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## **Gender, Religion and Patriarchy: The Educational Discrimination of Coastal Madurese Women, East Java**

By Sudarso<sup>1</sup>, Phillipus Edy Keban<sup>2</sup>, Siti Mas'udah<sup>3</sup>

### **Abstract**

One of the educational development problems is the gap in the quality of education between regions and community groups, as well as gender. This article has examined gender, religion, patriarchy and the educational discrimination faced by coastal women who are a part of the Madura culture in East Java. This study employed a qualitative approach by interviewing 70 informants who consisted of school dropouts, the parents of daughters who had dropped out, teachers, and community leaders. This study found there to be several key findings. In the Madura culture, the concept of gender for women is always associated with the domestic roles. Madurese women experience cultural and structural pressure regarding gender equality, especially for the women coming from poor families. The patriarchal culture is perpetuated through religious dogma and it has become a way of life and a code of conduct. The phenomenon of gender inequality faced by women in Indonesian society, such as in the coastal regions of East Java, cannot be separated from the existence of a patriarchal culture which is a way of life and a code of conduct. Coastal women do not only experience cultural pressure due to the patriarchal culture but they also experience structural pressure. This is because most of them come from poor families. Gender equality is difficult to achieve, particularly for Madurese women living on the coast due to their low socioeconomic status. The relevant empowerment model in the coastal communities related to gender inequality in education. This could start by reconstructing the thoughts of the coastal communities about gender through the existing socio-religious institutions, both formal and informal. In addition, there must be an economic empowerment of the coastal families. This is so then the daughters no longer become victims who must bear the economic burden of the family by dropping out of school or entering into early marriage.

*Keywords:* Gender, Religion, Patriarchy, Women, Education, East Java, Indonesia

### **Introduction**

Equality between men and women, known as gender equality, is still able to produce an interesting study. Through a long journey to convince the world that women have experienced discrimination only because of gender and social differences, starting in 1979, the United Nations (UN) approved a conference on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (International Labor Organization, 2006; Arjani, 2008). The United Nations is committed to resolving all cases of equality in the fields of education, child socialisation, domestic work, sexual health, gender-based violence, and the balance of work and family responsibilities (Connel,

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2005). The conference was ratified by Indonesia in 1984 to become Act No. 7/1984, but it is rarely well-socialised by the state. The Conference and the Act are in fact unable to eliminate discrimination against women. Act no. 18 of 2014 states that every woman is entitled to the protection of their human rights and an equal opportunity to achieve justice and welfare well-being, including getting a proper education. The above Act shows that the government has the need to protect women to allow them to obtain equal opportunities as men in terms of achieving prosperity.

Previous studies on gender equality showed there to be indications of gender equality between men and women, in which they ideally must achieve a balanced level of health, education, and political participation to fully realise their rights and potential (Wibowo, 2011; Puspitawati, 2013; Pascall & Lewis, 2004). Gender equality is one of the pillars of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) that initiates a long-term process of change in patriarchal structures (Kabeer, 2005).

In Indonesian society, the educational development problem is related to a gap in the quality of education between regions and community groups, as well as gender (Incing, Hardianto, & Rusmiwari, 2013; Yousapronpaiboon, 2014). In various regions, the quality of one school to another still tends to be polarised between favorite and marginalised schools, as well as uneven community access from certain socio-economic classes compared to other socio-economic classes. This includes the gap between men and women in achieving education to the maximum level. There is a gap caused by the phenomenon of favorite schools, which is dominated by the middle class and above. This is because there is a policy in relation to the school fees (Hanum & Rahmadonna, 2010). The study of gender equality in education shows that the education systems that may advance evenly through the system are not actually based on gender equality (Subrahmanian, 2005). Gender equality in education is interpreted narrowly in the form of the same number of boys and girls being present in the school (Untelhalter, 2005).

One example of educational inequality is education access and the gender gap in the coastal area. This area has a low quality of education, and the relevance of education is influenced by the inability to create a quality learning process (Masri, 2017). This situation seems to represent the condition of Indonesia as a whole, which is known to be a maritime country that is a country famous for its maritime community with 17,508 islands and coastlines of 81,000 Km<sup>2</sup> and 5.8 million Km<sup>2</sup> (Budiharsono, 2001). The facts show that more than one third, or equal to 5,300,000 coastal communities, depend on the coastal resources. The small islands are still poor, spread over 8,090 coastal villages, almost 80% of which are located in eastern Indonesia (Walhi, 2004).

