

How to Deal and Negotiate with the Campus Environment? Female Students' Experiences in Reconstructing Gender Identity

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Abstract: Being an 'ideal woman of Muslim version,' or *muslimah* in Indonesia, is the expectation from any family, and studying at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) is an option. However, female students confronted cultural shock when switching to a campus environment and experienced identity mediation. Experiences of study and interaction with the campus environment as well as the confrontation of gender norms between different *pesantren* and university, require them to renegotiate the meaning of gender and reinterpret Islamic teachings to meet their developing identity needs. To enhance our comprehension of the potential impact of higher education on gender identity negotiations, this study researched three female students who graduated from *pesantren* and then continued their education at university. The researchers employed in-depth interviews, discussions, and sharing of experiences through essays to obtain comprehensive information. This study found that *pesantren* and campus create an environment for thinking development. Some took the middle path to become more moderate, and others even resisted the *pesantren* doctrine. It generates novel assumptions concerning gender rather than the two prevalent perspectives, traditionalists who preserve the old system or principles and feminists who battle for gender justice based on their interpretation. Therefore, it is suggested that *pesantren* begin to adapt to the curriculum and public-school materials relevant to the era. Preserving a conservative notion of gender will diminish interest in studying at the *pesantren*.

Keywords: *pesantren* education, gender, negotiating female student, academic environment.

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Until recently, studying in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) is important for most Indonesian students (Nilan, 2009; Srimulyani, 2007), mainly because of the desire to learn about the Islamic religion. According to Ricklefs (1993), Islam is an inseparable part of Indonesian history (Rahayani, 2017). During the Golden Age of the Majapahit empire in the 14th century, Islamic traders ventured into the archipelago with the purpose of spreading Islam (Ricklefs, 2013). Hence, Islam has a powerful influence on the social life of society. Religious values are taken as basic educational standards and goals, ideally manifested as true moral values shown by students (Nilan, 2009; Raihani, 2007; Srimulyani, 2007). Through piety, parents expect their children to be pious after learning about religion. In *pesantren*, students start living in *Pondok* (dormitory) after completing elementary school education (Nilan, 2009; Srimulyani, 2007; Syukur, 2019; Thohiri, 2018). Parents think that their children are at the right age to live apart from the family. However, currently, many *pesantrens* provide education starting from elementary school age (Zuhdi, 2006).

The Indonesian government has instituted two distinct curriculums: the general national schools prioritizing general subjects over Islamic teachings and a special curriculum for *madrasahs*, and *pesantren* as schools focusing on Islamic teachings. The Ministry of Education is responsible for managing the general national schools, whereas the Ministry of Religious Affairs is the entity that administers *madrasah* and *pesantren* (Lopes Cardozo & Srimulyani, 2021; Lukens-Bull, 2017; Pohl, 2006; Rahayani, 2017; Raihani, 2012). Subsequently, after completing basic schooling in elementary school, many students persist in their education at the *pesantren* for six to seven years, and based on our investigations, we discovered that a multitude of students who graduated from the *pesantren* then advance their education at the collegiate level specializing in the non-religion major. Nevertheless, 'the contrast' between *pesantren* and university environments creates a challenge for many students in studying at university. Female students starkly face these differences. They experience a new culture – related to gender construction – where the *pesantren* environment is very strict, while at the university, there are 'no boundaries.' As female students who graduated from *pesantren* renegotiate to live and study in a new culture, they face complex identity concerns. Some female students undergo a process of identity development whereby they modify their personal and social identities. The present study examines the experiences of three female students who graduated from *pesantren* and then studied at university, exploring the cultural identity constructed by the *pesantren* with its current developing, strong doctrines about Muslim women and gender (Marhumah, 2019). How do these women adapt and negotiate with a campus environment that is different from the *pesantren*?

***Pesantren* Doctrine on Muslim Women**

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' website, the number of *pesantren* registered until 2019 was 27,722, and the estimated number of students was 4,173,502. Additionally, female students account for approximately 47 percent of the total 4,173,502 students. The issue of gender inequality in *pesantren* has become a crucial debate and has even become a prejudicial image for Islam (Marhumah, 2015; Prasetiawan & Lis, 2019). The development of Islamic teachings, such as authoritative fiqh (ra`you), is dogmatic (Prasetiawan & Lis, 2019); in other words, the learning model in the *pesantren* cannot be debated or questioned by students, let alone monologue-style learning. One example of this discourse is about the position of women in the realities of social life (Marhumah, 2015). The notion of 'women *kodrat* (women's nature) as primarily housewives limits women's career opportunities.' In the view of Michel Foucault (1978), gender socialization in religious institutions involves five aspects: (a) discipline and behavior demanding certain systems, (b) rites, (c) symbols, (d) the supremacy of certain cultural truths, (e) institutionalizing norms

through the symbolization of figures and belief models certain. Society and the community implement gender socialization as one strategy and mechanism to maintain power (Foucault, 1980). Gender socialization circulates messages, discourses, values, norms, beliefs, and models representing certain gender construction models. These elements are called 'discourse'. Discourse is knowledge combined with power. So, every idea, teaching, message, and understanding of men and women in society always contains the manifestation of power, which knowledge continuously produces.

