

WOMEN'S WORLD IN SHORT STORIES ON DUNIASANTRI.CO: A READING OF SANTRIWATI'S WORKS

**Novi Diah Haryanti¹, Atiqotul Fitriyah², Aprilia Pitaloka³,
Syihaabul Hudaa⁴, and Virdika Rizky Utama⁵**

¹²³ *Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia*

⁴ *Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Technology and Business Jakarta, Indonesia*

⁵ *Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

*Corresponding e-mail: novi.diah@uinjkt.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the world of women in short stories written by *santriwati* (female students) on *duniasantri.co* website, which was the first pioneer of student journalism with the concept of citizen journalism. There are 78% of short stories written by *santri* (male students) and only 22% of short stories written by *santriwati*. This gender-based contribution imbalance was appealing to study further. Using qualitative descriptive method to explore the *santriwati* short stories, this research analyzes five short stories in *duniasantri.co* written by *santriwati*. To strengthen the data and analysis, the researcher also conducted interviews with the *santriwati* authors. The study found that there were various themes such as matchmaking and marriage in pesantren, the search for identity, the longing for Ramadan and *Lailatul Qadar*, and patriarchy culture. These themes indicate that education in Islamic boarding schools produces female students with heterogeneous thinking. Therefore, it can be concluded that the world of women is not seen as uniform by *santriwati*.

Keyword: *duniasantri.co*, Pesantren, Santriwati, Women's World.

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dunia perempuan dalam cerpen-cerpen yang ditulis santriwati di website *Duniasantri.co* yang merupakan pelopor jurnalisme santri pertama berkonsep citizen journalism. Terdapat 78% cerpen ditulis oleh santri dan hanya 22% cerpen ditulis oleh santriwati. Ketimpangan komposisi tersebut menjadi daya tarik untuk melihat bagaimana kisah-kisah yang diproduksi oleh santriwati. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskripsi kualitatif dengan objek kajian cerpen-cerpen karya santriwati di *duniasantri.co*. Untuk memperkuat data dan analisis, peneliti juga melakukan wawancara dengan para penulis santriwati. Berdasarkan hasil analisis terhadap lima cerpen yang ditulis oleh santriwati di *duniasantri.co* memperlihatkan karakteristik tema yang beragam seperti perjodohan dan pernikahan di pesantren, pencarian identitas para santriwati di pesantren, kerinduan terhadap bulan Ramadan dan Lailatul Qadar, serta budaya patriarki yang masih membelenggu perempuan. Tema-tema tersebut memperlihatkan, pendidikan di pesantren menghasilkan santriwati dengan pemikiran beragam (heterogen). Dengan demikian dapat disimpulkan dunia perempuan tidak dilihat seragam oleh santriwati.

Kata Kunci: Dunia Perempuan, *duniasantri.co*, Santriwati, Sastra Pesantren.

INTRODUCTION

As a *website* that claims itself to be the pioneer of *santri*¹ journalism, *duniasantri.co* opened its door to anyone to contribute to *duniasantri.co*. By bringing the spirit of *citizen journalism*, *duniasantri.co* contributors could publish their thoughts and ideas in its various columns, including: Opini, *Santriwati*, Teras, Cerpen, Puisi, Sosok, Pondok, and Humor according to the guidelines set by the curators of *duniasantri.co*. All incoming contributions are going through selection process by the curators of *duniasantri.co* to ensure the quality of the writing, including preventing the writing from the plagiarism or double publication. The contributors whose piece was published in *duniasantri.co*

¹ *Santri* is a term to describe students who study in Islamic schools or in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). *Santri* refers to male students, while *santriwati* refers to the female students.

received monetary *reward* after their fifth published work. This system made *duniasantri.co* to be one of most-wanted web portals for *santris* who love writing.²

Besides being active in publishing the writings of *santri*, *duniasantri.co* which was founded in 2019 under the Yayasan Jejaring Dunia Santri Foundation, is also active in conducting journalistic trainings in various places, both online and offline. The active involvement of *pesantrens* in responding to the digital world has resulted in changes in the attitudes and behavior of the *santri*³. Today, *duniasantri.co* has published 2,200 articles spread out in its 10 columns. Based on data from *duniasantri.co* website, Short Stories column attracted the most readers after Teras, Opini, Sosok and Santri Way.

Although literature of *pesantren* (*sastra pesantren*) in early 21st century) was dominated by women's writings⁴, but the data on *duniasantri.co* shows that these writings are still dominated by male writers. Lately, contemporary *pesantren* literature was promoted by notable female *pesantren* writers such as Khilma Anis and Najhaty Sharma, who are *Ning* (the daughter or daughter-in-law of *Kiai*), not many *santriwati* writers could produce similarly unique experience of *pesantren* as did these two prominent authors. Khilma Anis, the writer of novel *Hati Suhita* (2019), is the *pengasuh* of PP An-Nur Jember. The popularity of *Hati Suhita* turned the novel into a film under the same title⁵. Meanwhile, Najhaty Sharma, *pengasuh* of the Al-

² Duniasantri.co, "Duniasantri.Co : Visi Membangun Negeri," 2019.

³ Risdiana, A., Ramadhan, R. B., & Nawawi, I. (2020). Transformasi Dakwah Berbasis 'Kitab Kuning' Ke Platform Digital. *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, 18(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v18i1.682>

⁴ Nor Ismah, "The New Generation of Women Writers from the Pesantren Tradition in Indonesia," *EXPLORATIONS a Graduate Student Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2011): 105–20, [https://scholar-space.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/20308/Nor Ismah- Women Writers Pesantren- EXP 2011.pdf](https://scholar-space.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/20308/Nor%20Ismah%20-%20Women%20Writers%20Pesantren-EXP%202011.pdf).

⁵ Suci Amaliyah, "Khilma Anis Kisahkan Awal Mula Hati Suhita Diangkat Ke Film Layar Lebar," NU Online, 2022, <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/khilma-anis-kisahkan-awal-mula-hati-suhita-diangkat-ke-film-layar-lebar-6ULAY>.