As an archipelagic nation, Indonesia naturally has a coastal area that stretches widely around it. This condition means that a lot of people living in coastal areas earn a living as fishermen. Coastal communities generally have a category based on their role (Radjab, 2015). First, fishing communities are coastal community groups whose main livelihood is fishing at sea. This group is further divided into two large groups, namely modern fishermen and traditional fishermen. Both of these groups can be distinguished by the type of ship/equipment used and the range of their catchment area. Second, the collectors are groups of coastal communities who work around the fish auctions. The collectors are included in the social network of the fish trade (Kurnia, 2016). They will collect caught fish, either through auctions or from the remaining non-auctioned fish, which are then sold to the surrounding community or to local markets. Generally, the collectors are women in the coastal community groups.

Third, the labor within the fishing community is the fishing community group that is most often found in the coastal communities. Their characteristics can be seen from their poverty as they do not have the capital or adequate equipment for the making of a productive business. Generally, they work as laborers/crew members on skipper ships with a minimal income. Communities working in this field have few opportunities to get out of the poverty zone because of their low income and labor transfer in the same sector (Bene, 2003). Fourth, there are pond fishing communities and processing fishermen communities.

Indonesia is also known for having extraordinary marine wealth. Unfortunately, this is not supported by a good education. Coastal communities are spoiled by the abundant marine resources, which can actually run out at any time if it is not managed properly. Fishermen and their children still have a low education level, so they have difficulty finding alternative work (Suyanto, 2011). This is an obstacle to the development of education in the coastal areas. They still think that they can survive without an education. They think that they can get rich when they can catch as many fish as they can. The fishing community thinks that the most important thing that they need is food, so it is not surprising that they have difficulty when trying to meet their minimum basic needs (Wekke & Cahaya, 2015). If the coastal community still live with this traditional thinking, then it is not possible for them to gain better education.

Studies on the Madurese culture focused on women show that the Madurese see women as creatures that must be monitored and protected, so this leads to early marriage (Munawara, Yasak, & Dewi, 2015). In addition, the Madurese culture in terms of the gender division of roles is clearly seen in *batik* making, where women paint the cloth while men clean the wax that sticks to the cloth (Noer, 2012).

Various studies in the literature show that the image, role and status of women has been created by the overarching culture. As an example, blue is the color for men while pink is the color for women (Hutajulu, 2015). The image of a woman as idealised by the culture, is gentle, obedient, does not argue and must not "exceed" men. They have an idealised role such as a household manager, as a supporter of their husband's career or as an obedient wife. The image that belongs to men, among others, is that of "all-knowing", as a role model that must be "more" than women, and as rational and aggressive. The ideal role of men is as the breadwinner of the family, as a protector and as "nurturing", while their ideal status is at the head of the family (Raharjo, 1995).

Women are still considered to be of a second class whose existence is often ignored. The implication of the concept and common sense about their unbalanced positioning has become a force in the separation of the life sectors into the "domestic" sector and the "public" sector. Women should take part in the domestic sector whereas men are placed in the public sector. Women are depicted closely with sexism and they provide the majority of husbandry and child care, while men consume these service (Connel, 2006). This kind of ideology has been endorsed by various social institutions which then becomes a social fact about the status and role played by women (Abdullah, 1997).

This gender inequality is constructed through formal legal rules and unwritten norms. The rules of some of the community groups often do not carry the spirit of gender, such as the position given to men (Lestari & Hidayah, 2016). Formal legal rules apply the official ideology to society and its institutions, while the unwritten norms are understood to shape daily attitudes and behavior in the real world (Kabeer, 2005). These two social methods are considered to be a common process that is generally accepted by the community even though it occurs outside of the boundaries of essential justice. Meanwhile, it must be realised that formal legal rules are a

form of power practice that is generally made for the benefit and purpose of benefiting the legislator.

Gender inequality forms the structure of the relations of production and reproduction in different classes. This ideology is considered to be the basis of women's oppression since it creates a feminine character and an inclusion that preserves the patriarchy and produces male domination (Rokhimah, 2014). For example, men have the main role as the household breadwinners while at the same time, it plays an important role in creating the reproduction of unpaid work in the domestic space. This is generally associated with the biological function of women as the family carers. In this role, the community also adopts the responsibility of improving the quality of its human resources. In this case, there is an injustice concerning the resources of men and women in terms of carrying out their responsibilities, wages and an acknowledgment of their respective contributions (Kabeer, 2005).