The domination of certain gender discourses in *pesantren* is a product of certain power relations in which one group is more dominant over another group. Dominating gender discourses regulate and normalize the function of all actions, behaviors, and gender relations among the *pesantren* communities. As the top leadership, the *Kiai* (cleric) has absolute power and determines all the *pesantren's* rules. The *Nyai* (the *Kiai's* wife) assists the *Kiai* and *Ustadz* or *Ustadzah* (male and female teachers in *pesantren*) to carry out their duties. Socialization produces and reproduces gender discourse in *pesantren*. The discourse includes various elements, such as values, norms, teachings, models, behavior, rules, and other gender messages. *Pesantren* uses the '*kitab kuning*' - a collection of Islamic laws written by Islamic scholars- as the source of Islamic teachings to legitimize these rules (Marhumah, 2015) so that students accept these truth values as absolute and undebatable. Doctrinal and axiomatic in nature. figure 1 demonstrates the gender socialization process in *pesantren*.

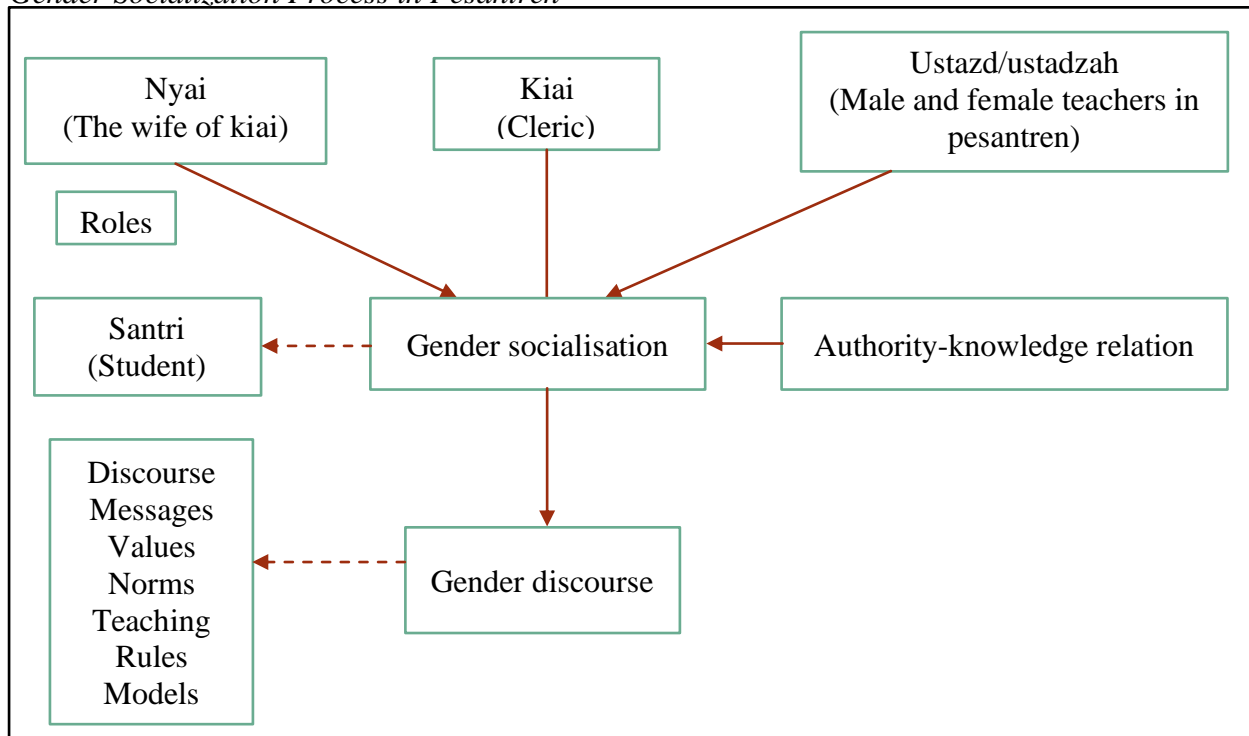
To foster being a Muslim with a good reputation, *pesantren* education emphasizes religious and moral values (Srimulyani, 2007). However, apart from the moral values applied to both male and female students, some moral values are specific to female students as *Muslimah* (Muslim women). Female students receive particular treatment that arises from gender-specific moral values socialized and nurtured by the *ustadzah* (female teachers). These moral values originate in the local communities' religion and socio-cultural components (Marhumah, 2019, 2015; Srimulyani, 2007). Female students are accorded exclusivity in the regulation system as they are viewed as more 'vulnerable' to everything, such as slander and disgrace. Although this isn't always the case, the opinion stays, and parents will have an increased sense of responsibility to take care of their daughter until marriage.

