

***GENDER FLUIDITY OF DISORDER OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT
CHARACTERS IN MIZUSHIRO SETONA'S HOUKAGO
HOKENSHITSU MANGA***

***GENDER FLUIDITY TOKOH DISORDER OF SEXUAL
DEVELOPMENT DALAM MANGA HOUKAGO HOKENSHITSU
KARYA MIZUSHIRO SETONA***

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Abstract

This research is entitled "Gender Fluidity of Disorder of Sexual Development Characters in Mizushiro Setona's Houkago Hokenshitsu Manga". The main focus of this study is on the concept of gender identity fluidity displayed by Disorder of Sexual Development characters and their relationship to the issue of freedom. This study was conducted by utilizing references to Gender Fluidity proposed by Erin Calhoun Davis. In general, gender fluidity is understood as the uncertainty of gender identity that arises as a result of the destabilization of the binary gender system. Mizushiro Setona uses literary works as a tool to convey messages that contain social criticism of the injustices experienced by minority groups. The Disorder of Sexual Development character is used as the main character who seeks to break free from the shackles of social norms. The concept of gender fluidity from Erin Calhoun Davis shows that there is a possibility for gender diversity for individuals because identity formation is a process that never stops and always continues. This concept of gender fluidity is used as a reference in research on Disorder of Sexual Development individuals. The findings of this study show that Disorder of Sexual Development individuals face pressure due to external pressures. The pressure comes from gender boundaries that are debated in society. Gender attributes are used by trans individuals to free the body and soul from the shackles of gender norms. Although Disorder of Sexual Development individuals can achieve freedom through appearance and gender attributes, it is limited to internal aspects.

Keywords: *Gender Fluidity, Disorder of Sexual Development, Manga*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berjudul "Gender Fluidity Tokoh Disorder of Sexual Development dalam Manga Houkago Hokenshitsu karya Mizushiro Setona". Fokus utama dari kajian ini adalah mengenai

konsep kecairan identitas gender yang ditampilkan oleh tokoh Disorder of Sexual Development serta hubungannya dengan isu tentang kebebasan. Kajian ini dilakukan dengan memanfaatkan referensi mengenai Gender Fluidity yang dikemukakan oleh Erin Calhoun Davis. Secara umum, gender fluidity dipahami sebagai ketidakpastian identitas gender yang muncul sebagai akibat dari destabilisasi sistem gender biner. Mizushiro Setona menggunakan karya sastra sebagai alat untuk menyampaikan pesan yang berisi kritik sosial terhadap ketidakadilan yang dialami oleh kelompok minoritas. Tokoh Disorder of Sexual Development dijadikan sebagai karakter utama yang berupaya untuk melepaskan diri dari belenggu norma sosial. Konsep kecairan gender dari Erin Calhoun Davis menunjukkan bahwa ada kemungkinan untuk keberagaman gender bagi individu karena pembentukan identitas adalah proses yang tidak pernah berhenti dan selalu berlanjut. Oleh karena itu, konsep kecairan gender ini dijadikan acuan dalam penelitian tentang individu Disorder of Sexual Development. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa individu Disorder of Sexual Development menghadapi tekanan akibat adanya penekanan dari pihak luar. Penekanan itu berasal dari batasan-batasan gender yang menjadi perdebatan di masyarakat. Atribut gender dipergunakan oleh individu trans untuk membebaskan tubuh dan jiwa dari belenggu norma gender. Meskipun individu Disorder of Sexual Development dapat mencapai kebebasan melalui penampilan dan atribut gender, namun hal itu terbatas hanya pada aspek internal.

Keywords: *Gender Fluidity, Disorder of Sexual Development, Manga*

1. INTRODUCTION

In society, gender plays a role in determining a person's identity. The discourse on masculinity traits that should exist in men and femininity traits in women makes an individual automatically follow the existing pattern. A woman is considered to have performed her role correctly if she has adjusted to her nature such as being gentle, liking beauty, hating violence and other so-called feminine traits, men who possess feminine traits are considered to violate nature and are labeled as deviant individuals. Conversely, women who do not have feminine traits are also considered to have violated nature.