Munir Islamic boarding school, Tegalrejo Magelang, wrote the best-selling novel *Dua Barista*.⁶ Their level of education and privileges of being *Ning* gave them different experiences in the life of pesantren, so that they produce works that are different from the short stories produced by santriwati at *duniasantri.co*.

To date, there are 267 short stories published and written by 54 contributors of *duniasantri.co* from various pesantrens. From these 54 short story authors, 42 of them were male, and 12 of them were female. It means, 78% of short stories were written by *santri*, and only 22% of short stories were written by *santriwati*.⁷ This inequality shows that the involvement of *santriwati* in the publication process is not balanced with the very small number of publications when compared to *santri* writers. This study aims to explore the world of women in the short stories written by *santriwati* in *duniasantri.co*. The women's world refers to the space (place) for women to carry out activities and the life of women themselves. This is in accordance with the concept of the sociology of literature which sees the relationship between literature and social reality and the background of writing as a producer of literary works. For the rest of the paper, the words *santri* and *santriwati* hence will not be italicized.

Pesantren presents unique setting for literature as it has segregation system that is not found in other formal education. Badrus Sholeh said that the segregation system in pesantrens resulted in limited access to *santriwati* compared to the *santri*.⁸ The segregation system also influences the mindset and writing produced between *santri* and *santriwati*. The segregation system in pesantren has also made research that has appeared so far focused on the work of *santri*. This is what makes this research necessary.

⁶ Afina Izzati, "Najhaty Sharma, Novelis Santri Di Balik Karya Best Seller *Dua Barista*," NU Online, 2022, <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/najhaty-sharma-novelis-santri-di-balik-karya-best-seller-dua-barista-gIj5z>.

⁷ Mukhlisin, "Data Penulis *Duniasantri.Co*" (Depok, 2022).

⁸ Badrus Sholeh, *Sastrawan Santri: Etnografi Sastra Pesantren* (Surabaya: Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama (eLSA) Press, 2020), 30.

Recently, literary works originating from pesantren and written by pesantren members are referred to as pesantren literature. Although scholars have not yet agreed on the term *pesantren literature*, various studies have begun to emerge. Jamal D. Rahman revealed three definitions of pesantren literature, namely literature that lives in pesantren, literature written by pesantren people, and literature with the theme of pesantren⁹. Moving on from this definition, Astutiningsih and Pujiarti discussed how humanist religious discourse and ideological position of the santri are represented in the short stories written by santri¹⁰. An important finding to note in this study is that, the religious understanding of the santri who comply with fiqh rules giving priority to human rights and prioritizing humanist values. The three short stories in Astutiningsih's study represent a humanitarian discourse with a value of tolerance and were far from dogmatic-textual judgments. As a *salaf* (traditional) pesantren, discourses on divinity and humanity grow side by side in harmony as seen in literary works. The humanist religious discourse represented in pesantren literature provides space for humanitarian issues in a proportionate way with its cultural context.

Another study on santrei was conducted by Badrus Shaleh¹¹ who directly related the literary tradition of pesantren with the santri sub-culture. This anthropological study suggests that literature is the only medium of creativity that can be accepted in the *fiqh*. Literature can be a medium for religious education and communication. It can also symbolize spirituality as well as personal and communal expression, search for identity, and even support the students' economy. Shaleh's research only focused on male-only pesantrens, while there are also pesantrens with segregated genders.

⁹ Irana Astutiningsih and Hat Pujiati, "Perspektif Santri Dalam Karya Sastra: Sebuah Representasi Wacana Religius-Humanis," *Poetika* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.22146/poetika.v7i1.40902>.

¹⁰ Astutiningsih and Pujiati.

¹¹ Shaleh, *Sastrawan Santri: Etnografi Sastra Pesantren*.

In contrast with the study by Badrus Shaleh¹², Nor Ismah¹³ conducted research on the writings of females from pesantren. In her research, nor Ismah underlined a phenomenon of writing genre in the early 21st century marked by the booming of *teenlit* and *chick lit* genres, that eventually also influenced the old and new writings in pesantren literature. *Teenlit* and *chick lit* were much written and read by females.¹⁴ Some categories were then explained by Nor Ismah by comparing the patterns and genres written by the old generation of pesantren literature writers with the new generation of pesantren literature writers.

The results of Ismah's study underlined two main points. One, pesantren literature is a bridge that connects between pesantren cultures and people outside the pesantren. The new generation of pesantren writers is more inclined to write by genre *teenlit* and *chick lit* which Nor Ismah categorized as *pesantren pop literature*. This phenomenon has made pesantren pop literature more widely known by the wider community and has become a point where pesantren are no longer alienated from modern life. Two, the old generation of pesantren literature between 1960-1990 was dominated by male authors rather than female writers. However, female pesantren literature writers are increasing in number at the beginning of the 21st century. This is because older writers write novels for older mature readers, while new generations of writers write for younger readers, so that the two generations have different narrative patterns.

Another research related to other pesantren pop literature was conducted by Novita Dewi, who analyzed *Santri Semelekte* by Ma'rifatun Baroroh and *Jilbab Britney Spears* by Herlinantiens. In her study, Dewi shows how Islam can be in harmony with *chick lit*. Both novels use the same plot pattern as *tchick lit* novels in the early 2000s, where the story was happy ending and

¹² Shaleh.

¹³ Ismah, "The New Generation of Women Writers from the Pesantren Tradition in Indonesia."

¹⁴ Suma Riella Rusdiarti, "CHICK LIT DALAM SASTRA PRANCIS KONTEMPORER Studi Kasus : Pendapat Peserta Komunitas Sastra Maya Di Prancis Tentang Chick Lit" (Depok, 2007).

had an ideal depiction of characters. Islamic elements are used as decorations that reinforce conflicts related to identity crises¹⁵.

