

# Self-Determination of Liz's Character in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*

**Tarwia Ulfah**

*Indonesia Writing Edu Center Surabaya*  
*tarwiyau@gmail.com*

**Trikaloka H. Putri**

*University of Pesantren Tinggi Darul 'Ulum Jombang*  
*princess.naura@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on depicting self-determination performed by main character's act and how her self-determination gives the impact to her existence. The self determination is the way she takes decision in love life, believe, and social life that give impact in her existence. The first problem talks about how Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz determines herself from the conflict in her life. The second will continue the impact she get from her self-determination. This research applies literary criticism in order to describe Self-Determination of Liz's Character for her existentialism in the phrase, quotation, and statement that related with self-determination in the novel. To answer the problems, this study uses the theory of existentialism by Jean Paul Satre, especially in his book entitled *Existentialism is Humanism*. The data divides into 2 part that explain about what are the decision Liz take in love life, believe, and social life then the impact of her self-determination. The result from the first statement is Liz's decision as her actualization to determine her destiny in life. Then the impact as her choice she takes is the circumstances she responsible.

**Keywords:** Self-determination, existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre, *Eat, Pray, Love* novel.

## **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini berfokus pada penggambaran penentuan nasib sendiri yang dilakukan oleh tindakan utama dan bagaimana penentuan nasib sendiri berdampak pada keberadaannya. Penentuan nasib sendiri dari cara dia mengambil keputusan dalam kehidupan cinta, kepercayaan, dan kehidupan sosial yang memberi dampak pada keberadaannya. Masalah pertama berbicara tentang bagaimana Elizabeth Gilbert atau Liz menentukan dirinya dari konflik dalam hidupnya. Yang kedua akan melanjutkan dampak yang didapat dari penentuan nasib sendiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan kritik sastra untuk menggambarkan penentuan nasib sendiri karakter Liz untuk eksistensialismenya dalam frasa, kutipan, dan pernyataan yang terkait dengan penentuan nasib sendiri dalam novel. Untuk menjawab masalah tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan teori eksistensialisme oleh Jean Paul Satre, khususnya dalam bukunya yang berjudul *Existentialism is Humanism*. Data dibagi menjadi 2 bagian yang menjelaskan tentang keputusan yang diambil Liz dalam kehidupan cinta, kepercayaan, dan kehidupan sosial kemudian dampak dari penentuan nasib sendiri. Pernyataan pertama adalah keputusan Liz untuk mewujudkan takdirnya dalam kehidupan. Maka dampak dari pilihannya yang dia ambil adalah situasi dia bertanggung jawab.

**Kata kunci:** Penentuan nasib sendiri, eksistensialisme, novel *Eat Pray Love*

## INTRODUCTION

This study is about self-determination on the main character in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. The main character, Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz is a woman who makes a big decision in her thirty. She leaves her family and decides to get divorce. In this case, Liz's decision to determine her self is a manifestation of her existentialism to emphasize her position. In other words, the existentialism emphasize the individual in unique position as a self-determining human to responsible for his/her choice (Corey, 1996:169). Existentialism of human is the intention when they can determine him/her self to choose freely what he/she will become. When people can choose freely what they want and responsible it, people can be called exist.

Human life cannot be determined by others, even by the societies. Therefore they have to determine their innate need to create a meaningful of existence in the life (Prameswari, 2014:71). In addition, human has the freedom in choosing his/her way of life. in brief, the existentialism showed when he/she is free in choosing his/her own choices.

In line with above explanation, the main character of *Eat, Pray, Love* novel Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz determining her self is influenced by the motivations in her life. The motivations come from internal rather external while internal motivation comes when someone do some activities that make satisfied. In other words, the concept of self-determination refers to actualization of everyone to determine their destiny. Therefore, this study examines self-determination of the main character in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*.

*Eat, Pray, Love* is a novel by the true story of Elizabeth Gilbert. This novel tells a story about the woman who search for everything across Italy, India and Indonesia. Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz as the main character take her self-determination based on her will. She decides for getting divorce with her husband that love her so much then being a lonely widow. She determines her life and responsible for the impact of her decision.