Discussions on gender issues raise questions such as, can a person still be considered a man if his behavior and character lean more towards the feminine and vice versa? Then there are also questions about whether sex is a biological element that must be accepted as it is? And are gender and sex the same thing and interconnected? Also, can someone be considered deviant if they do not conform to the norms of society? To answer all these questions, of course, further research is needed. The phenomenon of gender "deviance" can also be found in literary works that function as cultural products. Literary works are the result of the author's thoughts related to the events around him or inspired by existing facts. As cultural products, literary works that originate from the author's ideas and views of the world are able to create a reality that transcends the boundaries of the real world. The author's imagination can move more agilely and flexibly than existing structures so that the reality in literary works can reflect realities in the real world or create new realities. One of the literary works that contains stories about the phenomenon of gender "deviation" is Mizushiro Setona's manga entitled "Houkago Hokenshitsu". The issue

raised by the author in this work is related to gender fluidity, where the character Mashiro is a person with Disorder of Sex Development condition.

The term Disorder of Sexual Development was previously known as intersex. However, in 2005, the term Disorder of Sexual Development was formalized through the Consensus Statement held in Chicago as a more appropriate expression to replace intersex (Wieringa, 2010: 23). Disorder of Sexual Development is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of conditions in which individuals are born with sexual and reproductive structures that do not conform to traditional standards of male or female. For example, an individual may be born with a female physical appearance on the outside, but a male structure on the inside, or an individual may be born with genital organs that exhibit common male-female features-for example, a woman may be born with a very large clitoris, or without a vaginal opening, while a man may emerge with a penis that appears small, or with a scrotum that is split like the labia. This means that the individual could be born with a genetic combination, such that some of their cells contain XX chromosomes and others XY (Callahan, 2009: 25- 26).

Oliveira in Fitrianingrum et al. (2019: 190) reveals that the birth of a child with Disorder of Sex Development often causes confusion for parents because they must face the reality that their child is born without "clear gender or born with two genitalia." This condition can be very difficult for parents to accept, especially when there is a lack of information about their child's disorder. As a result, parents often display different expressions such as surprise, anger, sadness, shame, and especially for mothers, feelings of guilt (Sanders in Fitrianingrum et al., 2019: 190). Another issue faced by parents of children with Disorder of Sex Development is the long-term medical treatment of their children. This condition is further exacerbated by the cultural taboo in society to discuss or debate disorders related to sex, sexuality, and genitalia, leading parents to often keep their child's condition secret and lacking the courage to disclose it to others, including family members (Sanders in Fitrianingrum et al., 2019: 190). Crissman et al. (2011) state that parents of children with Disorder of Sex Development often isolate themselves from the outside environment, striving to protect their children and maintain secrecy about their diagnosis as a way to shield them from potential negative stigma and emotional reactions.

A study by Duguid et al. in 2007 reported that nearly 60% of parents with children with Disorder of Sex Development experienced difficulty discussing their child's condition with relatives and friends, and 68% of parents were concerned that Disorder of Sex Development would lead to their child experiencing stigmatization. Ediati et al.'s research in 2017 on the stigma of Disorder of Sex Development patients in Indonesia found that almost all Disorder of Sex Development patients had experienced stigma due to their condition, and the more frequent the stigma, the higher the level of stress, especially for girls with DSD living in rural areas (Fitrianingrum et al., 2019: 191).

The concept of *Gender Fluidity* was proposed by Erin Calhoun Davis, a lecturer at Cornell College. Davis shared her thoughts in an article published in "A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Volume 15, Number 1, 2009, pages 97-130," published by Duke University Press. In the publication, Davis outlines her views on the dynamic nature of gender. She conducted interviews with several individuals who identify as transgender and transsexual. In the interview session, the respondents revealed their life experiences and the history of their gender identity journey. The idea of *gender fluidity* it arises from the view that some people want to be recognized as their true selves, without being bound by the gender they present, the clothes they wear, the behaviors that suit them, and the characteristics they may or may not have. However, Davis emphasizes that while gender can change, it does not mean that it has no boundaries. Social norms and gender structures still shape the notion of gender itself. In applying this notion of gender fluidity, it is important to analyze how gender structures are constructed in a novel and how narratives about the dynamic nature of gender are represented. (Hutami, 2017: 8-9).