A study that relates on the women's world in short stories is Hayati's research¹⁶ which analyzed 15 short stories in the anthology *Dunia Perempuan*. The research shows that there are 14 short stories that feature the dual roles of women who live in domestic and public spaces, as well as one short story that depicts women in public spaces. The depiction of the domestic world reflects the society's thinking which considers women to be better at home. Hayati also connects the world of women with the image of women. Women were pictured as a mother, a loyal woman, a successful woman, a second woman, an ideal woman, and a negative woman. Through the imagery, it appears that Indonesian women writers adhere to moderate feminism¹⁷.

Based on this background, this research will look at how female writers in the pesantren literature tell stories that describe their world. The stories to be analyzed are short stories published in *duniasantri.co* in 2021. There was a scarcity of studies on pesantren literature, especially in the form of short stories in online portal like *duniasantri.co*. In addition, the lack of research on the works of santriwati makes this research important because of the differences in the life experiences of santriwati and women outside pesantrens. As a portal that publish santri works, *duniasantri.co* depicts the struggles and thoughts of santriwati with all their characteristics. Thus, this research will complement pesantren literature studies, especially by looking at how the world of women is described by santriwati whose experience is distinct.

Literary works function as a reflection of reality, as well as ideal future aspirations for equal roles and rights between women

¹⁵ Novita Dewi, "Formation of Youth Identity in Indonesian Islamic Chick Lit," *K@Ta* 13, no. 1 (2011): 134–46, <https://doi.org/10.9744/kata.13.1.134-146>.

¹⁶ Yenni Hayati, "Dunia Perempuan Dalam Karya Sastra Perempuan Indonesia : Kajian Feminis," *Humanus* XI (2012): 49–56.

¹⁷ Hayati.

and men¹⁸. To explore the world of women in santriwati short stories, qualitative descriptive research was conducted for this study. Descriptive research is an effort to find facts by making the right interpretation of the object of research. While qualitative study is used to show the nature of values whose data source is in the form of texts (works), as well as formal data in the form of words, sentences, and discourses¹⁹.

This study employs a literary sociology approach. As a member of society, literary writers are bound to certain social groups that concern religion, customs, education, and various social institutions around them. Therefore, the relationship between literature and society is natural²⁰. There are five short stories under study, entitled: *Bulan Kesiangan*, *Cinta Istiqomah*, *Sala-wat Pertama Runa*, *Ruwaiya*, and *Dialog*. These five short stories were chosen because they were published in the same year 2021 and have a traceable author's background. To strengthen the corpus and research context, interviews were conducted with santriwati. To support the data, the researchers interviewed the authors via the Google form which was distributed in June 2022. In addition, as a library research, various journal articles, research results, books, and newspapers were used as secondary data. Data collection employed the listening note technique to find narrative patterns, women's issues that appear in the text, and how the world of women is described in the writings of santriwati.

¹⁸ Dini Asmarani, Sarah Monica, and Sari D. Ratri, "Tension of Religious-Traditions and the Ideas of Women's Liberation in Dreams of Trespass' Novel by Fatima Mernisi," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 20, no. 2 (2022): 289–318, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v20i2.1040>.

¹⁹ Nyoman Kutha Ratna, *Teori, Metode, Dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010).

²⁰ Sapardi Djoko Damono, *Sosiologi Sastra* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Arranged Marriage in Pesantren

Arranged marriage in pesantren is not a taboo nor new tradition. According to Dhofier²¹, arranged marriage occurred because the kyai tries to find a good partner for his daughters in terms of religion, lineage, and character. This is due to the fact that his son or his son in law will later lead the pesantren, hence arranged marriages are considered normal and unavoidable. There are at least two short stories that depicted the arranged marriage in pesantren, such as: *Bulan Kesiangan* (BK) and *Cinta Istiqomah*. *Bulan Kesiangan* short story was written by Zahrotul Wardati.

Bulan Kesiangan tells the story of a mother's wish to see her daughter get married. The mother's wish was in conflict her daughter's the main character. Until the end of the story, this mother's wish was not fulfilled. As the story title "Bulan Kesiangan" [late moon] suggests, the main character was passing her prime time in relation to lovemaking. The main character of this short story, Nauri, was a 32-year-old woman, the age range where usually Indonesian women had already get married for the first time and settled with children. The 2020 National Socioeconomic Survey (Susenas) mentioned that 48.59% of women in Indonesia married for the first time at the age of 19-24 years, 26.55% married at the age of 16-18 years, 16.67% married at the age of 25 and over and 8.19% of girls were married at the age of 7-15 years²². Referring to this data, it was not surprising that Mrs. Fitri (the mother) wants Nauri to end her bachelor period and get married because she is no longer young, as she emphasized in the following quotation.

Apalagi usianya juga sudah tak muda lagi. Teman-temannya sudah menikah semua. Namun, dia belum siap. Panjang sekali renungan gadis itu malam ini. Hingga akhirnya dia memutuskan untuk mengikuti kehendak ibundanya. Senin ini dia hendak

²¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren : Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985).

²² Viva Budy Kusnandar, "Mayoritas Perempuan Indonesia Menikah Usia 19-24 Tahun," databoks.katadata.co.id, 2021.

*meminta tolong kepada Kiai Rasyid untuk mencarikan jodoh untuknya. Menurutnya jodoh dari sang kiai insyallah bebet, bibit, dan bobotnya adalah yang terbaik.*²³

[More importantly, she was no longer young. Her friends are already married. However, she said she was not ready. It was a long contemplation night for her. Finally, she decided to follow her mother's request. This Monday, she met Kyai Rasyid and asked for his help to find her a husband candidate. For her, Kyai recommendation must be qualified in terms of piety, knowledge, and lineage (bibit, bebet, bobot)]

The main character of this short story, Nauri, was a female student who memorizes Quran (*hafizah*) and devotes herself to teaching at the Tahfidz An-Nur pesantren. Nauri was described as a santriwati who was obedient and highly dedicated to the pesantren where she studied. It was her dedication to her alama-mater that made her putting off her mother's wish to get married. Becoming an *ustazah* (teacher) was a form of her solemn to the Kyai. For santris, Kyai are leaders, teachers, and role models who have a substantial role in disseminating religious concepts and teachings in pesantren. Kyai's world view became the life guidance of the santri who hope to get the blessings when interacting with and respecting the kiai and his family²⁴. With this world view, Nauri was to ask Kiai Rasyid's help to find a husband for her.

