

Abstract

This research analyzes the protagonist's struggle in pursuing work-life balance in Almira Bastari's novel *Home Sweet Loan*. Using a qualitative descriptive method and sociology of literature approach, the research explores how Kaluna, the protagonist experiences multidimensional conflicts in her attempt to navigate between professional responsibilities and personal life. The analysis identifies three main struggles: internal (emotional and psychological conflict), external (social and economic pressures), and existential (search for meaning and identity). Set in urban Jakarta, the novel reflects real challenges faced by middle-class working women, including unrealistic social expectations, limited income, and familial burdens. Kaluna's strategies, such as extreme frugality and disciplined budgeting, show her resilience in maintaining control over her life amid external demands. The findings reveal that work-life balance is not a stable condition but a continuous negotiation, often filled with sacrifice and emotional tension. The protagonist's journey provides a critical lens on the social structures that burden women with invisible labor and unacknowledged emotional exhaustion. This research contributes to literary studies by highlighting how contemporary Indonesian fiction mirrors socio-economic realities, especially those experienced by young women. It also serves as a reflective tool for readers to understand the personal dimensions behind the concept of work-life balance.

Keywords: protagonist, struggle, strategy, work-life balance