



**THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL *PESANTREN* IN  
SHAPING WOMEN'S VIEW ON GENDER  
EQUALITY  
(CASE STUDY: PESANTREN RAUDHATUL  
QURAN SEMARANG)**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this project is compiled by her without taking the results from other researches in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3 and in diploma degree. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, March 2014

Nofa Fauzia

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

Acquire knowledge, and learn tranquility and dignity.

(Umar ibn al-Khattab)

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents and friends*

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The writer realizes that this project is still far from perfect. She, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this project better.

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The writer

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## ABSTRAK

Pembentukan konsep diri erat kaitannya dengan lingkungan sosial. Pandangan seseorang mengenai gender pun dipengaruhi oleh interaksi sosial yang ada di lingkungannya. Bagi sekelompok orang, istilah gender atau kesetaraan gender terasa asing akibat tidak adanya edukasi mengenai gender ataupun tertutupnya akses masuk bagi ideologi asing. Pesantren Raudhatul Quran Semarang sebagai sebuah pesantren tradisional merupakan obyek yang menarik bagi pengkajian gender karena sistem sosialnya yang cenderung tertutup. Tulisan ini bertujuan menjelaskan bagaimana pesantren tradisional ini berperan dalam pembentukan konsep diri santri putri sebagai wanita serta pandangan mereka terhadap kesetaraan gender. Data dari penelitian ini merupakan data kualitatif yang didapat melalui wawancara dengan 9 santri putri sebagai sampel, yang kemudian dianalisa menggunakan pendekatan *symbolic interactionism* dari Helbert Blumer. Hasil dari studi ini ialah interaksi serta sistem sosial yang terjadi dalam lingkungan Pesantren Raudhatul Quran Semarang mempengaruhi pandangan santri putri sebagai wanita, di mana wanita diharapkan berkarakter lembut dan penurut. Konsepsi diri tersebut berakibat pada kurangnya minat mereka terhadap kesetaraan gender.

Kata kunci: gender, kesetaraan gender, pesantren , *symbolic interactionism*

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Gender differs from sex in which sex distinguishes male from female due to their biological traits whereas gender is socially constructed (Handayani and Sugiarti, 2002: 5). Discussing the issue of gender, especially gender equality in such a patriarchal society as Indonesia, can be interesting. Reeves and Baden (2000: 28) define patriarchy as a systemic social structure which institutionalizes men's physical, social and economical power over women. Thus, in Indonesia, the idea of men's superiority has been internalized from early on. It is done mainly through educational practices, and an example of educational institutions is *pesantren*.

Mastuhu (1994: 55) defines a *pesantren* as an Islamic educational institution whose main purpose is to teach Islamic values and to emphasize the importance of religious moral. A *pesantren* is not merely an educational institution. It is a society consisting certain structure and norms. Pesantren Raudhatul Quran, declaring itself as a traditional *pesantren*, aims at producing Quran reciters. As implied by the head of the *pesantren*, KH. Khammad Ma'sum AH, Pesantren Raudhatul Quran puts efforts on preventing *santri* from the negative effect of globalization, i.e. the entering of Western ideologies. Consequently, this *pesantren* tends to embody a closed social system

which Anderson and Carter (1974: 22) describes as a system that has poor reception to the movement of energy across its boundaries. As a relatively more closed environment, the social control within this society tends to be strong, whether it is done through socialization or communication.

Starr (2007: 35) implies equality as an American ideology which has been deeply rooted and spread through globalization. Thus, the fact that Pesantren Raudhatul Quran Semarang is both an educational and a relatively closed social system makes it an interesting object in the study of gender equality as a project in American studies.

## **1.2 Aims of the study**

This study aims at explaining how the social interactions within Pesantren Raudhatul Quran construct female *santri*'s view on gender equality.

## **1.3 Method of the study**

### **1.3.1 Method of Research**

This study is a case study, which Reinharz describes as a method which focuses on a single case or issue (1992: 164). Qualitative data, which consist of words, not numbers (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: 1), become the primary data of this study. The data are acquired through interviews with female *santri*. With regard to Arikunto (2006: 131), sample is taken from 10%-15% of the population. Since the numbers of female *santri* are 89, nine *santri* are taken as the respondents. Sugiyono (2003: 76) mentions proportional sampling as one of the non-random sampling technique. In this technique, the female *santri* taken as

respondents are considering variety of age and length of time in the *pesantren*.