In this short story, the house and pesantren were the central settings of the story. The house connected Nauri and Ibu, while the pesantren became the spiritual setting that shaped the main character's etiquettes, customs, and values. With a pesantren background, polite and obedient characters were built. Culture that presents in pesantren was also present, including the tradition of arranged marriages that often occurs in many

²³ Zahratul Wardati, "Bulan Kesiangan," *duniasantr.co*, 2021, <https://www.duniasantri.co/bulan-kesiangan/?singlepage=1>.

²⁴ Faridatus Sholihah and M. Ali Haidar, "TAFSIR NYAI DAN NING TERHADAP PENDIDIKAN PEREMPUAN SANTRI (Prespektif Hermeneutika Gadamer Dalam Kajian Teks Kitab Kuning)," *Paradigma* 3, no. 1 (2015): 1–12.

pesantrens in Indonesia. Nauri was finally matched with Akbar, a santri administrator who was also looking for a wife. The author's response to the matchmaking of the two can be seen from the following quote.

*Wajah calon mempelai wanita memerah. Dia tersipu malu saat beradu pandang dengan calon suaminya itu. Hatinya berdesir. Memang betul sesuai yang diinginkan Nauri. Selera Kiai Rasyid sangat tinggi.*²⁵

[The face of the future bride blushed. She blushed as she met her future husband's eyes. His heart fluttered. It was exactly what Nauri wanted. Kiai Rasyid's taste is very high.]

Arranged marriage is a theme that often appears in literature regarding pesantren. In the pesantren tradition, arranged marriages are common as an effort to maintain and expand the pesantren networks. With Nauri's character who is polite, obedient and devoted to the kiai, it was not surprising that as a santriwati, the kyai's recommendation of a future husband was her happiness. Bu Fitri as an additional character created a conflict in the story. She was described as a patient, understanding and compassionate character. It was Mrs. Fitri's wish that made Nauri nervous, and attempting to fulfill her mother's wish was form of respect (*birrul walidain*). Unfortunately, her desire was not fulfilled until the end of the story.

Bunga Kesiangan story also shows the generally accepted discourse about the obligation to marry at a young age for women. The slogan "perfecting the half of the deen" seems to be a mantra that continues to be passed from those who are married to (anyone) who is not married. In this sense, the happiness and perfection of women are socially constructed to be conditional to the event of marriage and childbearing. This social construct affected Nuri inasmuch when Nauri didnot the second one, anxiety arose within her.

*"Nduk, Ibu sudah tua. Kamu segeralah menikah. Umur kamu sudah tidak mudah lagi, lho. Ibu pun sudah ingin sekali punya cucu."*²⁶

²⁵ Wardati, "Bulan Kesiangan."

²⁶ Wardati.

[Sweetheart, I am already old. You go get married. You are no longer young, you know. I also want a grandchild so bad]

This conversation excerpt between Nauri and her mom indicated a pressure of marriage from a mother to a daughter. Society considers it “wrong” or “not normal” for a lady in her mature age for not getting married and having children. That is because, in the patriarchal society, marriage and childbearing were the ultimate achievement for women. Her other achievements (education or career) were considered insignificant when these women were not getting married and having children.

This short story portrays the typical spaces of Javanese women called *kasur* (bedroom), *sumur* (water well), and *dapur* (kitchen). *Dapur* became the opening setting of this short story, where Nauri was narrated to be in the kitchen. *Kasur* then became a space where Nauri was so anxious about marriage and children; *kasur* was the most private space for women. *Kasur* and *dapur* were mentioned in this story, depicting the spaces where women should be.

In addition to private homes, pesantrens are public spaces where the main character served and taught santriwati. The segregation of pesantrens based on gender, opens up opportunities for women study at pesantren and became a teacher. It is through these contexts of home and pesantren that the marriage discourse was built and resolved. Related to prospective husband, Nauri was quite passive and waited for a candidate to be recommended by her Kyai. For santri and santriwati, Kyai's choices are the best and must be followed.

The story did not end happily, as Bu Fitri's wish to see her daughter married was not fulfilled. Mrs. Fitri died when Nauri was finally proposed. Mrs. Fitri's passing seemed to be a punishment for Nauri, who married late. This delay in marriage was then illustrated as the late moon: meaningless and futile.

Another story that portrays arrange marriage is *Cinta Istiqomah* written by Yeni Sri Purwanti from Ponpes Al Ainy 2 Nganjuk. In general, the theme of this story was matchmaking and love stories among santri and santriwati. The main character in this short story, Zana was the daughter of a religious leader

and owner of the largest pesantren in Batu city, Malang, East Java. Zana was described as a third Aliyah student (Islamic high school) who was beautiful, friendly, and polite. Zana was also smart and accomplished. This shows a typical ideal character that makes her a popular student and much liked by boys. After becoming an Aliyah student, Zana's appearance became more religious as shown by her wearing a niqab (face cover) and gloves.

Another main character was Akbar, the son of a successful businessman and was Zana's boyfriend. The narrator describes Akbar and Zana as a harmonious couple, both in terms of their physical appearance and economic status. Both characters were loyal, patient, and obedient to their parents. It was this obedience that made Zana and Akbar not refuse an arranged marriage with another person, named Farrell, as can be seen from the following quotations.

*“Abi dan Umi sudah mencarikan jodoh untukku, dan aku tidak bisa berbuat apa-apa selain menurutinya. Karena aku tidak mau jadi anak durhaka, Bar!” jelas Zana dengan air mata yang terus mengalir dari kelopakannya matanya. AllahuAkbar...!! Kenapa nasib kita sama, Za? Namun Allah tidak menakdirkan kita untuk bersama,” jawab Akbar dengan hati yang begitu hancur berkeping-keping.*²⁷

*“Ayah dan Bunda juga sudah mencarikan jodoh untukku, Zana!” Jawab Akbar menjelaskan.*²⁸

[“Abi and Umi (Dad and Mom) have found someone for me, and I cannot do anything but obeying their wish. Because I do not want to be a disobedient daughter, Akbar!”, explained Zana with flowing tears on her cheek.