In the manga Houkago Hokenshitsu, despite realizing that he is physically different from most humans (from the waist up male and from the waist down female), the main character (Disorder of Sex Development) believes that he developed as man. She was born with a vagina and has a problem with breast development, known as Congenital Adrenal Hypoplasia with Hypomastia syndrome. In the medical world, Congenital Adrenal Hypoplasia Hypomastia refers to an individual who is born with a clear female sex but has problems with breast development. Furthermore, Hypomastia is a condition where one or both breasts do not reach maturity or grow in an abnormal way. This condition can affect the individual emotionally, often requiring medical intervention to create a breast appearance that is more balanced with the body as a whole (Artaria, 2007: 259).

Mashiro is an example of someone who yearns for gender fluidity in society. He/She wants maintain his/her identity in one body as he/she tries to escape the shackles of gender binary. Gender, which should give a person freedom of choice, is instead hampered by restrictions and religious norms and teachings. Individuals are required to determine the gender that will affect the way they act, dress and obtain their rights. The duality experienced by Mashiro is the reason why the issue of gender fluidity is the focus of Houkago Hokenshitsu manga research.

2. METHODS

This research focuses on the material in the form of a manga entitled Houkago Hokenshitsu, by Mizushiro Setona. The formal object of this study is the concept of gender fluidity proposed by Erin Calhoun Davis. The data used in this study consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data comes from texts taken from Houkago Hokenshitsu by Mizushiro Setona as well as a journal entitled "Situating 'Fluidity' (Trans) Gender Identification and the Regulation of Gender Diversity" by Erin Calhoun Davis. On the other hand, secondary data was obtained from journals, articles, books and websites that present information related to issues regarding gender fluidity. This data was collected in the form

of quotations that included sentences, clauses, phrases, and words. The collected data was then classified and organized based on its validity and relevance to the text used as the object of research. The first step taken is to group the data in the text that relates to the experiences experienced by Disorder of Sex Development characters and gender attributes in accordance with the theory of Erin Calhoun Davis. The concept of Gender Fluidity is then used to analyze the doubts experienced by Disorder of Sex Development characters in living their daily lives. The next step is data analysis through the following steps:

1. Implemented the coding by collecting excerpts from the manga that relate to gender dualism in one character entity.
2. Conduct an analysis of data that reflects the construction of the gender binary as a limitation for individuals with Disorder of Sex Development
3. Analyze data indicating gender attributes as elements in social authentication and attempts to liberate the bodies of Disorder of Sex Development individuals
4. Analyze the data on the relationship between gender fluidity and freedom issues in manga.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Gender Attributes

Davis raises a number of points that explain the concept of gender fluidity. First, there are gender attributes. The division between femininity and masculinity is the basis for understanding gender attributes. These attributes are also used to confirm that a person has certain gender tendencies. In order to be accepted by society, individuals need to align their gender with feminine or masculine gender attributes. For individuals with Disorder of Sex Development, choosing gender attributes according to their preferred tendencies is a way to fit into existing social norms, even if the effort is not fully recognized by society.

Davis found a pattern in his research, where gender attributes play a significant role in determining a person's validation as a complete man or woman. A man who exhibits feminine traits but does not dress completely feminine cannot be accepted as a woman because what he wears is not appropriate. The way for individuals to be accepted in society is by conforming their appearance to the prevailing norms. However, on the other hand, using attributes that do not match their gender is also seen as a deviation. However, what society actually expects is certainty, stability and consistency, so Disorder of Sex Development individuals who alternate between feminine and masculine appearances are considered to be committing a greater deviation than if they were to decide which attributes they want to choose.

i. Gender Attributes of Naming

Naming is the first stage for parents in shaping a child's identity. With a name, a person is directed to become a classified individual, namely as Female or Male. Naming is the beginning of different ways of treating babies who are recognized as women and men.

The name serves as an initial signal as well as a formation for the baby to undergo the appropriate gender role for him. Names are also a component of gender attributes.

