

INTRODUCTION

Identity formation has been an interest for people in many fields, such as psychology, sociology, and literature. Identity is a complex term to define because it includes many aspects, such as personal experiences, cultural background, and social culture, which might vary widely for each person. However, Woodward (1997) claims that symbolic and social cultures form identity. Symbolic culture is the way people use symbols, such as language, to communicate and create meaning within a society. It can be shown by people identifying other people from their languages. Meanwhile, social culture is how a person interacts with their daily environment and can also shape a person's identity. Both cultures have roles in shaping how people understand and interpret their world. Moreover, both cultures can also help organize how people interact, cooperate, and maintain social function. It shows that identity is not only about people's gender, race, religion, and occupation but also about people's attitudes to living. Furthermore, identity can be understood from different perspectives, such as cultural studies and literature.

From a cultural studies perspective, identity is formed by symbolic and social culture, which shapes who we are and who we can become (Woodward, 1997, p. 10). Woodward's statement supports Hall (1996:597) who states that the interaction between self and society shapes identity. It means that a person's identity depends on the society they live in. Besides, according to Marcia, J. (2002), once formed, an identity furnishes individuals with a historical sense of who they have been, a meaningful sense of who they are now, and a sense of who they might become in the future. This explanation means a well-formed identity helps individuals understand their life journey. It also shows that identity is fluid since it keeps changing with the context where the person lives.

Whereas, identity in literature refers to the combination of elements that shape a person's sense of self and perception of their role in the world (Chiranjeevi, 2023). It involves the exploration of personal gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, individual characteristics, experiences, social roles, and cultural background, which form and define a person's identity. Meanwhile, Wan and Vanderwerf (2009) explain that identity is demanded and influenced by the circumstances where the incidents happen both coming from a person or a group. It shows the importance of the environment to how identity is formed.

In the context of literature, Chiranjeevi also explains that identity is often depicted through the portrayal of the characters' journeys in their self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-definition. Still from Chiranjeevi, authors of literary works use various narrative techniques,

including introspection, external circumstance, and character development, to explore identity formation and expression. It acknowledges that literature provides a medium to delve into the evolution and fluidity of identity.

In literature, identity formation can be influenced by individual experiences, traumatic incidents, or self-realization moments (Chiranjeevi, 2023). Characters may experience revolutionary journeys or significant events that challenge their self-concept. It can be illustrated that a character who undergoes substantial loss may cause themselves to wonder about their life's purpose. Then, they embark on a journey of self-discovery. The occurrences can change the character's beliefs, priorities, and values, eventually shaping their identity. It indicates that identity is ever-changing and dynamic, not a permanent unity aspect of people's existence. Therefore, there is a possibility that identity can be re-formed.

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig is a book that deals with identities. The book, published in 2020, explores the story of Nora Seed, who is profoundly dissatisfied with her life and ultimately attempts suicide. Nora is frustrated about everything that happens in her life. Nora feels she is no longer worthwhile to live in the world. However, instead of meeting death when she attempts suicide, she finds herself in a library. This odd place offers Nora a second chance at life by allowing her to travel to a parallel universe where she can experience different versions of her life based on various choices she could have made. *The Midnight Library* has achieved significant awards, ranking as a bestseller in *The Sunday Times* and *New York Times* and winning the Goodreads Choice Award for Best Fiction in 2020. This book has many readers because the story is relatable to real-world issues, such as depression and suicide.

By looking at the context and issue of the book, *The Midnight Library* is the chosen book in this research. The issue of depression and suicide is relatable to real-life conditions. Suicide news is already common to appear at least every month. Therefore, the researcher sees potential in *The Midnight Library* which may be able to raise and increase awareness of the mental condition of each individual, which might help avoid depression and suicide. This book also has the potential to discuss how important it is to know the personality of each person by understanding and building identities that suit their desires. It may also be a supporter in preventing depression and suicide.

Identity formation is a critical concept to study and discuss. Many fields have studied identity, such as psychology and literature. In literary studies, literary work is investigated to find out how literary work has constructed identity formation. *The Midnight Library* to a certain extent provides the possibility of research about identity formation as the main character has

to go through different identities. Apart from that, some researchers have studied identity, below are three previous studies that examine identity.

One research that explored identity formation is that of Van Leeuwen (2021). From three novels of the research, *Divergent*, *Shadow and Bone*, and *The Hunger Games*, Van Leeuwen concluded that the novels demonstrated society, such as friends, family, and partners, can help a character shape their growth and choices. The thesis also reveals that identity in literature can be formed through the society they live in, the events in the novels, and the people they engage with. In conclusion, this thesis focuses on revealing the importance of society in forming identity.

The second research was written by Rosida and Molalita (2016). This article shows that culture is a crucial aspect of identity and different cultures might represent different identities. Furthermore, this article also shows how identity can be articulated through someone's appearance and behavior.

The last research that discusses identity is Munfangati and Handayani (2021). The article revealed that self-identity can be shaped through social products, mental constructs, and force for action. Moreover, the article shows that identity is fluid because it can occur in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

The previous studies show that identity formation is a researchable topic in literature. Identity formation in *The Midnight Library* is a bit different because the main character intentionally obtains many identities, thus, the way the identities are described is a gap in this research. This research aims to describe how Nora's identity keeps being re-formed in *The Midnight Library* (2020). By investigating the process of identity re-formation, the study contributes to the literature world regarding how dynamic identity formation is.