“Allahuakbar! Why do we have the same faith, Za? Allah does not make us to be together”, responded Akbar with shattered heart.

²⁷ Yeni S Purwati, “Cinta Istiqomah,” *duniasantri.co*, 2021.

²⁸ Purwati.

“My mother and father have already found someone for me too, Zana!” said Akbar.

As a pesantren-based story, the conflict in *Cinta Istiqomah* shows the ambivalence of the characters. On the one hand, the characters (especially women) were depicted as religious and avoiding immorality, but on the other hand they were experiencing "puppy love". Their affection and love have been well maintained for years after school, even though the two were separated by distance. This is what gave rise to the conflict in the *Cinta Istiqomah*.

The word *istiqomah* means firmness, patience in carrying out "feelings of affection". It also means the obedience to arranged marriages made by both parents. In the end, the conflict of the story ends with a surprised matchmaking. Both of them did not know the person they were arranged to, which made them both so anxious. However, this story ends happily because it turns out that they are the arranged couple of both parents. It turns out that Farrell, the man who was arranged for Zana, was Muhammad Farrell Akbar, her very own Akbar. *Istiqomah*, or sustained love of Zana was then rewarded beautifully by this marriage. Zana said “So, our *istiqomah* is not in useless, Bar. Allah is indeed the Most Just.”

Istiqomah presents a different setting of story in the field of pesantren literature, Stories that took place in pesantren usually portrays arranged marriage to be occurred between Kyai’s family, between santriwati and Kyai’s son, between Kyai’s daughter to his santri, and so on. However, in this *Istiqomah* story, the arranged marriage was between Kyai's daughter and a businessman's son. However, the picture of Akbar's piety was highlighted from the start, as shown in the following quote.

.. Dia sudah tidak berani membatah lagi kedua orangtuanya lagi, karena akbar sangat menghormati keduanya. Sedari kecil, Akbar selalu menuruti perintah dan keinginan kedua orangtuanya. Dan kali ini, mau tidak mau dia harus menuruti

*permintaan mereka meskipun harus mengorbankan perasaannya. Dan Akbar pun hanya bisa pasrah dalam dilema ini.*²⁹

[He no longer dared to refute his parents anymore, because Akbar really respected them both. From a young age, Akbar always obeyed the orders and wishes of his parents. And this time, like it or not, he must comply with their request even if it means sacrificing his feelings. And Akbar can only surrender in this dilemma]

As a man, Akbar shows resilience in the face of failure in his love story. This was different for Zana who was described to be with tears flowing from her eyelids until her eyes were bruised and her voice trembled with sadness. The contrasting imagery between Akbar and Zana shows the stereotype of a woman who is weak, sensitive, and getting carried away easily. This gender-bias image was considered reasonable, originating from the patriarchal culture that is rooted in Indonesian society. Zana's fragility and her sincerity in accepting an arranged marriage, ended happily because it turned out that Akbar and Farrell were the same person. Arranged marriage was ideal because the story was finally happy ending and proving that being *istiqomah* was rewarded happily. There was no room for the main characters, Zana and Akbar to refuse an arranged marriage from their parents. So, in this case, the concept of dating which was prohibited in Islam ended with a proposal (*khitbah*).

The search for spiritual identity

A story that narrates someone's search for identity was *Salawat Pertama Runa* (SPR) written by Anna Aruna, a santriwati of PP. Al-Hidayah Karangsucu Purwokerto. Her educational background became the capital for her to write stories with pesantren backgrounds. Runa, the main character in the story, was a new student at a pesantren in Purwokerto. Runa was described as cheerful, easy going with the people around her and had a persistent nature. Runa's tenacity made her a critical and brave person. Everything that was against her pre-conceived

²⁹ Purwati.

understanding would always be questioned until she found an answer. Luckily, Runa was able to meet Ms. Inuy, Runa's senior, who was soft-hearted, compassionate, and patient in responding to Runa's curiosity about everything she had just experienced at the pesantren.

Runa enrolled to pesantren based on the wishes of her parents, who hoped that Runa would go to college but still lives at the pesantren. In addition, her parents did not want Runa to join the radical Islamic movement that was growing at the time. Thanks to Ustadz Baha's direction, a role model figure for Runa's family, her parents finally decided for Runa to stay at the pesantren.

“Nak, Ustadz Baha itu ustaz panutan keluarga kita sejak dahulu. Keilmuannya akan agama tidak mungkin diragukan lagi. Bukan hanya itu, ilmu kebatinan beliau sudah mumpuni. Pasti beliau tidak salah pilihkan kamu di pesantren itu saat ini. Ustadz Baha ingin kamu mempelajari Islam tidak radikal, Nak. Umi tahu kamu pasti berontak dengan keadaan di pesantren saat ini. Tapi kamu harus taat. Pondok pesantren itu berbeda dengan lembaga pendidikan yang lainnya. Nanti kamu akan paham, apa sebenarnya alasan kamu berada di situ. Peluk jauh dari Umi.”³⁰

"My dear daughter, Ustadz Baha has been a role model for our family since long ago. His knowledge of religion is undoubtable, his mysticism knowledge is equally qualified. Surely, he was not wrong to choose you to be in pesantren at this time. Ustadz Baha wants you to learn the non-radical Islam, dear. Umi knows you must be revolted by the current situation at the pesantren. But you must obey. Pesantren are different from other educational institutions. Later you will understand, what is the real reason you are there. Big hug from Umi."

Shalawat Pertama Runa story expresses Runa's anxiety regarding the search for identity in life and religion. Her inner turmoil occurred when she found many differences from the knowledge, she previously learned with what she got at the pesantren. As a daughter, Runa was not given the opportunity to

³⁰ Yuliana, "Selawat Pertama Runa," *duniasantri.co*, 2021.

choose which pesantren she would attend, let alone to refuse the pesantren that her parents chose. Therefore, although at first Runa felt uncomfortable with the habits of pesantren life, or feeling strange about the way the santri spoke which was different from the way she spoke, Runa persisted to stay in the pesantren.