The name Mashiro of the Disorder of Sex Development character in the Houkago Houkenshitsu manga is described as male. This is because the other characters in the manga address Mashiro by adding -Kun to the end of his name. In Japanese, "Kun" is a title of respect that is generally used to refer to men, especially boys, young men, or male companions.

<https://en.amazingtalker.com/blog/en/japanese/49212/>



(Mizushiro, Volume 1, 2014: 129)

紅葉 : でもいいんだ。あたしは... マシロ君は男の子でいてほしい。あたしが好きになれる男の子はマシロ君しかないもの... マシロ君だけだよ...

Kureha : *Demoiinda. Atashi wa... Mashiro kun ni wa otoko no ko de itehoshii. Atashi ga suki ni nareru otoko no ko wa Mashiro kun shika inaimono..... Mashiro kun dakedayo.....*

Kureha : But that's okay. I want you to be a man. The only man I can love is you Mashiro-kun. Only you.

The conversation panel above shows Mashiro being addressed as "Kun" at the end of her name, indicating that she is seen as a man by the other characters. Contrast this with

the situation where Mashiro's character begins to recognize her identity as a Disorder of Sex Development, and when interacting with her schoolmates, she is referred to as "Chan". The suffix -chan denotes closeness in Japanese which is usually used for children or young women.

<https://en.amazingtalker.com/blog/en/japanese/49212/>



Mizushiro, Vol 5, 2014 : 10

友だち 1 : 真白ちゃんが男の子だったらモテそう
 友だち 2 : 思うー絶対モテるよ!!
 真白 : うーん・・・夢ではモテてたかどうか覚えてないんだけど・・・

Tomodachi 1 : Mashiro chan ga otoko no ko dattara motesou
Tomodachi 2 : Omou- zettai moteruyo!!
Mashiro : U-n... yume dewa moteteta ka douka oboetenaindakedo...

Friend 1 : If mashiro chan became a boy it would be cool
 Friend 2 : I thought so too, it would be cool
 Mashiro : I never thought it would be cool even in my dreams.

In the narrative, the character Mashiro is referred to with the addition of Chan at the end of her name, as Mashiro is getting used to recognizing herself as a woman.

ii. Clothing Gender Attributes

Clothing is one of the crucial elements in determining an individual's gender. By looking at the type of clothing worn, we can give an idea of a person's gender. Skirts are clothing that is often associated with women. If a man wears a skirt in his daily life, it is considered a deviation.



Mizushiro, Vol 2, 2014: 35

The panel above illustrates how the character Mashiro dresses when playing role of a man. Mashiro appears to be wearing long pants that reflect her identity as a man, as opposed to the opposite sex character who wears a skirt. However, after Mashiro began to accept her destiny as a woman, she began to dare to look like a woman.



Mizushiro, Vol 7, 2014: 106

In the panel above, the character Mashiro is dressed like a woman by wearing a skirt and

looks blushing when praised by the male character in front of her.

b. Gender Fluidity

In his article, Davis (2009: 101) elaborates on the idea of fluidity. As a concept, fluidity is defined as constant change, uncertainty, incompatibility, and ambiguity. For example, some scholars emphasize the fluidity of gender and sexuality in opposition to views that consider bodies, behaviors, and identities as fixed, stable, consistent, or with clear definitions. Meanwhile, in explaining the transient and situational nature of gender performance, such arguments should not ignore the social construction and norms related to identity. As Butler explains, in terms of performativity, "gender performance cannot be separated from the regulatory practices of binding and recurrent sexual regimes".

