

Understanding Female Religiosity in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article analyzes coping mechanism under the restriction of women's role in domestic sphere. These women are members of Jam'iyat al-Nisa Assembly of Muslim (Majelis Taklim Jam'iyat al-Nisa – MTJN). This research is conducted using qualitative method, namely direct observation and in-depth interview. The result of the research shows that these women join MTJN to get away from their repressing domestic life, to meet friends with the same experience, to share their stories, and to do fun activities like joining the campaign of political parties or local elections, getting Islamic clothing and free picnic, as well as gossiping which some times could lead to the embarrassment of their husband. Going to MTJN does not solve their problems, but they are not going to file for a divorce for afraid of the negative "stigma" of becoming a widow or the social mockery which is common in the Tangerang patriarchal society. Most of Jam'iyat al-Nisa members use the assembly of Muslim as their legitimate coping mechanism and stress release particularly in the subordinate husband-wife relationship.

Keywords: coping mechanism, patriarchal culture

1 INTRODUCTION

Majelis Taklim or Assembly of Muslim in Indonesia is very much in number, even up to thousands. Majelis Taklim grows like mushroom and growing rapidly, to spread almost to all regions in Indonesia. In 2013 the number of Majelis Taklim recorded in the Directorate of Islamic Education of the Republic of Indonesia reached 165,000 with the number of congregation as much as 9,887,873.

Relevant studies that have been conducted on, Majelis Taklim among which are Sururin (2008), Firmansyah (2002), Yanto (2011), Fitriah (2007), Rohmaniyah (2007) Hamidi (2006), Taufiq (2008) Ihsana (2006), Suhari (2006), Najmiyah (2005), and Adi (2006). The conclusions of the above mentioned studies are that Majelis Taklim plays a role in increasing religious knowledge of mothers so they are practicing their better religion, obeying the religious command and away from the prohibition of religion. Majelis Taklim's role is to encourage man's behavior in the congregation to implement Islamic teachings in daily life.

Based on the above description, studies that have been done to review the Majelis Taklim are only in terms of normative course. These studies explore aspects of values and norms according to Islamic teachings, Majelis Taklim can play a role in increasing religious knowledge, practicing better religious values, obeying religious orders, considering seriously religious prohibitions, and reviewing Islamic da'wah. These studies have been conducted by institutions, such as, the faculty of Islam, majoring in Islamic education and Islamic da'wah faculty. Yet, none of the studies has been deeply investigated the reality of women's lives who participated in Majelis Taklim, and their reasons for joining Majlis Taklim, and their experiences in participating Majelis Taklim Therefore, this study tries to find out about all of these issues using anthropological perspective.

There are approximately 712 officially registered Majelis Taklim in Tangerang. This number was distribute from 1.045 mosques and 3.015 mosques. Usually, in the mosque and musholla there are also Majelis Taklim (Tangerang City Government official website in 2013). There are women-only

Majelis Taklim, men-only Majelis Taklim and woman and man Majelis Taklim, this study focuses on Majelis Taklim whose member are women. The Majelis Taklims are called Majelis Taklim Jam'iyat al Nisa (MTJN) meaning groups of women. This MTJN is dedicated for women because based on experience, growing fast Majelis Taklim was usually majelis taklim with mostly women members. Women who are active members in majelis taklim are mostly housewives. Housewives have more free time than men to participate in Majelis Taklim. And in Education side, the women who become a bachelor is still fewer than men, so they are more excited for looking for religious knowledge than men.

Based on the datas, Tangerang society is still have strong patriarchal culture. This can be seen from the following indicators; First, women's education is lower than men. Statistical data of 2012 in Tangerang district, Banten, shows that 75.69% of women aged 15 years and over are not finished their junior high school, the majority of women only graduated from elementary level, which is 30.70%. The higher level of education have lower percentage of women graduates, that is senior high school (18,59%), college (2,74%) and university (3,02%). School enrollment rates of girls ages 13-15 and 16-18 are lower than boys at the same school age. The education level of the female population is very low where 30,70% of female population are graduated in elementary school, so the female population are had less participate in the developmental region (Provincial RPJM Document Banten 2012).