*"Umi, Runa ndak betah di sini. Ngapa-ngapain ndak bebas kaya di rumah. Bahkan, Runa mau lanjut liqo di sini, ndak boleh. Padahal, kan Umi tahu, Runa tipikal orang yang ndak suka dikekang. Suka jalan-jalan, mengaji di outdoor, rutinan ODOJ (one day one juz), halaqah, liqoat, dauroh, jalsa ruhi, dll. Runa pengen pulang, Umi:("*³¹

"Umi, I don't feel comfortable here. Whatever I do was not convenient as is at home. In fact, when I want to continue *liqo* here, I was not allowed. Meanwhile, Umi knows that I am the type of person who does not like being restrained. I like traveling, reciting the Quran outdoors, routine reciting one juz daily, *halaqah, liqoat, dauroh, jalsa ruhi*, and so on. I want to go home, Umi :(

What was depicted in the excerpt above mentioned Runa's identity as hijrah Muslimah who recites one juz daily, *halaqah, liqoat, dauroh, jalsa ruhi*. She also wore niqab and gloves. All the attributes used by Runa, the way she dressed, the way she spoke, and the way she did her routines, all symbolized *hijrah*. *Hijrah* is now interpreted as a change in a Muslim to become more devout (religious) than before³². Religious movements in the form of *hijrah* are a form of religious transformation that is implemented in changes in religious behavior and in the context of group activities. The religious movement developed in the form of the *hijrah* movement initiated by the millennial genera-

³¹ Yuliana.

³² Erik Setiawan, "Makna Hijrah Pada Mahasiswa Fikom Unisba Di Komunitas ('followers') Akun 'LINE@DakwahIslam,'" *Jurnal Komunikasi Mediator* 10, no. 1 (2017): 97–108.

tion³³. The presence of the *hijrah* trend is becoming increasingly popular with the movement pioneered by artists in Indonesia. Increasingly unstoppable digital literacy makes *hijrah* a very interesting phenomenon to do.

Runa, before entering the Islamic boarding school, was following the trend of *hijrah* by changing her appearance and participating in all the activities of communities that claimed to be *hijrah*, such as wearing *isbal* pants (ankle length) for men and wearing socks for women. Runa was disturbed when she encountered many things that were different from what she understood. The religious experience experienced by Runa surprised her, so that she compared it to her previous experience of studying religion.

“Mba, kenapa sih, banyak yang berdandan mencolok di acara selawatan ini? Mereka kan bisa kelihatan sama santri putra?”

“Niat itu ada di dalam hati, Runa. Kita seperti ini karena berniatkan bertemu dengan Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad. Jadi kita berusaha secantik mungkin. Sebagaimana mereka yang di luar sana yang hendak bertemu kekasih, tentu memakai pakaian dan berdandan secantik mungkin untuk kekasihnya. Dan malam ini, kita akan bertemu kekasih sejati, bagaimana kami tidak mempercantik diri,” jawabnya.

Runa tertohok dengan jawaban Mba Inuy

“Lalu, kenapa kita di acara puncak malah selawatan. Ndak pengajian atau lainnya?”

“Karena majelis-majelis selawat adalah majelis cinta. Kamu tahu, selawat itu ibadah yang sungguh luar biasa. Coba deh, salat, zakat, puasa, haji, apakah Allah melakukan ibadah itu semua?”³⁴

[“Sis, why are there so many people who dress up so glamorously at this *salawatan* event? They can get some attention from the santri”

³³ S. Zahara, M.N., Wildan, D., Komariah, “Gerakan Hijrah: Pencarian Identitas Untuk Muslim Milenial Di Era Digital,” *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development* 2, no. 1 (2020): 58–70.

³⁴ Yuliana, “Selawat Pertama Runa.”

"That intention is in the heart, Runa. We dress like this because we intend to 'meet' the the Prophet Muhammad, so we try to be as pretty as possible. It is like someone who wants to meet his lover, they wear clothes and dress up as beautifully as possible for their lover. And tonight, we will meet our true lover, our Propher, how can we not beautify ourselves," she replied.

Runa was stunned by Mba Inuy's answer

"Then, why are we, at the peak of the event reciting shalawat? Not reciting something different?"

"Because shalawat means love for Prophet. You know, shalawat is a truly extraordinary act of worship. Try it, prayer, zakat, fasting, hajj, does God perform all those acts of worship?"

The awareness to understand that religion is the essence of love and compassion made Runa realized that what she had been doing and believing have made her think badly of other people's ways of religion. Runa was thinking that her religious practices were the best way of religion, and that others' ways of religion was wrong. With the new experience that Runa was living, she understood that feeling the most correct was not good and was not liked by Allah SWT. Through the journey to find self-identity, Runa had a new broader understanding that was more tolerant. This newly acquired understanding of Runa was in accordance with the objectives of moral development in pesantrens, including: being independent, living simply, having an *al-karimah* attitude, respecting each other, maintaining good relations with others and respecting pesantren residents, and interacting with the surrounding community³⁵. As a santriwati, the author used the pesantren as the spiritual setting for the story, so that the distinctive nuances of the pesantren appeared in each stage of the plot which was narrated chronologically.

³⁵ Muhaemin Latif, "PERGULATAN PESANTREN DENGAN MODERNITAS (Bercermin Pada Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso Barru)," *Al-Qalam* 25, no. 2 (2019): 379–92.

The world of women and longingness

A story narrating the world of women in relation to longingness was *Dialog*, written by Eva Maulidiyah, an alumna of PP Mambaus Sholihin Gresik. *Dialog* told a story about the longing of the protagonist named *Aku* and *Ia*. In this story, *Ia* was an imagined character by *Aku*. *Ia* represents *Lailatul Qadar* which is believed by Muslims to arrive in Ramadan. *Lailatul Qadar* is the night where Allah sent down the Qur'an, so that it becomes the most special night for Muslims. Therefore, many Muslims crave it because they believe in the blessings of the *Lailatul Qadr* for those who get it³⁶.