Pesantren education is characterized by the feature segregated/single-sex education system (Raihani, 2012; Srimulyani, 2007). Most *Pesantren* across Indonesia implement and perpetuate gender-segregated education. Male and female students have no natural interaction (Raihani, 2012). The simplest rationalization is to shield female students' *aurat* (women's bodies) thus, male and female students could not converse or even meet each other. The *pesantren* enforces even more stringent regulations for female students, and they are not permitted to exit the *pesantren*. However, gender is a social construction, not something natural (Adriany, 2019; Khurshid, 2015; Webster, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 2009). On the one hand, patriarchal socio-cultural factors construct gender bias (Adriany, 2019; Mustofa et al., 2021). Conversely, *pesantren* utilize misinterpreted Islamic teachings sourced from the '*kitab kuning*' to negate the role of women (Marhumah, 2019, 2015, 2016; Prasetiawan & Lis, 2019). Thus, gender bias is not only a result of Islamic teachings but is also a product of the socio-cultural community.

Socialization about gender and 'how to be a good woman' originates from the *pesantren* rules of the *Kiai*, the absolute leader in the *pesantren*. Female students are bound to these rules, cannot debate them, and must absolutely obey them since; besides the *Kiai's* command, this rule usually rests on Islamic law in the *kitab kuning*. Therefore, the rules stand on strong legitimacy. Women must be good women, especially when they get married, obey their husbands, maintain dignity, cover their *aurat*, and not look attractive in front of a man who is not a *mahram* (*mahram*

meaning anyone who is not from the family). Moreover, the state supports this sort of discourse, namely women as appendages of their husbands and women's dependence on their husbands as ideal (Brenner, 1999). The discourse on the *kodrat* of Indonesian women prescribed that they should be meek, passive, obedient to the male members of the family, sexually shy and modest, self-sacrificing and nurturing (Wieringa, 2003; Wulan, 2008). To this end, their main vocation is wifehood and motherhood. This teaching is given to female students yet not to male students. While the teaching for male students is that they are a leader and head of the family who is obliged to protect and provide for their wife physically and spiritually (Marhumah, 2019). By their very nature, these are noble teachings if placed in the right and proportional context.

Figure 1
Gender Socialization Process in Pesantren



Note. Gender socialization is instilling gender roles process in *pesantren*. From Hadith, justice, and gender equality: Indonesian progressive Muslim thought, by Marhumah, M. (2019). *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 27(1), 405-417. Copyright 2023 Citation & Infometrics Center & Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

The rules on how to maintain women's *aurat* are one of the most crucial things in *pesantren*. By covering her body, a woman ensures that her *aurat* is respected not to attract male lust. In addition, talking about 'sex' is very taboo in *pesantren*. *Pesantren* actively prevents *Santri*, especially female students, from thinking about sex via repeated warnings, surveillance, programs for more senior students that regulate the behavior of younger students, lack of privacy, lack of free time, and discouragement from standard leisure practices such as reading novels, watching television or listening to music (Nilan, 2009; Srimulyani, 2007). In such discourse, the only 'riches' offered are piety and knowledge bestowed by the devoted teacher, despite there being no guarantee that the *santri* (student) will obediently accept what is offered (Nilan, 2009).

Education for Women in the Indonesian Context

In many ways, women are often forgotten. Suryakusuma (2011) argued that a history book, which discusses the birth of the Indonesian national unity pioneered by youth on October 28, 1928, rarely highlights the role of women who contributed to building human civilization and social processes. In fact, according to Suryakusuma, on 22-25 December 1928, Indonesian women also held their first congress at the *Djojidipoeran* Mataram Building, Yogyakarta. They gathered to discuss strategic matters related to Indonesian women, gender issues, welfare, marriage, polygamy, and access to education (Ashton et al., 2012; Arifia & Subono, 2017). This marginalization of the role of women in Indonesian history aligns with the historian Cynthia Enloe who described nationalism as usually arising from masculine memories, masculine humiliation, and masculine expectations (Enloe, 2014; Wieringa, 2003).

