

Original Research Article

Education Representation of Female Santri in *Pesantren* Literature in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to discuss access to education and self-development of female santri in three different novels (*pesantren* literature) by female authors. The research method used is qualitative with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The research data is in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs which are identified about the opportunities for female students to access and develop themselves in the world of education. Data analysis through a holistic, selection and detailed approach. The results of her research are that female santri in the novel "Hati Suhita" experience restrictions in choosing a field of knowledge, but this is not a reason for not being able to express herself so she willingly accepts it, in the novel "Dua Barista" female santri are given freedom in accessing education in fields that he likes and self-development in the world of fashion, and female santri the novel "Perempuan Berkalung Sorban" limits access to education, especially in the general field and self-development. The description of female santri in terms of access to education and self-development varies. Even though the female authors have the same background, namely having studied at Islamic boarding schools, this indicates a different view on the role and position of female santri in the Islamic boarding school culture.

Keywords: Female Santri, Islamic Boarding School Literature, Education.

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A. INTRODUCTION

This research is about educational opportunities and access to self-development in the scholarship of female santri as depicted in Indonesian Islamic Boarding School literature. This research is necessary because the authors have different thoughts in moving their characters (female santri) in educational opportunities and self-development in novels of the *pesantren* literary genre. Education in Islamic teachings is very emphasized towards its people, namely seeking knowledge. The verses of the Qur'an and Hadith, which advocate and glorify every knowledgeable person, even the law of seeking knowledge is obligatory for every human being, whether male, female, children, or adults, and in obtaining access to education obtains equal rights. Husein (2014) explains the concept of education from various experts as follows the concept of education by Sayid Sabiq, in his book entitled "Islamuna," Athiyah al-Abrasyi (1969), and Anwar Jundi (1975) in his book "at-Tarbiyyah wa Binaul Ajyal fi Dhau'il Islam," concluded by Muhammad (2014) that education is an effort to prepare and grow individual

human beings from the time they are born until the end of their lives to have physical, intellectual and spiritual strength for humans, not only in men but also in women based on Islamic values.

The practice of the rights and obligations of fulfilling education for humankind by the Prophet then conveyed the idea that the need for education in the first revelation was an appeal for them to read. "Iqra," which means reading, also implies seeing, thinking, and contemplating. Therefore, it is interesting that the Al-Qur'an texts respond so much, providing space for women's human rights and restoring them. This is also reflected in literary texts, especially the novels *pesantren* literature in Indonesia.

Nurrohmat in Roqib *et al.*, (2016) that *pesantren* literature has so far been identified as literary works that deal with Islamic themes, literary works by authors who have experience in the life of Islamic Boarding School or Islamic Boarding School kiai and Islamic Boarding School clerics, and literary works

reflect the life of santri and Islamic Boarding School. Rahman, on the blog "Literature, Islamic Boarding Schools, and Islamic Radicalism, there are three meanings in Islamic boarding schools literature: 1) literature that lives in Islamic boarding schools; 2) literature written by people (kiai, santri, alumni) Islamic Boarding School; 3) literature with the theme of Islamic Boarding School.

Many studies on education for women have been found, including: 1) When women regularly achieve the same level of education or higher than men and their economic and social roles become more equal, then gender differences related to education and fertility also is expected to decrease (Jalovaara, M *et al.*, 2019); 2) The status of equal opportunity in education and employment in Saudi Arabia to understand what has been achieved and what still needs to be achieved and has been achieved (Barry, A., 2021); 3) An increased level of education tends to increase women's earning capacity and quality of work which can help reduce family pressure on work; 4) Public policies that encourage higher education, increasing the accessibility of employment along with affordable childcare, will increase non-agricultural employment, which is increasingly becoming a major source of new employment, for women living in rural India (Dhanaraj, S., & Mahambare, V., 2019); 5) Although the gender gap in educational attainment is reducing in most countries, empirical evidence does not support the hypothesis that a reduction in the gender gap in education consistently leads to a smaller gender gap in labor force participation (Evans, D *et al.*, 2021). Maternal education leads to increased family resources for children and improved mental health and maternal care, which we interpret as a potential mechanism behind our findings. (Cui, Y., 2019). The difference that the researcher wants to uncover is access to education and opportunities for self-development to be varied in literary works because the author's ideology in viewing female santri is different.

Female santri are women who have a santri spirit. Female santri can be a female santri, the wife of a Kyai, a mother who has a Islamic Boarding School background, and the daughter of a Kyai and Bu Nyai. The relationship between female santri and their families and households is the focus of feminist anthropological research so that it opens the possibility for women's narratives to appear based on their experiences and for women to be able to express their views on issues that directly affect their lives (Ollenburger & Moore, 1996). The views of female santri towards educational opportunities and access to self-development that affect their lives are reflected in literary texts, especially in *pesantren* literature.