The conflict occurred due to the inconsistency of *Aku* in carrying out worship. He gave sharp criticism to *Aku*, who only focused on worship and was only close to Allah in the month of Ramadan, and was distant when Ramadan ended. *Aku* seem to represent Muslims in general who were competing to do good especially during Ramadan.

*“Ada banyak orang di dunia ini, ketika aku pergi mereka berubah, bahkan bisa jadi lebih buruk dari sebelumnya. Kepadamu, aku tak mau membicarakan yang lebih baik sebab aku ingin menegurmu. Aku sering hanya dijadikannya momentum untuk mengadu pada Tuhan dan orang hanya berlomba ketika aku datang saja. Sepeninggalanku, mereka kembali sama.”*³⁷

[“There are many people in this world, of who, when I left they changed, maybe even worse than before. To you, I do not want to speak something better because I want to rebuke you. I was often only used as a momentum to complain to God and people only compete when I come. After I left, they returned the same.”

To reinforce the theme of *longing*, the background is Ramadan and *Lailatur Qadr* night were described with people carrying out *tadarus* after the *tarawih* prayer. The gender of the character *Aku* was not explained because *Lailatul Qadr* meet any

³⁶ Mustofa Bisri, *Fikih Keseharian Gus Mus* (Surabaya: Khalista, 2005).

³⁷ Eva Maulidiyah, “Dialog,” *duniasantri.co*, 2020.

Muslim who is consistent in carrying out worship, especially at the end of the month of Ramadan. By not referring to one particular gender, the reader can also reflect on the ego in the main character in the *Dialog* story.

*“Kalau besok di sisa malam-malammu seperti ini, aku pasti kembali. Asal kamu tahu, aku benar benar pemilih. Hanya orang tertentu dari sekian puluhan juta jiwa di bumi ini yang kuajak berdialog seperti ini, dan kamu beruntung.” Ia mulai beranjak dari posisinya.*³⁸

[“If tomorrow, in the rest of your nights you are like this, I'll definitely come back. Just so you know, I'm really picky. Only certain people out of the tens of millions of souls on this earth I invite to dialogue like this, and you are lucky.” He started to move from his position.]

Although the setting was not mentioned to be in pesantren, but the Islamic nuance was so adamant as shown in this quote:

*Aku baru saja meletakkan mushaf di atas meja lipat di sebelahku. Pakaian salat masih lengkap kukenakan dengan sajadah yang sengaja kugelar kembali di atap rumah sekembali dari tarawih di masjid satu jam yang lalu. Beberapa hari ini aku sangat senang menyendiri di atap, entah untuk mendasar al-Quran atau kemudian mencoret-coret buku harian.*³⁹

[I just put the *mushaf* on the folding table next to me. I still wore my prayer clothes with the prayer rug that I deliberately put back on the roof of the house when I returned from *tarawih* at the mosque an hour ago. These few days I really like to be alone on the roof, either to recite the Quran or to scribble in my diary].

The religiosity as conveyed in the story does not only occur because of the time setting in the month of Ramadan, but also because the character of *Aku* grew up pesantren tradition. It was living in pesantren that made *Aku* and *Ia* to be very close, although in the end this closeness lessened after *Aku* left the

³⁸ Maulidiyah.

³⁹ Maulidiyah.

pesantren. This short story used the point of view of self. The dialogue that occurs between *Aku* and *Ia* uses many metaphors (parables). In addition, the strong nuance of religiosity makes the diction choices in this short story very close to religious symbols, such as the Quran, Ramadhan, *tadarus*, *mushaf*, tarawih, God which strengthens the theme of the longing of the people with Ramadhan and Lailatul Qadar.

From this story, the longing of the writer (santriwati) for the month of Ramadhan and Lailatul Qadr becomes the main conflict in the text. As an Islamic educational institution, pesantren is an ideal place to perform various acts of worship in the month of Ramadhan. Therefore, after leaving the pesantren, *Aku* and *Ia* became restless. The loneliness and sadness appear in the dialogue between *Aku* and *Ia* as seen from the following quote.

*“Kau tahu? Bulan-bulan tanpamu adalah kerinduan yang kosong. Seperti sepanjang tahun menanti kekasih tanpa kepastian,” kali ini aku mencandainya dan disambut tawa riang hingga bahu kami terguncang.*⁴⁰

[” You know, months without you were empty longingness. As if the whole year was waiting for a lover without guarantee,” this time I kidded her and our laughters were burst that our shoulders were shaking.

From this excerpt, a woman’s world in the *Dialog* story was a lonely, hard, resilient, memorable and longing.

Women and the manacle of patriarchy

Ruwaiya short story was written by Iffah, an alumna of Darussalam Billapora pesantren in East Java. Iffah was a founder of Perempuan Membaca [Women Reading] community and daily administrator of Duniasantri.co. This short story portrayed the paralysis of the legal system in cases of sexual violence against women.

Ruwaiya (Iya) the protagonist, had to suffer for the rest of her life as the consequence of sexual violence committed by her then boyfriend that put a profound trauma on her. Ruwaiya who

⁴⁰ Maulidiyah.

only lived with her mother, attempted to report to the authority (police), charging the young man for rape. However, due to ineffective justice system on sexual violence and the little empathy towards rape victims, the case was not handled properly. Trauma burdened Ruwaiya's life, so bad that she ever attempted suicide which ended she lost her sights. Such trials in her traumatic life brought Ruwaiya and her mom to leave the town they have been living, and starting a new life in a new place, far away from home.

The Annual Report of (Catahu) Komnas Perempuan 2022 shows that in the ten years timeframe (2012-2021), 2021 was the highest reported occurrence of gender-based violence, as of 338.496 cases. This number increased 50% from the previous year, even higher than pre-pandemic year (2019). The Annual Report also shows the 83% increase of gender-based violence committed virtually, from 940 cases in 2020 to 1.721 cases in 2021⁴¹. This maigre data suggests that gender-based violence widely occurred in our society and became part of social problems. No wonder that the issues of violence against women also appeared in many literary works, one of which, was the short story.