Rules of the pre-independence era, especially before 1900, allotted women fewer opportunities than men to self-actualize (Surbakti & Davasahayam, 2015). During this period, authorities generally did not allow girls to attend school. As in many developing other countries, women in Indonesia continue to have less access to education than men. Predominantly women cannot access the type of education required to operate in a secular world (Oey-Gardiner, 1991). They are even prohibited from working outside the home, let alone occupying communal positions. On the other hand, women often aspire to get married. In 1897, Indonesian history notes that only 278 native students were given access to two-year education in Java-Madura, with no female students included. Meanwhile, in 1898, the schools run by the colonial government had only 11 female students throughout the Dutch East Indies region. (Pane, 2005; Surbakti & Davasahayam, 2015). Education empowers those with access to it because educated people are more likely to realize higher well-being levels. There is a growing awareness in developing countries that education for women provides important advantages (Rankin & Aytac, 2006). The Bobbitt-Zeher study reported that it is important that education continues to contribute to gender equality (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). Moreover, educating women has been proven to raise family income and diminish social discrepancies, leading to higher income and career advancement. (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007; Rankin & Aytac, 2006). Women have long been unable to reach the same level of success as men, both in terms of acting and receiving development. The accomplishment of nation-building is often credited to men specifically. After independence on 17 August 1945, women's circumstances began to improve slightly due to the right to education for every citizen, as guaranteed in Indonesia's constitutions and policies (Surbakti & Davasahayam, 2015).

In the New Order era (1967-1998), the government systematically domesticated Indonesian women by touching the smallest units of society, such as women's organizations starting from the sub-district with the mission of 'returning women to their nature.' It is almost impossible to define the role of women as mothers singly from different time contexts. Although the stigma of mothers who only carry out domestic functions is still dominant, images of alternative mothers continue to grow and spread that women are not just 'mothers biologically' but must become the 'mother of the nation' as a form of obedience to men. The following husbands' culture became increasingly embedded in the definition of a mother's role during the New Order. Tien Soeharto's speech (President Soeharto's wife) at the State Palace to the wives of participants in the Working Meeting of Governors, Regents, and Mayors throughout Indonesia, quoted by 'Selecta Magazine' in 1977, confirms this.

Right now, I feel very happy [...] because I am among mothers who have faithfully accompanied and supported their husbands in carrying out their duties [...] Women and mothers must take part in this development. "Of course, we have to be able to choose exactly what areas are capable and should be handled by women.

There was also Suharto's speech on Mother's Day in 1978 at the Senayan Convention Center, which stated,

[...] no matter what progress women want to achieve, women do not want to lose their feminine and maternal characteristics. The advancement of Indonesian women must mean the perfection of their nature and nature as women as mothers. A woman who has lost her feminine and motherly character and role will not experience true happiness.

Words such as 'kodrat' and 'obligation' became weapons of the New Order to reduce mothers' roles. The New Order Leaders controlled women's activities and dictated their enthusiasm to uniformly support those in power. This control expanded not only to the wives of civil servants, but to the broader community through the formation of the PKK 'Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga' (empowerment of family welfare). In the end, the national domestication of women by the New Order kept mothers away from the initial spirit of the Indonesian Women's Congress. Glorification is given to the figure of a mother who is obedient to her husband, does not talk about politics, and acts according to her 'nature' as a housekeeper. These have a tremendous impact on the low level of enthusiasm for women to obtain tertiary education. In time, women have made progress and have been participating in many aspects of life, including politics. Much progress began during the reform era in 1998. However, socio-cultural factors still often display inequality or discrimination against women. Moreover, Indonesia's strong patriarchal culture preserves this inequality (Rohman, 2015; Samarakoon & Parinduri, 2015). In addition, the image of the role of the mother formed by the New Order regime remains. Therefore, Mother's Day is often identified only with expressions of love and appreciation for the services of a mother in her domestic role.

Methodology

This study took over a year between June 2019 and August 2020 at a private university in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. This study adopts an ethnographically oriented approach to collect empirical data and uses thematic analysis to examine the experiences of three female students. We departed from a profound curiosity due to an unintentional interest in some female students who graduated from *pesantren* and had a special tendency to be 'self-exclusive.' This research is part of a qualitative study focusing on 3 female students graduating from *pesantren*. They study in education majors, and all their names are pseudonyms; Mia, a 22-year-old, has pursued her studies at a *pesantren* for seven years and is currently in her sixth semester. Hasanah, 22 years old and in her fourth semester, has been studying at a *pesantren* for seven years, while Shifa, 20 years old and in her sixth semester, has been studying at a *pesantren* for six years. We examined the female students who graduated from *pesantren* and attended elementary school up to high school to gain abundant and deep information. Further, we selected three students from different regions and *pesantren*.

We collected data through semi-structured interviews in four steps (Alfurayh & Burns, 2020; Gao, 2018; Zheng, 2020). The earliest data we collected were observations, 'naturally observing,' and sharing. After that progressed for about 2 months, we provided the participants with 12 questionnaires. After we read and highlighted the important information related to the topic, then followed up with deep interviews and discussions to gain more information. Additionally, to provide the freedom and to anticipate ideas not covered in the interview, we asked each participant to write essays (Gao, 2018), respectively in the first and second years they study at university about how they negotiate and deal with the different values and beliefs between *pesantren* and university. We allotted them a two-day period to compose an essay, and they could take it home.