The novel "Perempuan Berkalung Surban" (PBS) by Abidah El Khalieqy is categorized as a religious work that intelligently breaks habits that make

women's position a minor. The main character of this novel is named Annisa. He was born and grew up in Islamic boarding schools which hold religious traditions firmly. However, as her development progressed, Annisa began to feel strangely treatment for her. Annisa is not allowed to practice horseback riding like her brother, she is not allowed to talk and express her opinion, she must be quiet at the dinner table, she cannot get up late, and this includes the opportunity to go to higher education, and must be diligent and many other different treatments which Annisa received from her parents who are respected Kiai in the Islamic boarding school.

In the novel "Hati Suhita" abbreviated (HS) by Khilma Anis, Alina Suhita is described as a young woman, the son of a cleric, who is betrothed to Gus Birru, the only son of Kiai Hanan's puppet. They were both betrothed since young. Kiai and Nyai Hanan have high hopes for Alina so that one day they can continue the struggle of the Islamic boarding school and produce good children. This hope must be realized by requiring Suhita to memorize the Qur'an so that her aspirations and hopes to study at the faculty of literature must be dashed. Because she is Alina Suhita. In her name embedded the power of women of Majapahit. He cannot be weak, and he will not lose. The Javanese values and stories from wayang and babad imbued him, as well as the verses of the Koran, which he recited from memory.

In the novel "Dua barista," abbreviated as (DB), Gus Ahvash and Mazarina are described as young husbands and wives, intelligent, pious, and energetic, who are predicted to continue parenting at the family boarding school. Starting at the Islamic boarding school, Mazarina diligently learned to recite any book by her parents' expectations. Her parents allowed Mazarina to study according to her choice and engage in the fashion world.

The novel "Perempuan Berkalung Surban" (2009) by Abidah El Khalieqy, the novel "Hati Suhita" (2019) by Khilma Anis, and the novel "Dua Barista" (2020) by Najhaty Sharma are *pesantren* literary novels because in the novel they discuss female santrits who are in the Islamic Boarding School environment. The three female authors also have backgrounds in Islamic boarding schools. Matters related to ideas or notions, especially regarding educational opportunities and self-development of female santri, which are embodied in the characters in these novels, are the author's experience in understanding the position of female santri in Islamic boarding schools. The author's experience in social reality or the real world is a picture of what is in the novel. Even though the setting in the three novels is a boarding school environment, there is something unique about each novel. Each character in these novels has varied story experiences in obtaining

educational opportunities and access to self-development in their knowledge.

B. METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Mannan, 1990), aims to study life experiences (phenomenology) and interpret life texts (hermeneutics). This study reveals the strength of female santrits in dealing with family problems in Islamic boarding school culture. The source of the data is the novel "Perempuan Berkalung Surban" (2009) by Abidah El Khalieqy, the novel "Hati Suhita" (2019) by Khilma Anis, and the novel "Dua Barista" (2020) by Najhaty Sharma. The three novels were chosen because there is a phenomenon about female santrits in the context of access to education.

The three novels are set in Islamic boarding schools. The three female figures (Suhita, Mazarina, and Annisa) are descendants of the great kyai, and their marriages have been arranged. The three women acted as wives, caretakers of the Islamic Boarding School, and daughters of the krai's family. Based on some similarities in the two novels, it can be seen that they have differences in the choice of either choosing for themselves as a conscious decision or coerced choices, especially regarding access to education.

The research data shows that every piece of information in the two novels reflects the strength of female santrits in dealing with their problems. Ten data excerpts contain this information, including the character's thoughts and actions. The data in "Hati Suhita" contains five citations, the novel "Dua Barista" contains three citations, and "Perempuan Berkalung Surban" contains two citations. Data collection was carried out through the following steps: 1) Reading data sources continuously and repeatedly, 2) critically reading both data sources to understand the meaning contained in the two works, and 3) selecting and marking the parts part of the story related to research data.

The collected data is then analyzed by 1) reading the two works over and over again in their entirety to get the full meaning, 2) paying attention to keywords and making them objects of study so that important ideas can be found, 3) focusing on important statements based on experience studied. In the context of this study, matters related to the representation of female santri education in the three novels.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Restrictions on Selection of Science Fields and Willingness to Accept It

In the novel "Hati Suhita" by Khilma Anis, a female santri named Alina Suhita, since MTS, has been betrothed by her parents to the Kiai family. He becomes a child who obeys his parents. Starting from compulsion, the storyline leads to an acceptance in the

process of life which takes time for Alina Suhita to understand why she has to obey her wishes to become the daughter-in-law of the Kiai family and learn to memorize the Al-Quran. This is according to the following data.