Ruwaiya short story told us that violence against women in the form of physical and psychological must be fought. Unfortunately, the patriarchal culture leads to negative stereotypes on women who voiced their rights to fight violence. This makes women, especially the victims of rape, were "raped" many times. Physically, women receive sexual violence, mentally they also received violence from the surrounding community. This was also clearly narrated in *Ruwaiya* short story.

Aku ingat sepuluh tahun yang lalu, Ruwaiya mengaku padaku kalau pacarnya memperkosanya. Ia juga mengadukan itu pada ibunya. Ibunya mengadukan itu pada polisi. Tetapi polisi tidak percaya, begitu juga keluarga pacarnya. Tidak

⁴¹ Komnas Perempuan, "PELUNCURAN CATAHU KOMNAS PEREMPUAN 2022: Peningkatan Jumlah Kasus KBG Di Tahun 2021 Menjadi Alarm Untuk RUU TPKS Segera Disahkan," <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/>, 2022.

mungkin itu perkosaan, pasti suka sama suka, begitulah tuduhan orang-orang. Ruwaiya dan ibunya tidak mau menarik gugatan. Pacarnya diadili, divonis bersalah, dan dihukum satu tahun penjara.

Dengan pedih, aku menyesali kenapa Ruwaiya menjadi seperti ini; karena barangkali akupun turut serta 'memperkosanya' bertubi-tubi: dengan ikut menyalahkannya.⁴²

[I remember ten years ago, Ruwaiya admitted to me that her boyfriend raped her. She also told her mother about it. Her mother reported the incident to the police. The police did not believe her, neither did the boyfriend's family. They said that it was impossible that it was a rape, as they assumed it was a consensual intercourse. Ruwaiya and her mother did not want to drop their charges. The young man was going on a trial, plead guilty and charged with one year in prison.

Sadly, I am so sorry to see Ruwaiya like this: as probably, maybe, I was also 'raped' her many times, repeatedly, by also blaming her]

The patriarchal system that dominates the society culture is a fertile ground for social injustice and gender inequality that affect various aspects of human activity. The case experienced by Ruwaiya was a portrait of how patriarchy had killed many women's voices and destroyed their lives. The complexity of life experienced by victims of sexual violence shows that the latent effects faced by victims are very dangerous.

Hingga suatu hari, Ruwaiya benar-benar menabrakkan dirinya ke sebuah mobil yang melintas, yang menyebabkan ia kehilangan penglihatannya.⁴³

Until one day, Ruwaiya literally bumped herself to a passing car, which made her loss her sights]

Violence is a form of action carried out by someone against another person, either individually or collectively, that gives impact on the suffering of other parties who receive the violence. Violence happens in two forms, namely physical vio-

⁴² Iffah, "Ruwaiya," duniasantri.co, 2020.

⁴³ Iffah.

lence which results in physical wound or even death, and psychological violence which does not result in a physical impact on the victim, but results in prolonged trauma on the victims.

Ruwaiya's depression and trauma lost her way to live again. She and her mother's struggle to bring justice to the man who raped Ruwaiya did not succeed. Only few people around her who believe and supported Ruwaiya to seek justice. The police as law enforcers and her boyfriend's family who eventually raped her, rejected Ruwaiya's charge, on the pretext that the incident was of consensual action. The judge's verdict was not worth the pain and harm Ruwaiya has experienced.

*Ruwaiya meradang. Pemerkosa itu hanya didakwa setahun penjara, setahun yang Ruwaiya yakin pasti akan dipotong beberapa hari, minggu, atau bahkan bulan dengan alasan kelakuan baik di dalam penjara atau apalah. Ia dan ibunya putus asa; tak tahu meminta keadilan pada siapa.*⁴⁴

[Ruwaiya was in rage. The rapist was only charged with a year in prison, a year which Ruwaiya was sure would be reduced by a few days, weeks, or even months for good behaviors in prison or something. She and her mother were desperate; not knowing to whom they seek for justice].

Ruwaiya and her mother showed the resilience of women in fighting for their rights and in seeking for justice, even though they were lost in the end. To heal Ruwaiya's trauma, her mother took her to move to a faraway place. This moving was Ruwaiya's mother's resistance to the injustice she and her daughter experienced.

CONCLUSION

The five short stories written by *santriwati* in *duniasantri.co* present the characteristics of various themes, such as: matchmaking in *pesantrens*, the identity search of *santriwati*'s identity in *pesantrens*, their longing for the month of Ramadan and *Lailatul Qadr*, as well as the sense patriarchy that still

⁴⁴ Iffah.

shackles females. These themes suggest that pesantren education gives birth to *santriwati* who have heterogeneous thoughts. These *santriwati* did not view the world of women uniformly. The woman's world in pesantren as presented in *Bulan Kesiangan* and *Cinta Istiqomah* short stories portrays arranged marriages and forced marriages, shows the ambiguity of the female character. Meanwhile, *Ruwaiya* narrates that the victim of rape was under a lot of pressure; the female character was portrayed as strong and fearful. In another story *Salawat Pertama Runa* the theme of *hijrah* and the search for identity appears, showing female characters who are open to changes. Whereas, in the *Dialog*, although the female character is not explicitly presented in the text, the narrator's point of view shows the female character who is resilient and strong in living her bitter life.

Bulan Kesiangan, *Cinta Istiqomah*, *Salawat Pertama Runa*, and *Dialog* have strong pesantren background, both as the story setting and spiritual setting. Meanwhile, *Ruwaiya*'s setting is a small town to show that violence against women does not only occur in big cities. This study shows the variety of short story themes on *Duniasantri.com* and the openness of *santriwati*'s minds to the female world of pesantren. This research complements research related to pesantren literature which previously focused on the writings of *santri*. The emergence of various websites that accommodate the writings of *santri/santriwati* facilitates access to the development of students' thinking so that research related to the works of Islamic boarding schools can continue to be carried out in line with the attitude of pesantren in facing changing times.

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