only taking advantage of their bodies. Another similarity is their view on prostitution by both female characters. Firdaus chose to become a prostitute because she did not want to be used as an object of satisfaction of male lust without a price. She doesn't want to give her body for free to men under the guise of the word love. Firdaus has a view that the profession she chose was created by men because men have absolute power in the world. Firdaus also thinks that all women are prostitutes. Men force women to sell their bodies at a certain price, other than that the cheapest body is the body of a wife. Firdaus does not want to be a wife who is only enslaved by her husband and prefers to be a free prostitute as stated *"Because I'm an intelligent person, I prefer to be a free prostitute rather than an enslaved free wife. Every time I give my body, I charge the highest price"* (El-Saadawi ,2007:133)

Something similar is revealed by Kiran. She has a view of marriage as a castration of the human self because it perpetuates the dependence of a woman on a man. Women will be like a tame cat that is only used as a slave by husbands as it is stated in the quotation below.

Persetan dengan nikah! Pernikahan merupakan pengebirian kedirian manusia karena ia mengabadikan ketergantungan seorang perempuan, si lemah, kepada lakinya. Dan dominasi itu secara nyata dan cantik difasilitasi oleh tradisi. Perempuan pun akhirnya berhasil dirumahkan dan tersingkirkan dari gelombang kehidupan sehingga posisinya semakin termarginalkan. Ia menjadi sangat jinak seperti kucing rumahan yang tak mengenali arus kehidupan apalagi mengendalikannya (Kirani, 2007: 197-198).

To hell with marriage! Marriage is a castration of human selfhood because it perpetuates the dependence of a woman, the weak one, on her man. And that domination is clearly and beautifully facilitated by tradition. Women were finally sent home and pushed out of the waves of life so that their position became increasingly marginalized. He becomes very tame like a house cat who doesn't recognize the flow of life, let alone control it (Kirani, 2007: 197-198).

Despite the similarities between both characters, it is shown that there is a slight difference that determines them to become a prostitute. In *Women at Point Zero* family issues be a significant contributing factor on Firdaus in becoming a sex worker. Rather than finding safety and security her uncle who sexually harassed her has become the first reason Firdaus chose this path. As for Nidah Kirani in *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur*, the failure to deal with certain issues effectively has made her to choose this path. Kirani's belief in God and the Islamic organization that she thought will

show her the real Islam has misled her and because of her disappointment she turned to be a sex worker. Another difference between both novels is how both female characters view themselves as a prostitute. Kirani views this profession as the only way for her to show her existence to God. A means to reach God, to be heard and seen by God. As for Firdaus, she views prostitution as a way to secure and protect herself from being objected to by others. Firdaus decided to quit and start a new life as an ordinary woman, but she realized to be respected and become a subject by giving herself and her body a value.

4. CONCLUSION

The novel *Woman at Point Zero* tells the journey of a woman named Firdaus who chooses to become a prostitute because of her hatred of men who only use women as slaves for their lust. The novel *Tuhan Izinkan Aku Menjadi Pelacur* tells the journey of a woman named Nidah Kirani who chooses to become a prostitute because she hates men and is disappointed in God. Firdaus' choice of profession as a prostitute in the novel is due to the way men treat her. She does not want to be used as an object of satisfaction for male lust without a price. Meanwhile, the profession of prostitute that Kiran chooses in the novel is due to her disappointment with God and men. In addition, both believe that being a prostitute is a power that can restore their confidence in life. The comparison shows that there are similar backgrounds between the characters Firdaus and Kiran choosing the profession of a prostitute Where they are equally disappointed with the treatment of men who only want their body as an object. But also, there is a difference in the factors that determine both characters in becoming a sex worker. All the aspects that are portrayed and reflected in both novels can significantly contribute to the understanding that prostitution cannot be a justification for the action of showing women's existence to restore their self-confidence. It is hoped that people will be more careful in interpreting events in life. It is necessary to examine a deeper reason why women have the belief to become a prostitute, which is a profession that is considered taboo either by society or by religion.

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