Previous studies of women's education in coastal communities have shown that the activities of the coastal communities are disaggregated by gender. This ignores the role of women, even though the role of women in the fisheries sector is not small (Handajani, Relawati, & Handayanto, 2015; Williams, 2008; Amanah, 2010). Efforts to introduce equality and the mainstreaming of gender still encounters many gaps concerning the knowledge of gender relations in the fisheries sector that is affected by changes due to development (Bennett, 2005). However, there are still a limited number of studies that have examined the equality of gender education and its relation to religion in coastal communities. Therefore, this study sought to examine gender, religion, patriarchy and the educational discrimination experienced by women of the Madura culture in East Java.

## **Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative approach by capturing qualitative data through interviews with guidelines. The research location was conducted in Sampang and Pamekasan Regencies in Madura Island. Seventy informants who were successfully interviewed had the following criteria: women dropping out of school, the parents of daughters dropping out of school, teachers, and community leaders.

The analysis of the data used a qualitative interpretative approach by carefully and thoroughly interpreting the social reality through the presentation of the research subjects in a narrative form. This qualitative data analysis used a series of words to describe the construction of each research subject. The results of the in-depth interviews were transcribed into written form to be further interpreted and linked with the theory.

## **Results and Discussion: Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Madurese Coastal Communities**

Coastal communities can also be defined as being made up of people who live and carry out socio-economic activities related to coastal and marine resources. Coastal settlements are a densely populated community with a major poor population. Indonesia has around 10,639 coastal villages, in which 7.8 million people are poor and 2.2 million are very poor (Lasabuda, 2013). Thus, the narrow coastal community has a high dependence on the potential and condition of the coastal and marine resources. The environmental conditions of the coastal community settlements, especially fishermen, are still not well ordered and seem to be prone to being slum-

like. With low socio-economic conditions, the pressure on the coastal resources will be even greater to meet the needs of the community.

Previous studies on the coastal communities have shown poverty among the fishing communities that have a lower social strata that are isolated communities, and that are caused by fatalistic cultures (Cahaya, 2015; Stobutzki, Silvestre, & Garces, 2006; Nikijuluw, 2001).

In general, coastal communities have a livelihood that depends on marine and coastal resources. This requires a large investment and it is very dependent on the season (Widodo, 2011). In addition, low business opportunities are caused by low levels of education and a lack of access to information. The poverty experienced by the coastal communities can be seen from the livelihoods of its inhabitants.

This study showed that living as fishermen means that the residents in this region only work seasonally. Previous studies have shown that the fishing season does not last all of the time, depending on the wind, weather, waves and sea water currents (Wasak, 2012; Gander, Berg, & Signal, 2008). In the dry season, the sea conditions are more often stable, so the fishermen can go out to sea. If the weather is good, then the fishermen can earn one hundred thousand rupiahs for one catch a day. However, during the rainy season, the sea conditions are more frequently that of strong tides and storms, so the fishermen cannot work. Thus, they do not have an income. Previous studies have showed that coastal communities are highly dependent on nature and they often do not earn an income during the hurricane season (Smith & Willen, 2005; Lekatompessy, Nessa, & Arief, 2013).

During the rainy season, the fishermen do side jobs as construction workers or they even become farm laborers in other villages which are quite far away. Side work is carried out by the fishermen if the weather at sea puts them at risk when conducting fishing activities (Wasak, 2012). Over the last 2 seasons, not many fish were caught so the fishermen change jobs to that of farmers who work the fields in the hills not far from their homes. The plant that is usually planted during the rainy season is maize. The husbands plant cassava and banana during the dry season.

To provide for their family life, coastal communities also go to the fields to look for firewood to then sell it to traders. Firewood buyers usually come directly to the house with a pick-up car. The jobs as a firewood seller can be a substitute job for as long as the sea products cannot guarantee the family's finances. Public houses are generally made of wood and woven bamboo, while next to it there may appear a building consisting only of supporting wood alongside tile. Under this building, there are many visible piles of wood that are ready to sell.

