

**POWER AND AGENCY: THE ROLE OF *BU NYAI* (FEMALE *ULAMA*)
IN DEALING WITH DISPOSABLE SANITARY NAPKINS PROBLEM
IN PESANTREN (CASE STUDY OF PONDOK PESANTREN
ANNUQAYAH SUMENEP MADURA)**

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Abstrak

Salah satu masalah lingkungan yang dihadapi pondok pesantren adalah limbah pembalut sekali pakai yang mengandung plastik dan dioksin yang berdampak pada kesehatan reproduksi dan lingkungan. Ketimpangan relasi kuasa antara laki-laki dan perempuan serta iklan media membuat banyak perempuan tidak mengetahui fakta ilmiah dan efek samping pembalut sekali pakai. Merespon hal ini, aktivisme menolak produk pembalut sekali pakai muncul untuk mendukung perempuan dalam mengontrol tubuhnya. Dengan menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis yang dikembangkan oleh Norman Fairclough, penelitian ini mencoba; (1) mengungkap agensi tokoh perempuan di Pesantren Annuqayah dalam menangani masalah pembalut sekali pakai dan (2) mengartikulasikan agensi dan aktivisme mereka dari sudut pandang ekofeminisme. Penelitian ini menemukan, pertama, bahwa dengan melarang penggunaan pembalut sekali pakai dan mengeluarkan fatwa 'haram' atasnya, para tokoh perempuan di pesantren ini bernegosiasi untuk mereproduksi relasi kekuasaan dan dominasi baru antara, (a) industri sanitasi dan propaganda media yang mengutamakan kepentingan kapitalis dan mengabaikan dampak jangka panjang penggunaan pembalut sekali pakai terhadap kesehatan reproduksi dan kelestarian lingkungan serta, (b) tradisi patriarki di pesantren yang mensubordinasi suara perempuan. Kedua, dengan menegaskan

bahwa perempuan memiliki kendali atas tubuh dan kelestarian lingkungan mereka, tokoh perempuan di Pesantren Annuqayah ini menguatkan etika ekofeminis yang menggarisbawahi keterkaitan antara isu lingkungan dan perempuan.

Kata Kunci: Agensi Perempuan; Pesantren; Pembalut Sekali Pakai; Ekofeminisme

Abstract

One of the environmental problems faced by pondok pesantren is the problem of disposable sanitary napkins (DSN) waste containing plastics and dioxins that effect health and the environment. The imbalance in power relations between men and women and media advertisement have left a lot of women unaware of the scientific facts and side effects of DSN. Menstrual product activism emerges to support women in controlling their bodies. Using Critical Discourse Analysis improved by Norman Fairclough, this research tries; (1) to unfold the agency of female figures in Pesantren Annuqayah in dealing with DSN issues and (2) to articulate their agency and activism from the point of view of ecofeminism. This research finds, first, that by banning DSN and issuing fatwa against DSN, the female figures in this pesantren negotiated to reproduce a new relation of power and domination between (a) sanitary industries and propagandas of media that prioritize capitalists' interests and ignore long term reproductive health and environmental sustainability and (b) the patriarchal tradition in pesantren that subordinated women voices. Second, by insisting that women have control over their bodies and environmental sustainability, these women's agency conforms to ecofeminist ethics that assert the interconnectedness between environmental and women's issues.

Keywords: Women's Agency; Pesantren; Disposable Sanitary Napkins; Ecofeminism

Introduction

Based on the data from the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia generates around 67.8 million tons of garbage per year. The numbers will continue to increase along with population growth.¹ Each person is estimated to produce 0.7 kg of waste per day. Moreover, the rapid development of commercial revolution and industrial enterprises changes habits, cultures, and commitments of modern people. The organic worldview that respects nature as a living organism is replaced by a mechanistic perspective that see nature as a machine to serve humanity.² This means that modern people produce more waste due to parallel significance between waste production and economic development.³

One of the modern products is disposable sanitary napkins (DSN). The massive use of DSN is one of the biggest waste problems faced in the modern world. This is because these popular sanitary products contain a lot of plastics from absorbent parts, leak-proof layers, strings to packages that do not biodegrade easily. If women experience approximately 40 years of menstruation during their life-times, a significant amount of DSN will accumulate in landfills, clog pipes and sewage systems, and pollute shores of beaches. Moreover, the bleaching process during manufacturing creates dioxins that effect both health and the environment. Some women experience irritation, infection, and discomfort. In some cases, some of them also are harmed by cancer.⁴