*"Until-as often happened during those first months of travel, whenever I would feel such happiness- my guilt alarm went off. I heard my ex-husband's voice speaking disdainfully in my ear: So this what you gave up everything for? This is why you gutted our entire life together? For few stalks of asparagus and an Italian newspaper? (Elizabeth Gilbert:67)"*

The quotation above explain what Liz feel after she gets divorce with her husband. She feels satisfied with her decision, because her motivation is she wants to find something that makes her happy. It shows in the sentence that say *"Until-as often happened during those first months of travel, whenever I would feel such happiness"*. It shows that she feels happy with her decision by

travelling after leaving her husband. She feels that her decision is right. But one time she feels depression with the decisions she takes. It's because she haven't exist in the society in her new condition. This present Corey existential concept which is "existentialism emphasize the individual in unique position and responsible for his or her choice". People have to be responsible with their decision or choice (Corey, 1996:169). People will fight for their choice for the sake of their existence in the society.

This study uses literary criticism to investigate self-determination of Liz's Character in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. The study therefore focuses on the main character in the novel, Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz, while method of collecting data in this thesis is the library method. Library method uses an existentialism approach in analyzing this study. It will help the researcher to get the valid data, such as phrase, quotations, and statement to support the analysis.

In conducting this study, several previous study are used to get comparison and finding research gap. First previous is journal by Ines Indira Prameswari entitled *Self-Determination Of Gatsby's Character In F.S Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* (2014). Ines Indira Prameswari in this paper focused on depicting self-determination performed by main character's act and how his self-determination gives raise to his existence. Her study also uses the theory of existentialism by Jean Paul Satre, especially in his book entitled *Being And Nothingness, and Humanism* and supported by Francis Scott Fitzgerald, which focus on men's existence in his society.

This study is different from the previous study that have been done by other researchers in the same novel. Those are in the Psychosocial form and Linguistic form which focus on Religious Reader's Perspectives on The Spiritual Instruction Issue. Meanwhile this study will analyze the main character's self-determination in the form Existentialism theory. Here in this study, the researcher intend to analyze Self-Determination Of Liz's Character In Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* by using Existentialism approach.

From those explanation in background of the study above, the question in this study are how Liz determines her self in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* and the impacts of Liz's self-determination for her existentialism in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research concerns with Self-Determination of Liz's Character for her existentialism in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. The use research method is for determined what technique and approach should be applied in this research. It will help also the researcher to get the valid data, such as quotations to support this analysis.

This research applies literary criticism in order to describe Self-Determination of Liz's Character for her existentialism in the phrase, quotation, and statement that related with self-determination in the novel entitled *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

The data is the phrase, quotation, and statement that related with self-determination and the impact for existentialism in the novel entitled *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

The steps of how the data analyzes are divided into three steps. The first is describing Liz's decisions, what are the decision Liz take in every occurrence in her life. then second is describing the impact of Liz's decision for her existentialism. The last is drawing the conclusion based on the analysis of the data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study focused on analyzing the categories of self-determination impact toward the main character named Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz in her quotation. It describes through the theory of existentialism by Jean Paul Satre in his book entitled *Existentialism is Humanism*. The analysis begins with the explanation of the way Liz takes some decision from the conflict in her life, then the decision as her self-determination with the impact toward the main character's love, believe and her social life.

Elizabeth Gilbert or Liz as the main character and the writer of *Eat, Pray, Love* novel's is a woman in thirthy that makes a big decision for her household life, belief and relationship in society. Drawn from the European philosophy of existentialism, self-determination emphasises the freedom individuals have in exercising choice to manage their circumstances in spite of external forces that challenge this capability (Yalom, 1989).

Liz makes a big decision in her life for freedom. In her love life, Liz passes some occurrence that makes the conflict. The conflict comes from her household life and her boyfriends. Self-determination emphasises Liz for being an individual that make a choise from circumstances in spite of herself and her boyfriend forces. It makes her getting the impact and feel depression and loneliness.

Liz feels that the circumstance of her household is cull of a fear, confusion and grief because she fails to have a baby. It shows in the utterance "*I don't want to be married anymore. I don't want t live in this big house. I don't want to have a baby*" (2006:10).

At that time, Liz's condition of her household is in a chaos which make her do not to do marry for more though she possessed of everything; a big house and wealth. It can be said that her marriage's failure initiated the conflicts in her life. Trauma, depression, and loneliness that make

her change a way of life. Liz wanted a freedom to choose and determine her fate. This is what Yalom (1989) said that self-determination emphasises the freedom individuals have in exercising choice to manage their circumstances in spite of external forces that challenge this capability.

In that situation, Liz decide to get divorce with her husband. In her mind, she thought that divorce is the best way to take. Her decision impacts on her self which make her depress. It shows in the utterance

*“But seven very difficult months later, I did leave my husband. When I finally made that decision, I thought the worst of it was over. This only shows how little I knew about divorce”*(2006:17)

Getting divorce is not easy way for Liz, she needs a long time for finish it. In this case, the long time she needs was caused by a complicated request from her ex husband. All of the process makes the situation more difficult. It’s out of Liz thought about divorce, as she said that *“This only shows how little I knew about divorce”*(2006:17).