Sejak kecil, abah dan ibuku sudah mendoktrinku bahwa segalaku, cita-citaku, tujuan hidupku, adalah kupersembahkan untuk pesantren Al-Anwar, mertuaku (Anis, 2019:3).

Since childhood, my father and mother have taught me that everything I have, my goals, and my purpose in life, is to dedicate to Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School, my father-in-law's Islamic boarding school (Anis, 2019:3).

The doctrine is that Alina Suhita was prepared as the successor to the Islamic boarding school even though she is a daughter-in-law in the Islamic boarding school family. The ideals and goals in life that belong to female santri are dedicated to the continuity of the Islamic Boarding School. Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School is a boarding school owned by Kiai Hannan, who has a son named Gus Birru as the successor of the Islamic Boarding School, Kiai Hannan selects prospective sons-in-law for his son, and the criteria are lineage in the context of knowledge or scholarship.

Maka, aku tidak boleh punya cita-cita lain selain berusaha keras menjadi layak memimpin disana. Aku dipondokkan di pesantren Tahfidz sejak kecil. Kiai dan Bu Nyai Hannanlah yang mengusulkan bahwa aku harus kuliah di jurusan Tafsir Hadis meski aku sangat ingin kuliah di jurusan sastra. Abah ibuku setuju saja asal itu keinginan mereka (Anis, 2019:3).

So, I should only have one goal besides trying hard to be worthy of leading there. I was lodged at the Tahfidz Islamic Boarding School since childhood. Kiai and Bu Nyai Hannan suggested that I should major in Tafsir Hadith even though I really wanted to major in literature. My mother and father agreed as long as it was their wish (Anis, 2019:3).

The female santri shared her life experience and that her dreams and aspirations had to be dashed because there was a direction to study at the Interpretation Department as a complement to memorizing the Al-Qur'an. His biggest wish is to study literature. It is supported by his own family. Restrictions on choosing a field of knowledge according to the wishes of female santri become accepted because there is a culture of *birrul walidain* towards parents. Female santri want to make their parents happy by obeying their wishes. *Birrul walidain* is devoted to their parents. Being devoted to parents is believed to be a form of pleasure or willingness for the

happiness of a child's life (Hasanah, 2020). This is contained in the following data.

Bahkan, saat aku sudah semester tujuh. Kiai Hannan memintaku pindah Islamic Boarding School dan meninggalkan kuliahku agar aku bisa lebih banyak hapalan di pesantren baruku. Aku menurutinya karena itu kemauan mereka. Demi pesantren mereka (Anis, 2019:3).

When I was in the seventh semester. Kiai Hannan asked me to move to an Islamic boarding school and leave my studies to memorize more at my new Islamic boarding school. I complied because it was their will. For their boarding school (Anis, 2019:3).

This willingness was followed by moving from lectures that had yet to be completed and deepening the Al-Qur'an memorization at the Islamic boarding school. This is not easy for female santrits themselves, but the culture of the Islamic Boarding School becomes valuable in religion. It is implemented in the life of *birrul walidain*, manifested in *tawadhu'*. *Tawadhu'* is an attitude of humility, but not to humiliate self-respect, and does not allow other people to belittle self-honor (Nashirudin, 2015) does not become a loss when accepting it as a willingness. Like the data below.

Ummik begitu intens membahas pesantren dengan Alina. Sebelum menikahpun, aku tahu, ummik sangat mengandalkannya (Anis: 2019,132)

Ummik so intensely discussed Islamic boarding schools with Alina. Even before I got married, I knew that Ummik relied on him (Anis: 2019, 132).

Aku menunggunya shalat subuh sampai salam. Memastikan ia bisa rebah kembali ke sofa, lalu segera beranjak ke pondok puteri untuk menggantikan ummik ngimami dan menyimak setoran hapalan (Anis: 2019, 132).

I waited for him to pray at dawn until greetings. Making sure he could fall back on the sofa, then immediately went to the princess's cottage to replace the ummik ngimami and listen to the recitation (Anis: 2019, 132).

Islamic boarding school activities are the responsibility of Alina Suhita. He knows that as a consequence, as the successor of the Islamic boarding school, he is responsible for starting to lead the prayers and listening to the students memorize the Al-Qur'an. Because Mrs. Nyai's job is to constantly motivate the students to remain enthusiastic and consistent in memorizing the Qur'an. This position and role is the mandate to prioritize the use of knowledge that must be

mastered by a female santri regardless of being forced to start because humility is the best thing for Alina Suhita.