That pesantren are residential areas also enhance the need for effective waste management. The greater the number of santri the bigger the challenge for pesantren. The Pesantren Data Base of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs recorded 27.722 pesantren all over Indonesia with 4.175.555 santri.⁵ This means that pesantren need to deal with the waste management problem. Lack of knowledge about waste management in some pesantren ends up causing environmental problems.⁶

¹ <https://indonesia.go.id/kategori/indonesia-dalam-angka/2533/membenahi-tata-kelola-sampah-nasional> (accessed on Tuesday, March 30, 2021).

² Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for Livable World*, (Routledge, 2005), 2nd ed.

³ UNEP, *Solid Waste Management*, (United Nations Environment Programme, 2005).

⁴ A. Borowski, *Are American women turning to reusable and greener menstrual products due to health and environmental pollution concerns?*. (Thesis ed, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2011).

⁵ <https://ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id/pdpp>.

⁶ In fact, the engagement of pesantren in dealing with the current ecological issues started to develop particularly when the Ministry of Religious Affairs collaborated with the Ministry of the Environment to initiate an 'Eco-Pesantren' program in 2008 and launched a guide book on this program (KLH, 2010). From that point onwards, a lot of pesantren in

Additionally, since menstruation periods and practices are considered taboo and disgusting in some societies, a lot of women remain unaware of the scientific facts of sanitary napkins and the waste that relate to menstrual hygiene management (MHM).⁷ Therefore, education plays a pivotal role in raising women's awareness toward menstrual hygiene management to teach them facts on their menstrual periods, correct misinformation and myths they have heard and show them physiological process relates to menstruation.⁸ Accordingly, pesantren as a basis of religious teachings, are challenged to promote comprehensive perspectives regarding the use of sanitary napkins and their waste that relate to menstrual hygiene management especially for santri who are at the age of menarche. By combining religious and health contexts in promoting healthier life styles and a healthier planet, santri will attain holistic worldviews on this issue.

However, the challenges of menstrual hygiene management are grounded in gender inequality. The imbalance of power relations between men and women contributes to the neglect of women's and girls' opinions in decision making within domestic and public areas.⁹ As a consequence, it is important to involve men and boys in menstrual hygiene management through diverse roles as brothers, fathers, peers, teachers, husbands, community leaders, as well as policy makers.¹⁰ Governments are also responsible in ensuring secure circumstances for women to access their reproductive rights. ¹¹It is time for pesantren to observe this issue in its education and policy making.

Indonesia made efforts to internalize ecological awareness through diverse activities such as conservation, reforestation, organic farming, water management, and waste banks. Some pesantren attained the Kalpataru award from the Ministry of the Environment for their ecological achievements. Annuqayah is among other pesantren that attained this award in 1981 for its reforestation program. After four decades of achievements, pesantren Annuqayah continues to struggle with problematic ecological issues. The founding fathers of this pesantren experienced drought problems and proved the benefits of forestations. More recently, however, the problems have been getting more complicated particularly in terms of waste management. A previous study noted a decrease of environmental awareness within this pesantren both in practice and curricula (Fawaid, 2016).

⁷ A. S. Yagnik, "Construction of negative images of menstruation in Indian TV commercials", *Health Care for Women International*, 2012, 33(8).

⁸ J. C. Chrisler, "Teaching taboo topics: menstruation, menopause, and the psychology of women", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37(1), (2013), h. 128-132.

⁹ Y. Kim, "My Body is the Evidence, Assess My Health: Women's Disposable Sanitary Pads Social Health Movement in Korea", *Health Care for Women International* (2021).

¹⁰ T. Mahon, A. Tripathy & N. Singh, "Putting the Men into Menstruation: The Role of Men and Boys in Community Menstrual Hygiene management", *Waterlines*, 34(1), (2015).

¹¹ Y. Kim, "My Body is the Evidence, Assess My Health: Women's Disposable Sanitary Pads Social Health Movement in Korea", *Health Care for Women International* (2021).