As stated by Bagong Suyanto (2001), poverty is caused by two factors. First, natural poverty is the poverty arising from scarce resources. Second, artificial poverty is the poverty that occurs because of the social structure of people who do not control the economic facilities equally. Poor economic conditions mean that the coastal residents are unable to achieve a higher education, and they even tend to experience dropping out of school. In addition to being a fisherman, one of the work options is demand is becoming an Indonesian Migrant Worker (TKI). A study conducted by Widodo (2012) revealed that the phenomenon of migrating women in fishing families to abroad is one of the livelihood strategies undertaken by poor households in coastal areas. The choice to become a migrant worker is also motivated by having a low level of education and a lack of enthusiasm for youth learning in this area. The success of the relatives or neighbors who become migrant workers has also influenced the orientation of individuals to decide to work or to continue with their education. Society makes material success one of the benchmarks of success when becoming TKI. The community thinks that it is better to be a

successful migrant worker even with low education than to be a graduate of tertiary-level education but unemployed. This way of thinking, especially for young people, means that the fishing families tend to neglect their education. A study conducted by Mas'udah (2019) found that many people who make a living as migrant workers do not understand the importance of education. They are instead stimulated to consume goods that have little value as related to the family's future.

### **Gender, Religion, Patriarchy and the Educational Understanding of the Madura Coastal Community**

The Madurese community, besides being known as a community that obeys the teachings of the Islamic religion, also holds tight to the original traditions and customs that have become the values in the behavior of Madurese people. A study conducted by Rochana in 2012 concluded that the level of trust held by the Madurese in the religious institutions and scholars was higher than that of the state and government institutions. Madurese people are influenced by the power of religion and this makes them dependent on the clerics as the religious field is dominant (Mahfud, 2019).

Relations between men and women still contain patriarchal values which place men as a superior component compared to women. Therefore, the social and cultural dimension of Madura sees that women must be monitored, protected and directed (Raharjo, 1995). Men in the Madura culture hold to hegemonic masculinity such as *carok* perpetrators as crime figures and Islamic religious leaders as the supporters of the social norms in society (Nilan & Demartoto, 2018).

The contemporary anthropological approach, whose theories are rich when it comes to the description of 'the real society', explains that the formation of the identities and roles of women and men are a product of the cultural construction and ideological values of certain groups. The development of human behavior and individual identity is more influenced by culture. From a cultural perspective, gender differentiation is understood to be an instrument in society at a specific time (J. Tripathy, 2010).

The patriarchal system in gender history is a system that places men and their power over women in all life aspects. Outside of the domestic sphere, men control and limit the public role of women. This phenomenon is referred to as the patriarchal mode of production which is detrimental to women (Walby, S., 1989).

The dialectics of teaching and culture in Madurese women can be traced to Anke Niehof's (1985) study titled "Women and Fertility in Madura". The Madurese people are known as entities with rich religious values and they are fanatical about religious teachings. How do the Madurese women's cultural strategies address the social sphere? Niehof answered this question by examining two Madurese women who lived in coastal and inland/mountain areas. The relations formed as a part of the social relations in coastal communities, represented by Patondu village, were different from the activities in the Tambeng village community in the mountains of Madura. In very tight social relations, Niehof often met several Madurese men representing women's opinions, in addition to husbands representing their wives with various opinions when interviewed by Niehof (1985: 15-20). Most Madurese women are still confined within the patriarchal culture and they only occupy jobs in the private sector. Even the Madurese women's representation in the council institution is limited (Putri & Muharram, 2016).

This condition is mainly influenced by the background of the Madurese community who still view women as part of the family that must be protected and nurtured as a result of the

men's struggle to cultivate self-esteem in front of the community (Wiyata, 2002). There is a term in the Madurese language, "*reng binik pagghun worker ka dapur*", which means that at the end, a woman finally goes to work in the kitchen. This term becomes a stereotype that involves a negative image of Madurese women (Mufidah, 2017). Therefore, the Madurese people place women in a sacred space and separate them from men's business. This dimension shows that space is translated as part of tradition based on the religious teachings and cultural dialectics in society.