Second, number of women who work is lower than the men. The results of data collection of National Work Force Survey (Sakernas 2012), reports that inhabitants of Banten Province are 6,452,566 people where 50.37 percent of them are men and 49.63% are women. Beside that, the largest number of women workers are also filled by workers from elementary school graduated (35.03%), from this number we can see that many women are still unable to join the work force because just there is fewer women had high formal education.

Third, domestic violence that occurred in the Tangerang City area increased between 10% to 20% every year. Based on data from the Tangerang City Police and Child Protection (PPA) unit, in 2010 there were 250 violations, up 20% from last year (Tangerang News.com, 14 January 2011).

Statistics of Banten Province also shows that the most cases of domestic violence, especially violence against wives in this province are located in Tangerang. Women who are victims of violence (ages 22 - 59 years) amounted to 3,134 people. Most

victims of domestic violence are still reluctant to report domestic violence in their households.

Fourth, polygamous marriage. According to the Legal Aid Institute of the Indonesian Women for Justice Association (LBH APIK): polygamy is most prevalent in the Tangerang area and increases every year. In 2007, only 16 cases of polygamy complaint but in 2008 there were 87 cases. It means for a year there are more than 500% increased poligamy complaint cases. Field observations show there are more polygamous marriages because marriages generally take place with a serial marriage without being registered officially through the Office of Religious Affairs. Based on the description the authors have outlined above, the research question becomes: Why are women who are depressed in their home life due to authoritarian of their husbands, happy to go to MTJN that often teach loyalty and obedience to their husbands, What the truth expected MTJN Members for joining the Majelis Taklim.

2 METHODS

This study was conducted for six months, from January 2015 to June 2015. In an effort to collect data, Authors applied qualitative methods and techniques are used, namely observation and in-depth interviews. I studied the qualitative characteristics of informants, that the informant is not determined on the basis of the sampling principle. Informants are individuals who know about a particular culture in their community without any sampling considerations at all (Jhonson 1992), (Bohannan, 1988). The snowballing technique is also not correctly to used because the informants may not necessarily be from the same domain, which can be connected in a network as required in this rolling snowball technique. So with a good report card, through careful observation and depth I choose a informant who understands about research question.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dominance of men to women, in the limitations of women's movements in the household is the result of women's disempowerment of their social embeddedness, and this is because women are historically and culturally perceived as subordinate, Jacques Lacan (1977) a French philosopher said that Society is governed by a series of interconnected signs (symbols), roles and rituals that exist in society. The prevailing rules in Tangerang society are women occupying a subordinate position to men.

Alwedini (2017:8), has done research in Saudi express patriarchal influences and gender expectations lead Saudi women to choose the study of particular fields at university level.

Women are considered inferior to men in the aspects of marriage, property and inheritance rights (Ajala, 2016:2).

Many anthropologists have dealt with the distribution of roles and tasks between men and women within the family pattern on the basis of sex and gender depending on biological differences and the natural formative difference between them. Some believe that motherhood and its associated functions are only concerned with women in relation to pregnancy, childbearing, breastfeeding, and baby care (Himat, 2015:126).

Bennet (1976) reveals coping mechanism is a human adaptation strategy in order to adapt to the surrounding environment. Humans always strive to adapt to the surrounding natural environment, both biologically / genetically and culturally. It can be adaptive or maladaptive. So that adaptation is an active human strategy in facing the environment.

Coping mechanism is a specific process accompanied by an attempt by an individual to confront and anticipate situations and conditions that are pressing or threatening both physically and psychically predicted will be able to burden and exceed the ability and resilience of the individual concerned. The process can be either mastering the existing conditions, accepting the conditions at hand, weakening or minimizing the problems at hand.