Fluidity is defined as something that is not bound or unlimited. Transgender fluidity is considered as a symbol of gender freedom and individual choice and also as a way to break down categories and boundaries. Bornstein in Hutami (2017) asserts that "gender fluidity recognizes the absence of gender boundaries or regulations". Fluidity rejects the limitations of assumptions about gender and refuses to be trapped in one category. Fluidity also relates to the desire to reject identity as part of a "strategy for collapsing identity". Postmodern queer theory questions the unity, stability, continuity and political function of sexual identity. These questions portray identity as something that may be flaccid and subject to change. However, at its core, identity is also perceived as limiting, requiring individuals to "work their way out". Halberstam in Hutami (2017) explains that "postmodern theories of gender are widely misinterpreted as descriptions of and pleas for a greater degree of flexibility and fluidity". Many gay and lesbian adolescents feel that they are part of a 'post-gender' world, and for them, the act of labeling becomes a symbol of oppression, so they are happy reject the order in order to move into a world of peace and infinite diversity. This rejection of identity categorization relies on the fluid (in this case, unbound) potential of gender performance and affiliation. Moreover, the focus on "individual creative agency" is often at the helm of hegemonic power relations (Davis, 2009:101).

The aspect of gender fluidity in literature can be observed through several phases. The first phase involves the character's gender journey until she finds herself as a Disorder of Sex Development. The second phase outlines how the character's identity moves and changes according to her desired gender and how the character is able to show instability in her gender identity.

i. Mashiro Gender History

From the initial phase of the narrative in the comic, the author creates a physical depiction of the character Disorder of Sex Development, with the body part from the waist up depicted as male and the part from the waist down as female. The story begins with the character of Disorder of Sex Development still in the womb, where the character is shown as a twin fetus, with no certainty regarding gender, whether male or female.



(Mizushiro, Volume 10, 2014: 58 dan 64)

先生 : 性別がわかるのはもう少し先ですよ。でもニュースがあります。
赤ちゃん2人いますよ。

Sensei : Seibetsu ga wakarui no wa mou sukoshi saki desuyo. Demo nyuusu ga arimasu. Akachan futari imasuyo.

Dokter : We still have to wait a little longer to find out the sex difference. But I have news. You have two babies.

真白お母さん：赤ちゃんね、一人は男の子でもう一人は女の子だって

Mashiro Okaasan : Akachanne, hitori wa otoko no ko de mou hitori wa onna no ko datte

Ibu Mashiro : She said that one of our children is a boy and the other is a girl.

The mother of the character with Disorder of Sex Development has a history of hypertension, which can have a serious impact on the mother's health as well as the growth of the fetus in her womb (Mizushiro, Volume 10, 2014: 58). The conversation balloon (on the left side) shows the scene when the doctor informs the mother of the character with Disorder of Sex Development about her pregnancy situation. In the conversation, the doctor explains that the fetus she is carrying is in a twin condition and the sex of the two fetuses is not clearly known. Realizing this situation, the mother of the Disorder of Sex Development character had already made up her mind that the two fetuses she was carrying were of different sexes (male and female) when she shared this information with the father of the Disorder of Sex Development character. A few days after the news was delivered, a fire broke out in the hospital where the Disorder of Sex Development character's mother was being treated. As a result of this incident, the fetus, which was still in an imperfect stage of development, was forced to be born earlier than it should have been.



(Mizushiro, Volume 10, 2014: 177)

医師

: 火災現場から救出された妊婦さんです。妊娠25週目だそうです。
胎盤剥離を起こしてる。急いで帝王切開の準備を、胎児は双子・・・胎児の
片方心拍が停止しています。

Ishi

: Kasaigenba kara kyuushutsusareta ninbusandesu. Ninshinn 25
shuume da soudesu. Taibanhakuri wo okoshiteru. Isoide teiousekkai
no jyunbi wo. Taiji wa futago... taijino katahou shinpaku ga
teishishitemasu.

Medical Officer : This is a housewife who was rescued from the fire. It looks like
she has been pregnant for 25 weeks. There is placental detachment.
Please prepare immediately for a cesarean section. Twin fetuses, the
heartbeat of one of the fetuses has stopped.

Related to the previous discussion on fetal sex determination, this conversation
shows that the fire that broke out in the hospital where the mother of the character with
Disorder of Sex Development was staying led to an accelerated labor process. When
evacuated from the scene of the fire, the medical team had no choice but to perform a
caesarean section as the placenta had been exposed. When the fetus was examined, one
heartbeat of the 25-week-old fetus (about 4-5 months old) was no longer heard.

