

## NAME CHANGING AS THE FORM OF IDENTITY CRISIS

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### ABSTRAK

*Nama seringkali dianggap hal sepele, kenyataannya nama memiliki arti/maksud yang penting dan pengaruh pada pemiliknya. Nama merupakan representasi dari suatu identitas. Nama dapat diberikan oleh orang sekitar (orangtua, teman, dll) atau buatan sendiri. Nama dapat memberikan informasi tentang siapa orang tersebut. Maka dari itu, nama adalah faktor krusial dalam membentuk makna diri dan juga menentukan jalan hidup seseorang. Beberapa orang mencoba untuk mewujudkan namanya, dan beberapa mencoba lari dari namanya tersebut. Orang yang melarikan diri dari namanya dapat diindikasikan mengalami krisis identitas. Mereka berpikir namanya tidak cocok dengan dirinya, tidak sesuai dengan personalitasnya,*

*itulah mengapa mereka melarikan diri dari namanya. Fenomena ini pun digambarkan oleh sebuah karya sastra berjudul Kafka on the Shore. Pada novel ditemukan bahwa karakter utama, Kafka, mengalami krisis identitas, dan kemudian mengubah namanya untuk membentuk identitasnya yang baru. Hal ini membuktikan bahwa nama dapat mempengaruhi sebuah personalitas. Orang yang diberi nama yang berat (dengan harapan tinggi) dan yang tidak cocok dengan kepribadiannya dapat menyebabkan krisis identitas pada pemiliknya. Oleh sebab itu, orang-orang harus lebih memerhatikan sekitarnya. Jika ada seseorang yang mengubah namanya, ada kemungkinan bahwa ia mengalami masalah dengan identitasnya.*

**Kata kunci:** *identitas, krisis identitas, nama*

## ABSTRACT

Name may seem trivial, but actually it has important meaning and influence to the owner. It is a representation of one's identity. It can be given by people around (parents, friends, etc.) or self-creation. It can give people information about who ones' are. Therefore name is a crucial factor in constructing the sense of self and determining ones' path of life too. So sometimes people try to live up their names, and some try to run away from their names. People who run away from their names can be indicated experiencing identity crisis. They do not think their name suit them, their personality, that is why they run away

from their own names. This phenomenon is depicted by a literature work entitled *Kafka on the Shore*. In the novel it is found that the main character, Kafka, experienced identity crisis, and then changed his name to form his new identity. Accordingly, name can affect the personality. People who are given names with high expectation and that do not suit them may cause them identity crisis. Thus people should be more aware of their surroundings. If there is a person changing his/her name, there may be an issue about their identity.

**Keywords:** identity, identity crisis, name

## INTRODUCTION

Identity is dynamic qualities, values, beliefs, habits that construct a person. James Marcia (1980) interpreted identity as a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organizations or drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. He proposed that if the structure is better developed, the individuals will be more aware of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their own way in their life. A good structure development is indicated when ones know better of the elements constructing it—their ability, viewpoint, faith, etc., they know what they are. It is dynamic because the elements of the structure are constantly being added or discarded. It grows along one's life as they confront new challenges and experiences. Hence, identity can be constructed and reconstructed.

Ones' identity can be represented by their name. "Name stands for the person" (Watzlawik et. al., 2016). Everyone must have a name to distinguish themselves from another. The name itself can be given by parents, friends, even we create it ourselves. Name can be taken as the representation of ones' identity. Thus, the name ones choose is the representation of themselves, showing what ones want to present to their environment. It may seem like a trivial choice, but the choice of name, whether ones want to use the name from their parents, their title in their name, the family name, or their nick names, in fact is the way ones create the impression they want other people to form of themselves (Windt-Val, 2012).

Name cannot be separated with identity. Both name and identity can affect each other. The name given by parents, friends, or ourselves can construct who ones are. Lawson (1987) stated that the name of a person is a factor determining in the development of personality. The given name can affect the owner's development because the name comes with wishes. For example, in Indonesia, a person named Arif Wibawa is expected to be a person who is wise (as the meaning of *arif*) and has dignity (as the meaning of *wibawa*). Therefore the person is already constructed by the name. On another way, ones' identity can construct ones' name. Since identity is dynamic—as elaborated above, ones can construct and reconstruct their identity—ones can change their name as they construct or reconstruct their identity. For example, a person who has a given name Putri Ayu which has a meaning of a princess of beauty and elegance, may change her name because she feels it does not fit her identity. Instead she will prefer to use her own creation name like Ventry Senjaliani because she is a brave girl who likes to adventure till the sun goes down that she thinks suits her more.