In believing God, Liz is a woman who has a poor belief in it. Since she was a children, Liz was born in a catholic family and undergoing prayers faithfully until she was teenager. When she was in adult, she did not truly believe in God but she kept her status as a catholic.

Her oppessions in life started from her problem in the house hold. Liz felt confuse and often crying in every nights. She assumed of talking with something unseen. She has not call it as God, but she felt comfortable with this custom when facing the problems.

As what she do in a night when she is in a depression, she went from the bedroom to the basement to cry and think about her problems. She started to cry and say, telling problems she faced, and finally she started to pray. It shows in an utterance: *“What happened was that I started to pray. You know-like, to God.”* (2006:13). Liz started to pray and complain her problem to an invisible but she had not call as ‘God’ yet.

Then Liz have make some decision for her social life. Liz takes some activities in social. Several activities are new things to Liz. In this case, she took some decisions in her journey. During her journey in Italy, India, and Indonesia.

After her divorce with her ex-husband, one of the decision is following the Night School Class for Divorce Ladies. The encouragement from her best friends who pay enthusiasm to her after Liz’s down point in divorce, then she forced to follow the class in every night.. It is shown in the utterance: *“So I signed up for classes at one of those continuing education places (otherwise known as Night School for Divorced Ladies)”*(2006:24)

To Liz's friend, Night School for Divorced Ladies is a best class for Liz. Reminding about Liz's divorce process which required a long time and wasted her thinking. Beside depression, Liz's activities is also postponed. Her works also became the impact of her divorce. Thus, a choice to follow Night School for Divorced Ladies will help Liz of relieving her pain after her divorce.

From the whole decisions taken by Liz in many aspects; love, beliefs and the social relationship, that things cannot far from the impacts emerged from the decision taken by her. Many decisions she take has a good and bad impact to herself and her existence.

In her love, the decision that had been taken to divorce with her husband had a big impact to her. Her decision to divorce she took can be shown in the following quotation,

*“But seven very difficult months later, I did leave my husband. When I finally made that decision, I thought the worst of it was over. This only shows how little I knew about divorce” (2006:17)*

To leave her husband in a divorce way gave a big impact to Liz's life. The impact she felt to herself and her existence shown in the utterance:

*“It was my most sincere belief when I left my husband that we could settle our practical affairs in a few hours with a calculator, some common sense and a bit of goodwill toward the person we'd once loved. My initial suggestion was that we sell the house and divide all the assets fifty-fifty; it never occurred to me we'd proceed in any other way. He didn't find this suggestion fair. So I upped my offer, even suggestion this different kind of fifty-fifty split: What if he took all the assets and I took all the blame? But not even that offer would bring a settlement.” (2006:18)*

In the other hand, when Liz decided to take a journey to find the God. In this case, Liz met many lessons to find the God. The decision to find the God took a good impact to her and her existence.

*“Since I was last here, I've circled the world, settled my divorce, survived my final separation from David, erased all mood-altering medication from my system, learned to speak a new language, sat upon God's palm for a few unforgettable moments in India, studied at the feet of an Indonesian medicine man and purchased a home for a family who sorely needed a place to live. I am happy and healthy and balanced. And, yes I cannot help but notice that I am sailing to this pretty little tropical island with my Brazilian lover. Which is-I admit!” (2006:344)*

From her decisions, finding God through the journey from India to Indonesia, Liz got something she want. One of the moral value he needed, about the equivalent of life. She realized the love from God that clearly shown to her from the problems she faced. It shows in the utterance “I knew then that this is how God loves us all and receives us all, and that there is no such thing in this universe as hell, except maybe in our own terrified minds.” (2006:343)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis in the chapter III, this research finally concluded that the theory of existentialism based on Jean Paul Satre is relevant to answer the statement of the problem in this study. The conclusion describes as follows: The way Liz determine her self is based on the conflict in her life, it comes from the main character’s love, believe and her social life. It is found that in every chance Liz take decision as her actualization to determine her destiny. She tries to create the meaningfull existence in her life by reach her destiny even in the difficult fight and struggle. How Liz determine her self is by trying something new that give her the possitive impact. Every choise she takes is the circumstances she responsible. It related with the second statement problems abaout the impact of Liz’s self-determination. The impact of Liz’s self-determination is answered in every circumstances that accountable by her. It is found that Liz is the woman who responsible with her decision’s impact in her life. That everythings she choise, give the feed back to her, even possitive or negative.

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