We conducted interviews one-on-one with each participant in *Bahasa Indonesia*. To avoid boredom, we divided the interviews into two sessions for a duration of 45 minutes each. Transcripts used pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. Prior to the interviews, we asked the participants for consent for the entirety of the research series, including asking permission to record the interview. We also conveyed the description and scope of the research.

Table 1

List of interview questions

No	Questions
1.	How does being a university student or in a new environment feel?
2.	Between the <i>pesantren</i> and the university, the environment is different, how do you start your days?
3.	Is there any concern as a student at the university? Why?
4.	Tell me something that happened and your activities when you were a student at the university.
5.	Could you share your experience of how you interact with male students?
6.	What are the difficult things for you when interacting with male students, considering that this has never happened at the <i>pesantren</i> ?
7.	How do you think the interactions between male students and female students should be?
8.	As a woman, what are your thoughts and feelings about being a <i>santriwati</i> (female student) and being a female university student?
9.	Are you able to actualize yourself as a woman?
10.	So far, what are the barriers to studying at university?
11.	How do you compare between <i>pesantren</i> and university environments?
12.	Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience or your days at university?

The interview data were transcribed, then translated into English with the help of a colleague from the Department of English Education who was highly knowledgeable and experienced. We coded and employed thematic analysis to identify recurring themes. The numerous small pieces of data collected from observations, interviews, and essays were gradually combined or related to form broader, more general descriptions and conclusions. To ensure that the coding (code category and code name) is correct, we first made a scheme that defines each word and term (Lodico et al., 2010). Words and terms we derived from the data we have collected and coded. Firstly, we transcribed data and highlighted the essential information related to the topic. Secondly, we sought to understand the scope of their data (written and coded in the margin) by coding related themes and theories: adaptation, nervousness, emotion, and constructing gender

identity. Thirdly, we did an initial review to gain a sense of the data's overall flow and structure. Fourthly, we reviewed specifically to analyze how each individual uses language, noting words or phrases to identify the theme or big idea (Lodico et al., 2010). To ensure the reliability of the analysis, interview data were compared with data obtained from initial observations and sharing, as well as information provided from the essays written by participants, and the interpretation of the data also took considered contextual information, i.e., we still pay attention to the data obtained with the existing context. This data ultimately formed broad coding categories: Personal characteristics; shy person, adaptation, and skill. Relationship; female student-male student. Feeling emotion; nervous, fear, happy, inconvenient. Cultural context and social context; Islamic, gender, femininity. Concept issue; Construct gender identity, body.

Findings and Insights

An overview of the findings is that students who graduated from *pesantren* and later studied at university uniquely construct their gender identities. Of the three participants, Shifa and Hasanah displayed the same mindsets and one participant, Mia, displayed a distinct mindset. However, each has a different tendency to adapt to the university environment. Firstly, all participants emphasized that regardless of women's position, they should not forget their nature as a woman (*kodrat*). The Islamic boarding school's doctrine of the 'ideal woman' is still nurtured. Although Mia has a broader view of nature, according to her *kodrat* is related to innate instead of roles. Secondly, participants reported that when women appeared in the public sphere or even interact with members opposite sex, they must cover their *aurat*. According to their beliefs, the body is essential for women (Dahl-Michelsen & Solbrække, 2014) so as not to invite slander and lust from men. However, Mia has a divergent interpretation; *aurat* does not merely imply covering the body. Irrespectively, all participants conceded that the education of women is essential, and the enthusiasm to battle for it, particularly for students in *pesantren* who did not carry on their studies at university. These points are elaborated on in the discussion below.

Discussions

Kodrat and Ideal Women

The two participants, Hasanah and Shifa affirm that whatever the position of women, they must be aware of their *kodrat*. For both, *kodrat* is crucial, such that in interview processes, they always said, 'Don't forget *kodrat*'. According to the participants, *kodrat* allows women to be involved in the public sphere, politics, and education; yet women cannot forget their duties and responsibilities as women and as wives or mothers. *Kodrat* is empirically defined as natural in a biological sense, such as pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth, and breastfeeding, coupled with other meanings, such as womanhood, fate, customs or habits, rights, and obligations, among other socially constructed values (Kusmana, 2014). The *kodrat* of women has become a crucial subject in discussions about women or about gender in general. Moreover, the construction of women's *kodrat* – referring to feminists – tends to be detrimental to women (Adriany, 2019), yet, according to participants, it should be maintained. As Shifa put it:

The kodrat of a woman is a companion to her husband, the successor of the family, and a housekeeper to bear children, apart from being a small part of society. Even though we have a career, we still have to serve our

husbands, still take care of the household, and as wives, we must be responsible. Yes, managing time for those who work in the company, or whatever: Of course, we must arrange the time to raise children and take care of work in the office. (Shifa)

Hasanah and Shifa shared the same perspectives on Women's *Kodrat*:

Pesantren taught us that the ideal woman could raise children well and devote herself to her husband. These are either of the teachings of Islam, so we cannot deny them. However, we can have a career outside. We refuse people who say a woman should stay home and only take care of household matters. We believe that women are free to have careers but still have to be aware of their kodrat.