In analyzing the data, the writer follows these steps:

1. Categorize information through identifying patterns and organizing them into coherent categories
2. Identify connections within or between categories
3. Interpret the data

### 1.3.2 Method of Approach

The data of the study are interpreted through the use of symbolic interaction approach. Blumer (1969: 2) states that symbolic interactionism lie on three premises: human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have, those meanings are derived from social interactions one has with one's fellows and the meanings are modified through an interpretative process in dealing with social encounters. This approach is grounded on some basic ideas which refer to the nature of human groups, social interactions and objects (Blumer, 1969: 6). What is meant is symbolic interactionism describes the process of how one sees something as a result of social interactions with other parts of the society, including other people and objects. Blumer (1969: 10) classifies objects into physical objects, such as clothes; social objects, such as students; and abstract objects, such as religious doctrine. Symbolic interactionism is an interpretative approach which concerns on symbolic meaning put on social interactions (Ollenburger and Moore, 1996: 12).

## CHAPTER 2

### PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH OBJECT

Pesantren Raudhatul Qur'an has been established since 1934 by KH Abdullah. The *pesantren* is located on Kauman Glondong 352 Semarang; however, the majority of the *santri* come from Demak, Jepara and Purwodadi. There are 49 male *santri* and 89 female *santri* enrolled in the *pesantren* under the leadership of Ir. H. Khammad Ma'sum AH. If at first the *pesantren* was intended for only *tajwid* and *salaf kitab* studies, it developed in which the main curriculum is to produce Quran reciters. The daily activities of the *santri* are mostly memorizing the verses in Quran and presenting their memorization in front of the *astatidz* or teachers. Besides, they also have to study *tajwid*, *fiqih*, *hadits*, and interpretation of Quran. At first, *santri* have to learn Quran *bin nadhar* which means learning to read with the right *tajwid*. If they have passed *bin nadhar*, they will move to next step of memorizing Quran or *bil ghaib* in order to become Quran reciters. In order to keep the focus of the *santri*, they are not allowed to attend schools or to work. *Santri* lives in a dormitory. There are eight dormitories for male and female *santri*. These dormitories are the results of benefaction from the locals.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISCUSSION

This study applies qualitative method in which interviews are done to get the data. The interviews are conducted on 5-6 February 2014 with 9 female *santri* serve as the respondents. Below is a brief background description of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent's Background

Respondents' ID	Age	Length of time in the <i>pesantren</i> (in years)
R1	21	2
R2	21	4
R3	23	1
R4	21	1
R5	18	0.5
R6	19	3
R7	19	0.5
R8	24	5
R9	20	0.5

The first question asked to the respondents aims to know whether they understand the term 'gender'. As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the samples have no idea of what gender is. R1, R2 and R4 imply that they have ever heard the term yet they propose incorrect understandings. It is only R3 whose answer is close to the actual meaning of gender, i.e. something that differentiates men from women.

Table 2. Respondents' Understanding of Gender

Question 1: Have you heard the term 'gender'? What is it?	
ID	Description

R1	Equality between men and women
R2	Changing of sex
R3	Something differentiates men from women
R4	Equality to the opposite sex
R5	None
R6	None
R7	None
R8	None
R9	None

Table 3. Respondents' Views on a Woman and Her roles and Duties

Question 2&3: What is a woman like? What are her roles and duties?		
ID	Description (Q2)	Description (Q3)
R1	The pillar of the faith	An obedient & submissive wife
R2	Soft and gentle	A wife & a career woman
R3	Honorable	A mother, sharing knowledge
R4	Beautiful, awkward, fussy	The follower, nurturing & obeying
R5	Gentle, decisive, consistent	A companion to men, serving them
R6	Beautiful, gentle	Cooking
R7	Gentle	A companion to men, running household
R8	Smart, religious, nurturing	Staying home
R9	Gentle, polite	Obeying men, nurturing children at home

From the table above, it can be seen that the flashing images when respondents hear the word 'woman' vary. This matter has been explained by Blumer (1969: 11) that an object may have a different meaning for different individuals. R1's answer shows the importance of women in which they determine what a society will be. A woman, as described by R4, talks more than a man do. The rest of the answers mostly propose the idea of women as beautiful and gentle creatures. As for their knowledge of the roles and duties of a woman, they propose a common understanding in which a woman's role is being an obedient and submissive wife holding the duties of nurturing her children and doing household chores. Yet, R2 adds that a woman needs to develop herself, too.