In this reality, religion is understood to be a social phenomenon that is not singular. Religion can be both a method of teaching and a behavior in the sphere of culture. In the context of religiosity, the Madurese people are known to hold strong Islamic teachings even though sometimes it leaves them with a dilemma due to the contradictions within their diverse traditions (Taufiqurrahman, 2012). This can be seen in the traditions that are based on religious teachings (Islam) in the Madurese community. On the one hand, religion is often a strong support system for the social, cultural, economic and social relations within the communities. Women then interpret the social religious teachings in reality and in their social relations. A study conducted by Hidayaturrahman (2018) explained that women have no right to refuse, including on matters related to early marriage and limited education.

The phenomenon found in the coastal area of Madura, namely the fusion of Madurese culture and the understanding of Islam, reinforces the existence of a patriarchal culture (which places men in a higher social role than women). For example, there are still many women entering into an early marriage, with the interview results showing there to be a number of marriage cases involving school-aged women between 13 - 15 years old. There is a saying in the coastal Madurese community: if there is a man who will propose to a daughter, then the law makes it obligatory for the parents of the daughter to accept the proposal, even when their daughter is still in school. Early marriages in Madura are forced marriages, in which the married children are in a position of distress and fear (Sari, 2016). Women are always in a position to wait, so when there are men who make a proposal, it is considered to be an extraordinary gift, especially by their families who soon realize that they will be very easy to marry off without looking into the mentality and readiness of the children. Previous studies have concluded that early marriage in Madura is supported by an Islamic understanding that an adult child (*baligh*) is able to get married (Bawono & Suryanto, 2019; Sa'dan, 2015).

Early marriage is still happening in Madura because there are fears held by the parents about socio-cultural sanctions, such as fearing that there is a "curse" on their daughters. In addition, there are reasons that are related to implementation of rules in the Islamic religion in order to avoid adultery. The Madurese community label single adolescent women as spinsters. This is negative discrimination against the decision to marry made by women (Yusuf & Widati, 2017).

This situation is a factor that contributes to the concept of education for women. Girls in coastal Madura are educated not to gain knowledge to pursue a career in the future but to do more with their future as wives and mothers for their children. This concept has been embedded for a long time; formal education is considered not to be important because religious education is already sufficient for the provision of marriage (Munawara, Yasak, & Dewi, 2015). Almost all of the girls in this study went to two places to study, namely to learn general knowledge in formal school in the morning and studying religion (Quran) in the afternoon. Attending public school in order to gain general knowledge is beneficial in the future when the women have children, so then they can help their children do any homework given by their teacher in mathematics and

other subjects. Meanwhile, religious schools are needed by the mothers to teach their children to study the Quran and to learn about the knowledge of the Islamic religion. Previous studies have suggested that Madurese women occupy domestic work because they do not have a formal educational background and thus this places women at a lower position (Winkvist et al., 2002; Hayati & Sugiarti, 2009; Devy et al., 2013).

The informants acknowledged that even if women only had a short educational attendance or were in first grade when they got married, there would be no chance of further education. Parents withdraw their children from school to take care of household affairs. The informant also explained that there is no need to provide a high education for their children, especially women, because girls who are devoted to their parents obey their parents' decisions. This condition also happens when it comes to early matchmaking. Early marriages when the girl is under 17 years of age still occur frequently. The informants explained that education is not important for women because they still believe that there is no meaning behind educating women to achieve the highest possible education. This is because they will eventually return to domestic chores. Early marriage in Madura is considered to be one of the common things in their environment as they do not understand the danger behind early marriage itself (Kurniasari, Hariastuti, & Mardiono, 2018).

Previous studies have shown that early marriages occur among poor families and they are driven by the factors of the parents' low income, avoiding unpleasant family situations and a lack of expectations related to achieving a higher education for their children (McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997; Afifah, 2011; Schuler et al., 2006). These factors indicate that Madurese women are marginalised due to the structure and culture that constrains them. Gender equality is difficult to achieve, particularly for Madurese women living on the coast due to their low socioeconomic status.

## **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of gender inequality faced by women in Indonesian society, such as in the coastal regions of East Java, cannot be separated from the existence of a patriarchal culture which is a way of life and a code of conduct. Coastal women not only experience cultural pressure due to the patriarchal culture, but they also experience structural pressure. This is because most of them come from poor families. The relevant empowerment model in coastal communities related to gender inequality in education could start by reconstructing the thoughts of coastal communities about gender through the existing socio-religious institutions, both formal and informal. In addition, there must be an economic empowerment of coastal families so then daughters no longer become victims who must bear the economic burden of the family by dropping out of school or entering into early marriage.

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