Even though they still interpret women's *kodrat* as being obedient to their husbands and taking care of the household, this view tends to be more modern because they encourage women to have careers. This view is contrary to the mainstream of *pesantren* women. On the other hand, Mia conveyed that she was more moderate than others and had a more open interpretation, opposing the views of Hasanah and Shifa regarding Islamic teachings for women. According to her, taking care of housework is the duty of a wife and the duty of both husband and wife. "That is not purely Islamic teaching, yet it is a culture that overlaps with religious faith. Even so, I believe that women do have a *kodrat* that is not the same as men" (Mia). This community assumption, if merged with the word 'woman', can be interpreted as qualities inherent in a woman's body, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. These qualities form the essential formulation of women's character. This basic quality has practical implications in everyday life, encouraging women to do some jobs that are considered close to their nature, such as doing housework, caring for, and raising and maintaining children. For instance, the idea of production and reproduction is inspired by society's general practice that places husbands as breadwinners and wives as housewives and is also sourced from the holy book, which says that men are protectors and breadwinners.

This partition of the two domains becomes the perfect supposition of the role of each gender in the family. In this regard, they are grouped according to their reproductive function in the family; the reproductive biological function leads to the assumption of tasks deemed suitable for women and children's care. Starting from health and welfare to the reproductive process itself. From the explanation of the participants above, it can refer to the two divisions of *kodrat* from Kusmana (2014), which divide *kodrat* into two dimensions; essential and empirical. The figure below shows the dimensions of women *kodrat* proposed by Kusuma (2014).

Figure 2 demonstrates a contest between democratization and Islamization, even though, in essence, the spirit of Islamization and democracy are not contradictory; in practice, these two things often confront. Paralihan (2019) stated that this has occurred since some groups interpreted Islamic sources purely textually per se.

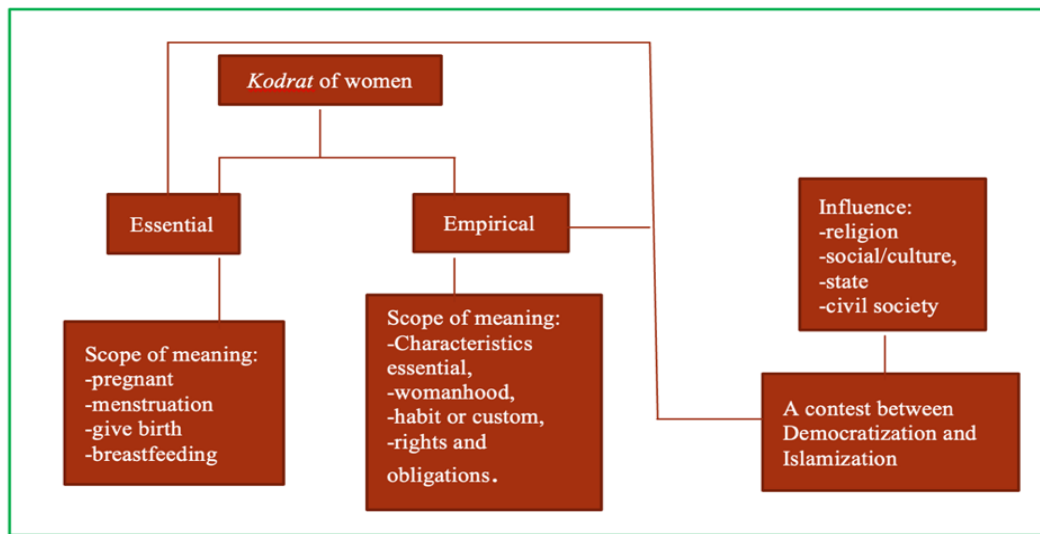
The essay composed by the three participants showed the same tendency toward *kodrat* and the perfect woman. Mia is more resistant to mainstream thoughts about women's *kodrat*, which are rooted in the prevailing conservative understanding of *pesantren*. She argued;

that women have to be involved in many ways, not just learning and being able to cook, yet also seeking other experiences such as skills development. Women should be independent and not too reliant on anyone; hence I used my opportunities to attend many training workshops.

According to her, ideal women could take care of the housework and develop many skills; women must be open-minded. Indeed, the discourse on the *kodrat* of women is always interesting to debate.