Respondents' understandings of the nature of women are a product of interpretation. Blumer (1969: 5) marks out this process as a formative process rather than a mere automatic application of the established meaning. From the answers of the fourth question of how respondents acquire their understandings of the roles and duties of a woman, the respondents mention that it is based on their thought and consciousness for social encounters they experience in the *pesantren*. This consciousness is reached from an interpretative process within one's mind on other's gestures toward them (Mazzotta and Myers, 2008: 22). R1 and R7 add that their consciousness of their gender is a response of what has been explained in the *Kitab*. As has been described before, Blumer (1969: 10) classifies religious doctrine as an abstract object. Since the *pesantren* tries to teach and enforce religious doctrine on the *santri*, their thought will be strongly influenced by what has been taught to them. It is R3 whose answer is slightly different from other respondents where she mentions watching television as something that affects her view. She, too, names reading as the cause of her knowledge on women even though it is not stated whether it is *kitab* reading or reading in general.

Table 4. The Causes of Respondents' Views on Women and Their Roles

Question 4: How do you acknowledge such view?	
ID	Description
R1	Own conscience, from interactions and <i>kitab</i>
R2	Experiencing in the society
R3	Reading and watching TV
R4	Own conscience, through society
R5	Concluding from social interactions
R6	Own conscience, acquiring from the society
R7	Being taught in the <i>pesantren</i> , from <i>kitab</i>
R8	From social interactions in <i>pesantren</i>
R9	From social interactions, being taught in <i>pesantren</i>

In understanding how the *pesantren* society views a woman, the writer comes up with the question of whether female *santri* and male *santri* are given different roles, duties and rights. Table 5 summarizes respondents' answers.

Table 5. Respondents' Views on the Rights, Roles and Duties Given to Female and Male *Santri*

Question 5: Are female and male <i>santri</i> given different rights, roles and duties?	
ID	Description
R1	Same duty to study, different role in leadership, different right in bringing cell phone
R2	Different duties and rights since men are the leaders, different right in bringing cell phone
R3	Same duty to study , no difference in role and right
R4	Same duty though some jobs are men-only
R5	Bigger role of men, no cell phone for women
R6	Same duty, different cell phone right
R7	Same duties and roles, different right in cell phone and motorbike
R8	Different duties and roles, different right in cell phone
R9	Same duties, roles and rights

It can be seen that basically, both male and female *santri* are given the same duty in studying Quran, so are their roles. Nevertheless, some jobs are designated only for male *santri* since it is believed that men are the leaders whereas women are the followers. The different right highlighted here is the allowance to bring cell phone. R1, R2, R5, R6, R7 and R8 mention how female *santri*'s focus on studying can be easily distracted by a cell phone thus using it is prohibited for them. The response following such answers is why men are not thought so? R2 and R5 say that it is due to male *santri*'s bigger role and a cell phone supports their jobs. R8 comes up with a view that strictness makes men uncomfortable whereas no cell phone for the female *santri* prevents from an unstable and messy study. This matter is a major influence in the self construction

of the female *santri*. As Cooley in Coser (1971: 305) argues that one's view on his self is a reflection of others' idea of him, the female *santri*'s views of themselves and their role as women are the reflections of the society's ideas of them. The idea of protecting female *santri* by prohibiting them to use cell phone explains why female *santri* tend to view themselves as gentle and obedient creatures who need to be protected.

As a traditional *pesantren* whose main purpose is producing Quran reciters, the *pesantren* does not allow the *santri* to attend formal schools or to work. Yet, the *pesantren* provides some courses, which most of the respondents state as available for all *santri*.