### Name and Identity Crisis

When individuals are in the search of their identity, they may experience crisis or failure to achieve it. It can occur when ones face major changes in their life such as having a first job, marriage, parenthood, divorce, unemployment, serious illness, etc. Besides encountering changes in life, Marcia (1980) suggested another cause

of crisis is that if ones develop their identity less, not try much, they will seem to be more confused about their own distinctiveness from others and need others to evaluate themselves. Identity crisis is usually indicated when ones start to question: who am I? What's my purpose? What is the meaning of life? They feel lost and try to find their role in life, having trouble in taking decision. The term identity crisis is first coined by Erikson (1968) who stated that each cycle of life—infancy, childhood (play), childhood (school), adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and maturity—meets its crisis. In line with Marcia who stated that “it changes with age and experience” (Marica, 1980: 160).

In its relation with identity, the name itself can cause identity crisis. A name of a person can lead the person experiencing identity crisis. There are many causes that lead into identity crisis concerning name. As mentioned above, parents may name their children with their wishes of what they expect their children to be. High expectation the children bear can become a pressure. Moreover in the name they carry, it can be a burden to the children for their lifetime. Ones with marvelous name will be expected to be marvelous one, and it is a pressure for some. The name with wishes can be such a prophecy that the owner shall fulfill. The owner who cannot fulfill it may feel embarrassed, get low self-esteem, and get bullied by the surrounding that can cause crisis to the self. So the person can feel that he/she does not deserve the name, does not fit to it, or “this is not me.”

In everyday life, ones may also have a pet name or a nickname their friends or their surrounding give them.

The nicknaming is usually taken from ones' personal identity: their habit, characteristic, behavior, values, etc. Nicknames can be taken as norm, form of social control, form of status, or an insult (Morgan et al.,1979). People who have been given a nickname and take it as an insult may feel irritated, that they may disagree with the given nickname or think that they have a more proper name to be called. Thus this nicknaming can cause crisis to some people.

The form of identity crisis may vary. Ones with identity crisis may try to change their looks, make their own reality, or try things to explore and discover themselves, depending on the factor of their crisis. Name changing is one of the form of identity crisis. As an example given before, individuals who think their name does not fit them may change their name. They do not accept their given name, feel that it is not fit them, and then create their own name that suits them or they want to be. Those are some examples of identity crisis causes concerning name. However, this research aimed to focus in discussing the name changing as the form of identity crisis that is reflected in a literature work, *Kafka on the Shore* novel.

## DISCUSSION

Literature is a reflection of the real world. The real life and literature both have influenced each other—the naming process in real life is often inspired by the works of literature. Not a little amount of parents naming their children from the characters they like,

and of course wish their children to be like them. Meanwhile, literature must be created based on or inspired by the real world. This can be showed by a casual case, naming. Most of literature works must have objects or characters with names. "Personal names and place names are some of the most important tools of the author in the creation of credible characters placed in a literary universe that gives the impression of being authentic" (Windt-Val, 2012: 278). Just like in reality, generally names in literature shows information of the owners such as self-depiction, family, social status, ambitions/dreams, and many more. In satire and comedy works, mostly names become the label or tag of the character that are frankly revealed in forward so that readers can tell the role of a character just by his/her name. Or in another case, the author uses names to puzzle his readers, making them figuring out what is the meaning behind the name. Thomas Pynchon did this in his black humor novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. He named the character Oedipa Maas, Pierce Inverarity, and Dr. Hilarious. He plays around and riddles the readers with the name of his characters. Battestini (1991) said that naming an object is to erase the part of its mystery, thus name can help readers to identify the character.

Resemble to reality, name in novel is also the representation of character's identity. Literature has also served many issues or problems in the real life so thus it can be analyzed and help to solve the similar issues in real life. An issue regarding name and identity was found in the character of *Kafka on the Shore* novel by Haruki Murakami, Kafka Tamura. He

experienced identity crisis and created his own name. The discussion about name changing in this character may help readers to comprehend and more aware of ones' crisis.

### **Identity Crisis on Kafka's Character in *Kafka on the Shore* Novel**

Kafka Tamura, the main character in the novel *Kafka on the Shore* is found experiencing identity crisis. He said himself that he does not know who he is, his direction, and his life purpose. The researcher has conducted a research before entitled "*Krisis Identitas pada Karakter Kafka dalam Novel Kafka on the Shore*" or in English "Identity Crisis on Kafka's Character in *Kafka on the Shore* Novel." In the research it is found that the factors causing identity crisis on the character are adolescence—physical and psychological changes, omen, and environment. So the forms of his identity crisis are various. Because of his physical changes—his looks resemble to his parents that he does not like and some of his puberty, like his voice, has not changed completely—he builds his body in order to form a new him. Because of his psychological change, he starts to wonder and think about life, and the incomplete process of the brain work in adolescence emerges impulsive behavior (Yurgelun-Todd, 2006), so he runs away from home to discover himself and to run away from the omen and his environment.