Figure 2

Dimensions of Women Kodrat



Note. Dimension of women *kodrat* is an analyzes of a woman's essential and empirical dimensions. From *Menimbang kodrat perempuan antara nilai budaya dan kategori analisis*, by Kusmana, K. (2014), *Refleksi, Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Filsafat*, 13(6), 779-800, Copyright 2014 the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta.

Moreover, society's dominant discourse still seems to desire to keep the status quo about *kodrat*, like a patriarchal society. Instead, Suryakusuma (2011, p.130), formulated *kodrat* as “nature and destiny” (nature, fate, and destiny). Her views about *kodrat* as “a biological reductionistic term used to keep women at home” (a reductionistic biological term used to keep women at home). She criticized the use of nature in social practice, women as “wives and mothers,” as feminists generally argue. the women's movement opposed male domination and assumed that patriarchal culture had subordinated women.

The participants' belief that women can have careers like men results from an upheaval in their thinking when they have been in university. There is a dialectical process of thought that they experience between religious doctrine and campus life dynamics, producing a new definition. Yet, they still maintain the definition of women's nature, although they accept the rationalization that women can be career women. They gained this awareness over almost 2 years when they began to adapt to the campus environment's discourse of thought. That is, they no longer strictly define women's nature like when they have been in *pesantren*. Their thinking has undergone an evolution in university, where they often discuss, attend seminars, read books, and listen to lectures. Shifa and Hasanah have the same opinion, as they put it:

Indeed, I confess that there have been many changes in my understanding of kodrat when I am studying at university. In the past, I was very rigid in understanding the kodrat of that woman, the campus experience has changed me a lot, and I am grateful. On the one hand, I have a strong religious foundation, on the other hand, I see the wider world. Gradually we start to understand gender equity, despite the fact that we cannot fully accept what feminists argue because, naturally, women and men are never the same (Shifa & Hasanah).

Take Care of Aurat

The two participants Hasanah and Shifa, had the same perception and interpretation of the body. For them, the body is essential in life, especially when they appear in the public sphere and interact with the opposite sex, or not 'mahram' (anyone who is not family). Both of them said, "as a woman, we should to takes care of our body, we must cover aurat not to invite slander and lust for man." Even Hasanah believed that a woman is the source of men's lust:

When I interact with friends of who opposite sex, I always take care of my body in order not to invite his lust. Even I always limit myself to not interacting if not necessary. Islam taught me when I studied in pesantren that I must cover my body properly; that is an obligation I cannot deny it. (Hasanah)

That belief does not change, although they are already in the campus environment. Based on their beliefs, keeping 'aurat' is Islamic guidance. Moreover, when they first came to the university and interacted with male students, they felt strange and awkward, so they always tried to limit interactions. Hasanah said, "I felt strange and very awkward when interacting with male students, I felt inconvenient." Shifa said, "women should be introspective so that they do not get caught up in promiscuity." According to her, the campus provides women freedom so that if they do not adequately protect themselves, they will fall into the trap of promiscuity. Thus, they must take a long time to adapt to the campus environment.

The body reflects social values and is a carrier of physical capital, according to Bourdieu (1990) who discussed the intersection between the body and the social world. Individual habitus is the internalization of their behavior from time to time at the subconscious level. In particular, dressing, walking, talking, behaving, and living are body practices that are informed by habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Maintaining *aurat*, e.g., covering the body properly, polite behavior, or trying to limit interaction with male students, is an attitude that has been internalized over a long process; even that attitude has become a habit because of the strong religious doctrine through *pesantren*. This phenomenon coincides with previous research theories, such as Paechter's (2006) theory, that humans are not completely separate from their material bodies since the body and self are intertwined.

Shifa wrote in her essay that it was a tough challenge when she had to work in a group where one of the members was a male student. She felt strange and nervous and looked at her interlocutor with a bowed face. Hasanah also felt the same way as Shifa, and both took a very long time to become familiar with and calm down as when they were in the *pesantren* they never interacted with the opposite sex:

During group work, it is difficult to adapt when one of the members is a male student, whereas, on the one hand, I must work together professionally, this took a long time roughly 2 years and eventually I feel calmer. (Hasanah)

Mia adapted more quickly to the campus environment, including how to get along and interact with male students. Indeed, Mia has a more moderate and open-minded view than Hasanah's and Shifa's. In addition, Mia participated in campus activities and comes from an urban area; her views tend to be resistant to the mainstream. There is a clear resistance to many topics, particularly concerning individual opinions of relationships between men and women, generalizations about women, and gender biases. In social science theories, resistance is often used to explain conflict and injustice. Resistance can be dissent, uprising, opposition, insurrection, uprising, revolution, protest, civil disobedience, and even objections of conscience (McDaniel, 2018). Mia's efforts were a form of resistance to patriarchal culture. Mia always speaks renewal in her thinking about women. Also, she openly interpreted *aurat* that was not limited to the body; according to her, *aurat* is all immoral behavior. She also went to great lengths to influence women who did not attend college.