Table 6. Respondents' Answers on Additional Courses Given to the *Santri*

Question 6: Despite Quran reciting, is there any course given? What is it? Is it available for both male and female <i>santri</i> ?	
ID	Description
R1	Baking, computer and driving. No female <i>santri</i> has taken the driving course
R2	Baking, computer and driving for all <i>santri</i>
R3	Cooking, computer and driving courses for all <i>santri</i>
R4	Baking, driving and computer courses for all <i>santri</i>
R5	Sewing, cooking and computer courses yet the sewing course is no longer available
R6	Baking and driving courses for both male and female <i>santri</i>
R7	Cooking and computer courses. The cooking course is likely female-only
R8	Baking, sewing, driving, etc. No female <i>santri</i> has taken the driving one
R9	The practice of conducting some prayers

R1 and R8, however, reveal that no female *santri* has been enrolled in the driving course due to low interest. This low of interest can be seen as a result of female *santri*'s conception of themselves.

Table 7. Respondents' Answers on Leadership System in the *Pesantren*

Question 7: Are male and female <i>santri</i> given the same role in leadership?	
ID	Description
R1	Yes, there is an involvement from male and female <i>santri</i>
R2	Yes, but female <i>santri</i> can only lead their fellow gender
R3	Yes, but the system is divided, i.e. gender-segregated
R4	Women can only lead their fellow gender
R5	Men are given the priority to serve as leaders
R6	No, a leader should be a man
R7	Men are the leader
R8	The system is divided, i.e. gender-segregated
R9	The system is divided. Men lead men, women lead women

With regard to leadership, most of the respondents assert that both genders are given the same opportunity to lead. To lead here means to lead their fellow gender, or in other words, it is a gender-segregated leadership. Male *santri* have their own leader, so do female *santri*. R1 says that there has to be an involvement from both genders. R5, R6 and R7, on the other hand, stick to the view of men as the leader.

As far as total equality between male and female *santri* is concerned, the majority of the respondents refused. Table 8 presents how R4 and R9 insist that they are already equal as fellow students. Male and female *santri* hold the same right in front of the *kyai*. R5 declares that equality is needed only in some sphere, such as leadership and studying. R6 and R7 are not sure whether equality is necessary. R6 chooses to follow the *kyai* whereas R7 thinks that all *santri* are grown-ups and able to be responsible for their actions so there is no need for a strict rule. R2 and R8, who continue to construct relatively more traditional views

on women, affirm that total equality is dangerous since it is like having no rule and no protection on women.

Table 8. Respondents' Views on Total Equality between Male and Female *Santri*

Question 8: What do you think of total equality between male and female <i>santri</i> ?	
ID	Description
R1	Disagree
R2	It's dangerous, women cannot protect themselves
R3	Disagree
R4	Already Equal as fellow students
R5	Already Equal in leadership and study
R6	Maybe, follow the <i>kyai</i>
R7	Maybe, all <i>santri</i> are grown-ups
R8	Disagree, as having no rule
R9	Already Equal in front of the <i>kyai</i>

From those views, a question of whether it is possible for gender equality to be existed in the *pesantren* is raised. The table below shows respondents' answers.

Table 9. Respondents' Views on the Possibility of Gender Equality in *Pesantren*

Question 9: Is it possible for gender equality to be existed in <i>pesantren</i> ?	
ID	Description
R1	Impossible
R2	Impossible
R3	No
R4	No
R5	Impossible
R6	Maybe
R7	No
R8	Impossible
R9	Possible

It is shown how most female *santri* who become the respondents think that it is impossible for female and male *santri* to be totally equal in *pesantren*. The

positive answer is only given from R9, who has already stated before that all *santri* are equal in front of the *kyai*. R6 argues that gender equality may be possible to take place if female *santri* want it. However, she does not want such condition since it is already good this way.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The results of the study, in which there are findings of female *santri*'s lack of understanding of the term 'gender' and their lack of interest in gender equality, are products of the society. The tendency in female *santri*'s views on women as gentle creatures whose duties and roles are being an obedient wife and nurturing children at home is the result of the social interactions happened in the *pesantren*. The prohibition of bringing or using cell phone for female *santri* as a protection for them is interpreted within female *santri*'s thought as a symbol that a woman is a creature who needs protection. As for gender equality, most of them refuse it. It is due to others' gesture toward them in which they are used to be the followers.

Those findings explain the role of the *pesantren* in constructing both female *santri*'s consciousness of their selves as women and their view toward gender equality.

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