Based on research, there are some reason why are women who are depressed in their home life due to authoritarian of their husbands, happy to go to MTJN that often teach loyalty and obedience to their husbands. First, they due to coping mechanism, avoiding by taking "Temporary Retreat" to go outdoors. For MTJN participants going outdoors is an expensive and difficult thing for wives to do. Their authoritarian husbands do not give them the freedom to go outdoors. Everytime the wives go out of the house, the wives must took permission first from their husband. Second, the wives looking for refreshing from their bad domestic. To attract the attention of the congregation and make them not bored, strategy that used by the ustadz is to insert pantun or humor story. In particular, MTJN participants feel happy and be filled spiritually at the same time. So the pantun and humor is always inserted in every dakwah.

The other side, sometimes the members of MTJN usually do Gossiping and degrading their husband's name, the member of MTJN tell each other. The contents of their story are mostly about bad habits of their husbands. Gossiping with downing husband's name, is a purely symbolic resistance-the rumor that authors investigated, follows the same pattern. It is

not a gossip that can be defined as a story that tells about an absent third party; Once made it an anonymous story with no origin but many dealers. Although the gossip is not a story that respects people at all, gossip still respects the broader normative order in which it operates. Behind every piece of gossip is not just news, there is an implied statement about a rule or norm that has been violated (Scott, 2000).

James Scott (2000) show the powerless parties, but the thing that can they do is rejection or become hidden opposition. This is called a hidden resistance or hidden transcript resistance. Women basically have no power, but they can also do hidden resistance, which is through stealing time out of the house, gossiping, dropping their husband's name and so on.

The women who become a victims of domestic violence, basically will looking for solution and comfort place for show their depressed. One of the solutions is joining MTJN. There are some advantages that they will get if join MTJN, they can relaxing their mind, gossiping and sharing some story with the same people who got the domestic violence too. Especially, they expected to reduce their husband's bad habituals if they were active in MTJN.

MTJN participants also got new clothes, headscarves and transport money from the activities at outside of MTJN, such as when direct local elections, whether for the election of regents or governors, require campaigners to mobilize the masses in order to reap votes for candidates for regional heads. The campaigns are held often accompanied by the lure of goods as souvenirs or gratitude in the form of money for the participation of the audience.

In fact, MTJN is not a Solution, MTJN does not provide solutions to daily problems faced by congregation. The liveliness of the congregation on MTJN did not change their husbands' behavior. Their husbands are still authoritarian, abusive, and arbitrary. Precisely through MTJN, the subordinate position of women is further strengthened through Islamic doctrines that say that a wife must obey to her husband.

One thing that keeps the women still defending their homes, they are afraid become a widows. Society considered that a widow was a negative thing. Negative stereotypes are frightening to women so they choose to stay their married even they are not happy. If they divorce and become widows, these women will get scorn from their social environment.

4 CONCLUSIONS

First, the MTJN members have a varied background. Some women become congregation of MTJN as a coping mechanism for the effort to break away

momentarily from the fatigue life as a wife or housewife. The others congregation are the victims of domestic violence, so they looking for solution and comfort place to show their depressed.

Behavior coping mechanism conducted by women in MTJN that is the way that the individual do to face and anticipate the situation and condition that is pressing or threatening both physical and psychic. In the context of the women in this study, they coping mechanisms to deal with patriarchal cultural pressures in the family.

Second, the women who become a victims of domestic violence expected to reduce their husband's bad habituals. So, they joining MTJN to seeking religious knowledge and sometime they do gossiping, dropping their husband's name and sharing with other members about their husband' bad habituals. But, Going to MTJN does not solve their problems, they are not going to file for a divorce for afraid of the negative "stigma" of becoming a widow or the social mockery which is common in the Tangerang patriarchal society. Most of Jam'iyat al-Nisa members use the assembly of Muslim as their legitimate coping mechanism and stress release particularly in the subordinate husband-wife relationship.

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