

Identity Crisis Represented in Raven Leilani's Novel *Luster*

Tiara Anggitya Larasakti¹

¹Universitas Pamulang

¹Email: tiara@gmail.com

Abstract

The study aimed to describe the depiction of identity crisis in the novel Luster and to find out the causes of identity crisis on character in Luster novel. The object of the study is novel. It described how someone struggled with identity crisis. This study is sought with qualitative methods in order to reveal the issue of the novel. This study applied the theory of identity crisis by Erik Erikson (1968). The result of the study found that the main character struggled with personality disorder that was developed when she had identity crisis in a young age. She portrayed by changed her behavior, blaming herself, thinking of death and suicide. It was also found that the cause was because of her mother committed suicide and the miscarriage which she had, with little attention she got since she was a kid made her always tried to be a better version of herself, and also she got fired from work making the situation even worse. All of these traumatic events made her uncertain of her identity which led her to explore new identities and later on did not recognize herself anymore.

Keyword: *adolescence, identity crisis, personality disorder, confusion, trauma.*

A. Introduction

Literature is an art of written works and acts. Literature can express a lot of feelings, thoughts, or even ideas. Fiction literature such as drama, novel, or short stories has a plot of story that tells person's life, personality and especially identity. Thus, the main reason why the writer is interested to identify the identity crisis of the main character's personality in Raven Leilani's *Luster*. Raven Leilani is an American writer who was born in Bronx. She first started working as an imaging specialist then later she worked at a scientific journal in the US Department of Defense. She studied Literature and Psychology in college and graduated with M.F.A. program in fiction in New York University. *Luster* was her debut novel which sooner than later become a hit.

The novel itself tells a story about Edie, a woman in her early twenties who just started dating a married man whom she met from a dating app. She did not see pass the baggage that he also brings, an open marriage which she willing to be in and also a kid. One time, he brought her to his house, where he lives in with his wife and his adopted kid. Later, Eddie got fired from her job because she did an inappropriate browsing on her company's laptop and

the HR found out about it. She soon lost her apartment too because she could not pay the rent. She was almost homeless but she met suddenly met Rebecca in the hospital, not long after that event, Rebecca offered Eddie a place to stay. Eddie got even more jealous and insecure while she was living in Rebecca and Eric's house. Although things were bad for her after she lost her unborn baby and on top of it all, Rebecca kicked Eddie out of the house. Even though it was hard for Eddie, but she managed to get a job and an apartment to stay. She was later felt at peace by being on her own.

B. Method

The qualitative approach used in this review since the writer used a novel to be analyze in the essay form. The information was discoursed that arise through the correspondence among the characters, and furthermore all of the text in the novel *Luster*, it is a piece of this methodology which is in the word structures. Furthermore, the identity crisis issue is reflected over the text. The data were taken from a novel titled *Luster*, which was released on August 4th, 2020 (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux) in United States. The novel influenced by the writer's background as a visual artist, her life experiences, poetry, and a love of comic books and music. *Luster* is a 2020 debut novel written by Raven Leilani and later won VCU Cabell First Novelist Award last year in 2021. Before the research paper was conducted, the writer found the main source of the research from an online book store then the writer reads the whole novel many times in order to understand the issue in the novel and later able to analyze the novel which is titled as *Luster* by Raven Leilani. After that, the writer separate which quotes from the book to classify the issue and relate it to the theory. For the last step, the writer analyzed and wrote the issue of identity crisis according to the writer's understanding in an essay form. The collected data which is from *Luster* by Raven Leilani's novel, first the author analyze the main character's personality based on identity crisis issue. After that, the writer analyze the novel based on the identity crisis with the interrelation between the main character, her behavior, traumatic events happened in the past, also life crisis. The whole data writes in the essay and these presents in the form of text from the novel followed by analysis. The theory uses in analyzing the data of identity crisis types are a theory of Erik Erikson. The writer used the qualitative method in order to analyze the issue in the novel which is written in essay form.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. The Depiction of Identity Crisis in Character *Luster*

The first characteristic is when one of the signs of an identity crisis can be seen from the behavior of being uncertain with their identity. A person may not sure what they feel or what they appear for the people around them. In the novel *Luster*, the protagonist, Edie, uses contradicting adjectives to describe herself. It can be seen from the paragraph below.

I was not popular and I was not unpopular. To invite admiration or ridicule, you first have to be seen. So the story of the cell that once divided inside me and its subsequent obliteration is also the story of the first man who saw me. (Leilani, 2020, p. 34)

2. The Protagonist Efforts to Deal with the Identity Crisis in *Luster*

When someone deals with identity crisis, they commonly looking or searching an identity to fit into themselves. According to Erikson (1963) identity must be tailored out of the individual's efforts. She believes that during the fifth stages which means adolescence the individual develops personal philosophy to go along with the personal identity they seek such

as they have a figure or model to be followed. In the novel, the protagonist does several actions to deal with identity crisis: she tries to find her talent in painting after she got fired, she always tries to be a better version of herself, and she is not follow the bad roles model such as her mother which she prefers to spread love to others even though she has lacking of love since she was child because her mother never gives her love.

The first action happens when the protagonist started painting after she got fired. It proves that the protagonist decides to take action in felling her day after she got fired from the job rather than do nothing. As it is seen in the quotation below.

Later, I try to paint. When I can't, I sit in front of the mirror and do a quick graphite study of my face, and for the first time in my life, there I am. Or, at least, something about it is recognizable, the timing is bad. Because among the dumb, insufficient platitudes I might offer to Akila or myself is the truth. And the truth is that when the officer had his arm pressed into my neck, there was a part of me that felt like, all right. Like, fine. Because there will always be a part of me that is ready to die. (Leilani, 2020, p. 160)

D. Conclusion

The conclusion of this thesis is from the data analysis, there are several points that can be concluded. Regarding to the novel, which discusses the depiction of identity crisis through the main character in the novel *Luster*. It also represents the causes the protagonist developed identity crisis. In the analysis, it is found that the protagonist Edie develops identity crisis seen as she was being uncertain with her identity, exploring new identities, and does not recognize who she is. Then, from the analysis is also found that the protagonist efforts to deal with her identity crisis. There are three actions that the protagonist efforts her crisis in such a way she tries to find her talent in painting after she got fired, she always tries to be a better version of herself, and she is not follow the bad role model such as her mother which she prefers to spread love to others even though she has lacking of love since she was child because her mother never gives her love.

The last part is suggestion which this study analyzed the depiction identity crisis and its causes in *Luster* novel by Raven Leilani. The first suggestion goes to the students who want to analyze identity crisis and its causes. Then, the writer also suggests that future researchers in the same subject can use different theories or different objects in order to reveal more about identity crisis. To the readers, expectedly read this novel *Luster* that can serve the deep understanding and depiction about identity crisis.

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