The other forms of his identity crisis are making his own reality, creating an alter ego, and changing his name. He makes his own reality with his

own theories and hypothesis about his lost mother and sister. He considers every women and girls he meets as his mother and sister. He also makes another persona of himself which shows that he experiences identity crisis, he does not want to be the present himself, he wants to be another.

### **Name Changing: Kafka**

From the beginning of the story, it is not mentioned what the real name of Kafka is. His real name remains unknown until the end of the story. Kafka is a name that he created himself as he runs away from home. At the beginning of his runaway, he met a girl and introduced himself as Kafka.

*"Kafka Tamura," she muses. "Weird name. Easy to remember, though."*

*I nod. Becoming a different person might be hard, but taking on a different name is a cinch. (Murakami, 2002: 21)*

From the quotation above it can be taken that Kafka wants to be a different person. Since he is a runaway, he needs a new name. The last clause of the quotation shows that for him it is easy to pick a different name, and he picked Kafka. It is showed in the following quotation when he meets his new friend:

*"But Kafka isn't my real name. Tamura is, though."*

*"But you chose it yourself, right?"*

*I nod. I'd decided a long time ago that this was the right name for*

*the new me. (Murakami, 2002: 115)*

He has decided the name Kafka suits for his new self. The reason behind his chosen name was revealed when he talks to his theoretical mother:

*"Nobody's going to help me. At least no one has up till now. So I have to make it on my own. I have to get stronger--like a stray crow. That's why I gave myself the name Kafka. That's what Kafka means in Czech, you know--crow." (Murakami, 2002: 233)*

Kafka chose his name because it has meaning as crow. He wants to be strong like a stray crow because he thinks nobody is going to help him in his crisis.

He also created another version of himself as the boy named Crow. Another self he created helps him to escape from the real him.

*"Hmm," she says, mildly impressed. "So you're Crow."*

*"That's right," I say.*

*That's right, the boy named Crow says. (Murakami, 2002: 233)*

Just like he chose his name as Kafka, he chose the name Crow for his alter ego because it has the same meaning, and the reason of the choice may same, he wants to be strong like a crow. There is also a quotation from the novel showing his wish to be a crow:

*You want to turn into a dauntless crow and fly out of this cabin, zoom out over these mountains, come to rest outside her*

*apartment, and gaze at her forever.* (Murakami, 2002: 261)

He said he wants to turn into a brave crow. The words “*fly out of this cabin, zoom out over these mountains*” means that he wants to go from where he is and explore everything that he does not know yet. The next clauses “*come to rest outside her apartment, and gaze at her forever*” shows that inside, he wants to go for his love (his mother), he is in love with her. The quotation above shows his wish that means he is unable to do so. That is why he wants to turn into a crow.

*I turn into a theorizing black crow.*  
(Murakami, 2002: 294)

For his inability to be a real crow, then he becomes a crow in theory, metaphorically. So he acts to be strong, he runs away from home, explores, and does everything he wants through this alter ego named Crow.

The chosen name is also inspired by the author Franz Kafka. Kafka is amused by his works and feels related with his fiction. As he said:

*I wasn't just giving some general theory of Kafka's fiction, I was talking about something very real. Kafka's complex, mysterious execution device wasn't some metaphor or allegory—it's actually here, all around me.*  
(Murakami, 2002: 41)

Kafka thinks that Franz Kafka's work is not merely a fiction. The complexity and mystery of his work are somewhat real, reflecting him. It makes him unconsciously took the author's name

as the author's way of thinking resembles his.

## CONCLUSION

Name may seem trivial, but actually it has important meaning and influence to the owner. It is a representation of one's identity. It can be given by people around (parents, friends, etc.) or self-creation. It can give people information about who ones' are. Thus name is a crucial factor in constructing the sense of self and determining ones' path of life too. So sometimes people try to live up their names, and some try to run away from their names. People who run away from their names can be indicated experiencing identity crisis. They do not think their name suit them, their personality, that is why they run away from their own names. In Kafka's case, he changed his name because he wants to create a new him, which shows his identity crisis—he does not accept the “previous” him, the identity he has before. Therefore to overcome his identity crisis, one of the way is changing his name and create new self. This shows that name represents the self. As reflected in literature works, name can affect the personality. People who are given names with high expectation and that do not suit them may cause them identity crisis. Thus people should be more aware of their surroundings. If there is a person changing his/her name, there may be an issue about their identity.

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