2. Freedom in Access to Education and Self-Development for Female Santri

In the novel *Dua Barista* by Najhaty Sharma, the life of a female santri named Mazarina experiences the same thing as Alina Suhita in the novel *Hati Suhita*. The similarities are matchmaking and Islamic Boarding School family background. It is just that in the context of education, Mazarina is more flexible in making choices. As the data below.

Di masa lalu, aku adalah perempuan pecinta seni yang terbungkus di balik jiwa-jiwa Islamic Boarding School salaf yang menghabiskan waktu belajar di pesantren orang tua sendiri dengan nilai-nilai yang memuaskan. Dengan mudah kuhafal bait-bait nadzam Alfiyah juga matan-matan kitab fikih, demi memainkan peran sebagai putri abah yang membanggakan. (Sharma, 2020:3)

In the past, I was an art-loving woman wrapped behind the souls of a salaf Islamic boarding school who spent her time studying at her own parents' Islamic boarding school with satisfying grades. I quickly memorized the verses of Nadzam Alfiyah and the books of fiqh to play the role of a proud father's daughter (Sharma, 2020:3).

Mazarina is a female santri who has a position as the daughter of a kiai. He studied religion at his Islamic Boarding School. His artistic spirit in the fashion world can still be expressed as long as his mastery of religious knowledge is also a priority to master, namely the verses of *Nadzam Alfiyah* (Arabic grammar) and studying *fiqh* books. This is very dominant in the salaf Islamic boarding school as a condition for someone studying at a Islamic Boarding School. Therefore, when the parent's wishes have been fulfilled, they parent, with relief, allow Mazarina to choose a place to study, namely in Yogyakarta at the Ushuluddin Faculty of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Like the following data.

Karena berhasil memainkan peran itu, abah memenuhi impianku untuk kuliah di Yogyakarta dengan ijazah muadalah dari pesantren kami. Kami mengambil kuliah pada Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam UIN Sunan Kalijaga. (Sharma, 2020:3)

Because he succeeded in playing that role, my father fulfilled my dream of going to college in Yogyakarta with a diploma from our Islamic boarding school. We took lectures at the Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought faculties of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. (Sharma, 2020:3)

Freedom in choosing scientific fields in lectures allows Mazarina to develop herself according to her talents in fashion. The restrictions are only on a more accessible social environment so that their parents forbid them from the context of friends in their fashion environment. The concept of non-mahram in Islam, especially in Islamic boarding schools, is indeed a guide in interacting with others, especially the opposite sex.

Dalam masa-masa kuliah itulah aku dapat merealisasikan hobiku yang lain mencicipi dunia fashion di Gilberta School yang mempertemukan aku dengan desainer muada. Juan Harvey Natalegawa. Namun, mengenal dunia fashion dan lelaki inilah alasan abah dan umik mulai membatasi pergaulanku. Hingga muncullah keputusan perjodohan. (Sharma, 2020:3)

During those college years, I realized my other hobby, tasting the fashion world at Gilberta School, which brought me together with young designers. Juan Harvey Natalegawa. However, getting to know the world of fashion and men is why my father and mother began limiting my association. Until the matchmaking decision appeared. (Sharma, 2020:3)

The concept of non-mahram in Islam is automatically applied in Islamic boarding school culture and becomes values that are implemented in life, especially when interacting with the opposite sex. Mahram in the Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasith dictionary states that *al-mahram* is *dzul-hurmah*, (i.e. a woman who is forbidden to marry. Not a mahram means a woman who can be married. But as long as she is not married, there are restrictions, namely not being married being alone, touching skin and so on. If you are married, then all the prohibitions become invalid, therefore, restrictions on interacting with the concept of mahram and non-mahram become social control, even if female santri have to interact with men or vice versa, then they should be able to maintaining attitude or behavior so as not to cause slander (Rachman, 2018).

3. Restrictions on Access to Education and Self-Development

Abidah El Khalieqy, in the novel "Perempuan Berkalung Surban", more clearly shows female santrits getting unfair treatment or gender injustice. Female santri are more dominant in the domestic sector, so access to education should be given more attention; it is enough to study religion and get married immediately. This is contained in the data below.