As discussed in the previous dialogue between the doctor and the mother of the
character who has Disorder of Sex Development, the mother believes that the fetus she is
carrying a pair, one male and one female. From the fire tragedy, one of the babies did not
survive while the other was saved. The dead baby was a boy, while the rescued baby was a
girl. However, the early delivery had an impact on the development of the baby girl. This
character became a person with Disorder of Sex Development, where the upper half of her
body resembled a male and the lower half of her body resembled a female. This abnormal
development process is known as Congenital Adrenal Hypoplasia Hypomastia.

ii. Diverse Gender Identities

Gender diversity can be seen through the character of Mashiro who has an attraction to both
genders, male and female. While Mashiro continues to express himself as a man, he
develops an interest in a female character named Kureha. However, when Mashiro switches
to declare herself as a woman, she gets involved in a relationship with a man named Sou.



(Mizushiro, Volume 5 dan 10, 2014 : 150 dan 95)

In the illustration above, DISORDER OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT's character appears to be involved in intimate activities with both female and male figures. This illustrates that DISORDER OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT's character is still unable to decide display or maintain his desired gender identity.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Mashiro is a representation of two genders in one body, reflecting issues of gender fluidity within a person. Gender fluidity can be understood as the result of an attempt to break down the binary categorization of gender and allow for the existence of multiple gender identities. Gender diversity can be seen as the emergence of unique characteristics that are present to challenge the rigidity of gender that limits it to only two categories. Disorder of Sex Development individuals break away from the boundaries of construction through gender symbols and choose to be at the crossing point.

As a Disorder of Sex Development character, Mashiro faces challenges in expressing and maintaining the gender identity she wants to display. However, pressure from the environment that should accept her existence as a Disorder of Sex Development forces Mashiro to fight for social acceptance by using the gender symbols she displays.

Authors use literature to reflect the unique phenomena within each individual. Mizushiro Setona raised the theme of freedom in the Houkago Hokenshitsu manga to convey criticism of humanism aimed at a society that has not been able to accept non-binary identities. The selection of Disorder of Sex Development individuals aims to show the various layers of restrictions experienced by individuals, starting from the limits of the mind, body, to social norms. Freedom in determining gender identity without being forced to follow existing norms also includes freedom in personal space. The concept of gender fluidity refuses to be confined to one identity, demonstrating an attempt to celebrate freedom. In addition, the idea of gender fluidity demonstrates the flexibility and uncertainty in

gender, providing an opportunity for variation that allows individuals to break free from the shackles of binary categorization.

In generally, public perception of individuals with Disorders of Sex Development is generally still shaped by negative stigma, ignorance, and fear rooted in rigid social and cultural norms regarding the binary concept of male and female. Society often views Disorders of Sex Development as a defect or deviation that brings shame, rather than as a natural biological variation in human development. As a result, many families with children who have Disorders of Sex Development choose to conceal the condition from their surroundings, even from close relatives, out of fear of rejection, ridicule, or social judgment. The societal taboo around discussing issues related to sexuality, genitalia, and gender identity further exacerbates the social isolation experienced by individuals with Disorders of Sex Development and their families. In many cases, this social pressure leads families to make drastic medical decisions—such as early gender assignment surgeries—without considering the child’s psychological readiness or complete medical information. To eliminate this harmful stigma, a holistic approach is essential. First, comprehensive public education must be continuously promoted to introduce Disorders of Sex Development as a complex but natural medical condition, not something shameful. Outreach efforts should be carried out through schools, mass media, religious institutions, and local communities to instill the understanding that biological sex diversity is not wrong. Second, psychosocial support should be provided not only to individuals with Disorders of Sex Development but also to their families, so they do not feel alone and can share experiences with peer support groups. Third, the state and professional institutions must offer inclusive healthcare services with multidisciplinary teams that prioritize empathy, ethics, and informed consent in every medical decision. Finally, the broader community must be encouraged to see Disorders of Sex Development not through a narrow moral lens, but through the lens of human rights—namely, the right to live with dignity, to be accepted, and to be treated equally without discrimination. Through a combination of education, support, and sound policy, the stigma toward individuals with Disorders of Sex Development can be gradually reduced, and society will become more capable of embracing diversity in human development.

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