I believe that aurat is important since it is a rule of Islam. Many people, however, have a narrow interpretation of it. Aurat is not merely about the body yet all of the bad behavior. I think many women are exaggerating so that limits them to no activity in the public sphere. For me, dress modestly is enough, and we do not need to worry and be afraid to interact with anyone. Of course, I felt nervous and uncomfortable at first, but this fear can actually reduce us as women. On-campus, finally, I was motivated to be active and feel that I have the same opportunity if in pesantren it is natural that we did not meet male students, but on campus we are free, so we must adapt quickly, the campus has taught me many things. The woman must be smart. (Mia)

All participants were aware that the *pesantren* and campus environments were different. Hasanah and Shifa found it difficult and overwhelming to adjust, particularly when interacting with male students, due to the new and strange environment. They were indeed more introverted to socializing from the beginning until they were aware that socializing, in general, was impossible to resist. However, Mia quickly adapted even though she had never interacted with male students at the *pesantren*. However, since she comes from an urban area and is open to socializing and participating in many student activity units on campus, and is open-minded about gender equity, she was able to normalize to the new situation quicker.

Convergence Between *Pesantren* and Campus

The three participants reported that while studying at university, they experienced a shift in views about *kodrat* and *aurat*. Their experiences during their studies on campus greatly influence their way of thinking, although the traditional way of thinking in the *pesantren* style is still clearly visible. Through many interactions, reading books, attending seminars, and attending lectures, they have the opportunity and encouragement to reinterpret gender; furthermore, they reconstructed their gender identity as *Muslimah*. In addition, all the participants agreed that education is essential

for women. For them, women should be highly educated. There is no limit to study and no distinction between men, let alone discrimination. Women have an equal opportunity to enter the public sphere. In fact, they aspire to be able to influence women in *pesantren* so that they are willing to study at university. They want to encourage women to continue their tertiary education since many communities, especially rural areas, still dichotomize between education and religion. In fact, one of the decisions that parents send their children to *pesantren* originates from the societal virtue of piety (Mawardi, 2011; Suhartini, 2016).

The adaptation process on campus has transformed them into a new identity as Muslim women. After being influenced by the more open campus climate and liberty, they negotiated and reconstructed their gender. However, the changes that occurred to them were more to the meeting between the *pesantren's* identity and the campus – a convergence – resulting in the synthesis of a new identity that was not the same as the others who did not have a *pesantren* education. As explained above, the *pesantren* doctrine of ideal women remains attached to their minds; the *kodrat* of women and maintaining *aurat*. However, they tended to be more open and more moderate in interpreting these two dimensions.

I am grateful to be able to study on campus to learn many things and be more open to new things. It is crucial because it affects how I think as a woman, so I desire to encourage women in pesantren to study in university since I think still many women are not aware. (Shifa)

According to Mia, she has gone beyond other friends in interpreting gender. Her interpretation is evidenced by the way she thinks, tending tends to be resistant, and her fashion in wearing the simpler and more fashionable dresses, even though she still wears a hijab. Meanwhile, Shifa and Hasanah wore wider clothes that looked looser despite having been transformed and no longer wearing big brackets. At the end of her essay, Mia explained her gratitude to be able to gain many experiences and study at university, and she closes her essay with a poem; “Now, I can gaze at the beauty of the twilight without having to peek out of the window worn by age. [Kini aku bisa melihat indahnya senja tanpa harus mengintip dari jendela yang usang dimakan usia].”

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study shed light on three female students who graduated from a *pesantren* and then studied at university. The campus environment challenges them to adapt to a climate that is different from that of the *pesantren*. They then negotiated and understood several things, beginning from defining the *kodrat* of women, maintaining *aurat* and interactions with the opposite sex, and the importance of education for women. Thus, they reconstruct their gender after going through a process of negotiations and upheaval of thought or dialectic between the understanding of the *pesantren* and the campus. This study provides an overview of the evolutionary process of thought based on the perception of stimuli; the experience, the lecture process, and reading books have stimulated and encouraged them to redefine women. However, this study draws attention to the fact that the development of their thinking is more at the convergence of two traditions, *Pesantren*, and campus, which produce new constructions about gender rather than the two dominant schools of thought, namely conservatives who desire to maintain the old order or values and feminists who fight for gender equality according to their version. We argue that expanding the study of gender and Islam is crucial in education and should respect female students with equality as human beings and cultural capital. Yet, without serious and continuous research to balance and update discourses

on Islam and gender, it will be difficult to grow their identity capital for their social and psychological well-being in the contemporary world. In addition, that *pasantren* should no longer be defensive against modernity and adapt the public-school curriculum as well as should consider the learning process and include general materials equivalent to school materials.

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