"Tetapi anak perempuan kan tidak perlu sekolah tinggi-tinggi sudah cukup jika telah mengaji dan khatam.sudah ikut sorogan kitab kuning. Kami juga tidak keburu. Ya, mungkin menunggu sampai si Udin wisuda kelak. Yang penting....kita sepakat untuk saling menjaga. Mengenai kapan dilangsungkannya

pernikahan, nanti kan bisa dirembug lagi. (El Khalieqy, 2009:81)

"But girls do not need to go to high school; it is enough if they have recited the Koran and completed their studies. They have joined the yellow book sorogan. We are quick too. Yes, maybe wait until Udin graduates one day. The critical thing is....we agree to take care of each other. Regarding when the wedding will take place, we can discuss it later. (El Khalieqy, 2009:81)

Female santri in the novel "Perempuan Berkalung Surban" experience subordination to their positions and responsibilities in household affairs compared to men. Even the statement "enough is enough" widely describes the limitations in access to education. Mastery of knowledge in a broad context is also essential for women to master both in the field of study and at the level this is not obtained by Annisa.

Most importantly, women get married soon and must also be matched. The difference between the two novels is that the santri woman (Annisa) "rebelled against the unfair treatment she received by protesting a lot, and her actions are reflected in the dialogue between the characters in the novel. Restrictions on access to education and even self-development, according to Annisa's talents have conflicted because of the different views of Annisa's family and herself. Because of that, Annisa feels oppressed by the difference in treatment between men and women. This is according to the following data.

"Yang aneh apanya, Bu? Pak guru bilang, kewajiban seorang perempuan itu banyak sekali, ada mencuci, memasak, menyetrika, mengepel, menyapu, menyuapi, menyususi, memandikan anaknya, dan banyak lagi. Tidak seperti laki-laki, Bu, Kewajibannya cuma satu, pergi ke kantor. Mudah dihafalkan? Mengapa dulu aku tidak jadi laki-laki saja, Bu? Aku ingi pergi ke kantor. Aku juga tidak suka memasak di dapur, bau minyak, bau bawang, bau terasi, dan asap mengepul. Aku ingin belajar naik kuda seperti Rizal. Boleh kan, Bu?" (El Khalieqy, 2009:26-27).

"What is so strange, ma'am? The teacher said that a woman's responsibilities include washing, cooking, ironing, mopping, sweeping, feeding, breastfeeding, bathing her child, and many more. Unlike men, ma'am, he has only one obligation, going to the office. Easy to memorize? Why didn't I be a man, Mom? I want to go to the office. Also, I would not say I like cooking in the kitchen, the smell of oil, the smell of onions, the smell of shrimp paste, and steaming smoke. I want to learn to

ride a horse like Rizal. Can you, ma'am?" (El Khalieqy, 2009:26-27).

As a female santri, Annisa is critical of the treatment always echoed by those around her, including her teacher. The data shows how the duties or roles of a woman are in the domestic sector, and men are in the domestic sector. The author very clearly mentions that these tasks are different. Annisa's wish is to get the same treatment as her brother regarding equestrian skills. Annisa's protest by asking her mother had significant consequences in her life. Different treatment, including educational opportunities in the general field, explicitly asks Annisa why there should be different treatment between men and women to achieve it.

The anthropological approach to feminism focuses on how a woman tells herself all her life experiences or activities without anyone's intervention. With hermeneutic phenomenology, language data provides a rich interpretation of the meaning of how the representation of female santri in access to education and self-development is written by female santrits or female authors. When this feminist anthropological research is studied in literary texts, it cannot be separated from the ideology of the author behind it so that in viewing women with all their activities in different lives it can be varied.

The concept of gender cannot be universalized because it can differ in space and time. Therefore, how can the gender injustice experienced by the three santri female characters and the novel not be equated as a standard of oppression. Photographing a tradition or culture used by a community group is relative because what is good for certain groups is not necessarily good for other groups of people. This cultural uniqueness is understood as an illustration of the various power relations between men and women.

The discussion about power relations between men and women is more enjoyable when revealed in the theory of cultural relativity. When it is identified that a woman accepts a treatment or decision that is seen as detrimental to her and she is willing to accept it, then the willingness of the santri woman is a spiritual potential that is not possessed by women in any part of the world.

D. CONCLUSION

The three novels discussed in this study are Islamic *pesantren* literary novels written by santri writers. It was found that there were differences in the views of the santri writers, namely Khilma Anis, Najhaty Sharma, and Abidah El Khalieqy, in responding to the role and position of female santri. The

view of feminism used by Khilma Anis is more multiculturalism because there is a cultural side of the Islamic Boarding School which colors her writing ideas. The views of Najhaty Sharma and Abidah El Khalieqy have much in common, namely more on equal opportunities or access between men and women in all areas of life. The translation or implementation of Islamic Boarding School values appears varied with the discussion of female santri so that it adds to the colorful repertoire of *pesantren* literature.

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