Additionally, this neglect is a remarkable sign of domination that amplifies patriarchal tradition where women, children, people of color, nature, animals, lands, and forests are seen as 'other'.¹² For those who prolong patriarchal tradition, DSN waste that pollutes nature is not as important as the production of it that generates capital. Mass media also plays a pivotal role in promoting the use of DSN. Arguing the negative image of menstruation as hygiene crisis, the mass media advertises the solution through DSN that enable women to stay active and fresh during this period.¹³ This is what Kissling described as the exploitation of women's bodies to enhance industrial profit.

Since DSN products and wastes contain potential hazard for women's reproductive health and the environment, their use becomes an environmental issue; therefore, environmentalists, consumer advocates, as well as feminists have warned about this issue.¹⁴ Additionally, according to ecofeminists, environmental issues are feminist issues as a result of the multi-layer interconnections between women and nature¹⁵ therefore, women engagement in solving this problem is also visible. In terms of movement against sanitary pads, some DSN movements or menstrual product activism emerge to propagandize the investigation on the health impact of DSN. The Korean Women's Environmental Network (KWEN), for instance, successfully argues in favor of women's voices in regard to their reproductive health.¹⁶ This movement and activism are rooted in women's health activism that supports women to control their bodies and health and challenge male domination over medical institutions.¹⁷ In 1977, Delaney, Lupton and Toth criticized the side effect of the use of DSN as non-biodegradable product.¹⁸

Indonesian women started to use DSN during the 1970s when "Softex," the first local brand of DSN in Indonesia, was produced publicly.¹⁹ The massive shifting from traditional sanitary towels to DSN was due to

¹² K. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000).

¹³ E. A. Kissling, *Capitalising on the Curse: The Business of Menstruation*, (London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

¹⁴ Y. Kim, "My Body is the Evidence, Assess My Health: Women's Disposable Sanitary Pads Social Health Movement in Korea", *Health Care for Women International* (2021).

¹⁵ K. Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000).

¹⁶ Y. Kim, "My Body is the Evidence, Assess My Health: Women's Disposable Sanitary Pads Social Health Movement in Korea", *Health Care for Women International* (2021).

¹⁷ C. Bobel, "Our Revolution Has Style": Contemporary Menstrual Product Activists "Doing Feminism" in the Third Wave. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 54 (2006).

¹⁸ J Delaney, Lupton, M. J. & Toth, E., *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation*, 1st ed. (Dutton, 1976).

¹⁹ Softex-Indonesia, 2021. [softexindonesia.com. https://www.softexindonesia.com/id/pages/our-history](https://www.softexindonesia.com/id/pages/our-history) [Accessed 30 April 2021].

their affordable price compared to the imported DSN that only the rich could buy.²⁰ However, the increasing environmental problems facing Indonesia urged public awareness to reconsider the adverse effects of DSN for women's health and environmental sustainability. Some environmentalists started to promote reusable sanitary napkins (RSN). However, neither impactful researches nor movements are found to support that women stopped using DSN massively. These movements are undertaken individually or institutionally on a very small scale. Pesantren Annuqayah is one of the educational institutions that promote the use of RSN instead of DSN. This research tries to portray how this pesantren internalizes santri's awareness, particularly the role of female figures in this pesantren, to convince santri of the importance to shift to RSN during their menstrual periods. The research questions of this research are: (1) how do female figures in Pesantren Annuqayah deal with DSN problem? (2) how is their agency and activism viewed from the point of view of ecofeminism?

This research applies critical discourse analysis improved by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough assumes the dialectical relationship between language and society.²¹ Language is a kind of social practice that implies three main points: (1) it is part of the society, (2) it is a practice of the society, and (3) its process is conditioned socially.²² To collect the data, we interviewed six female figures of two building complexes of Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah Guluk Guluk Sumenep, Madura, East Java. Codes are made for the interviewees: the code FF (female figures) stands for the interviewees in this research. To distinguish each figure, the number is added behind the code FF.

Critical discourse analysis is both a theory and a methodology that can be used to analyze wider societal and cultural phenomena.²³ A text is a product of social interactions which involve the process of production and the process of interpretation as well as the social determination which confirms the language as a social practice. In doing critical discourse analysis, the analyst should be aware of those three keywords that any text is a production of productive and interpretative processes which is always determined by society. That is because people as members of society gain their knowledge from the surrounding including the language. This knowledge is a two-sided: cognitive and social. It is cognitive since it is in

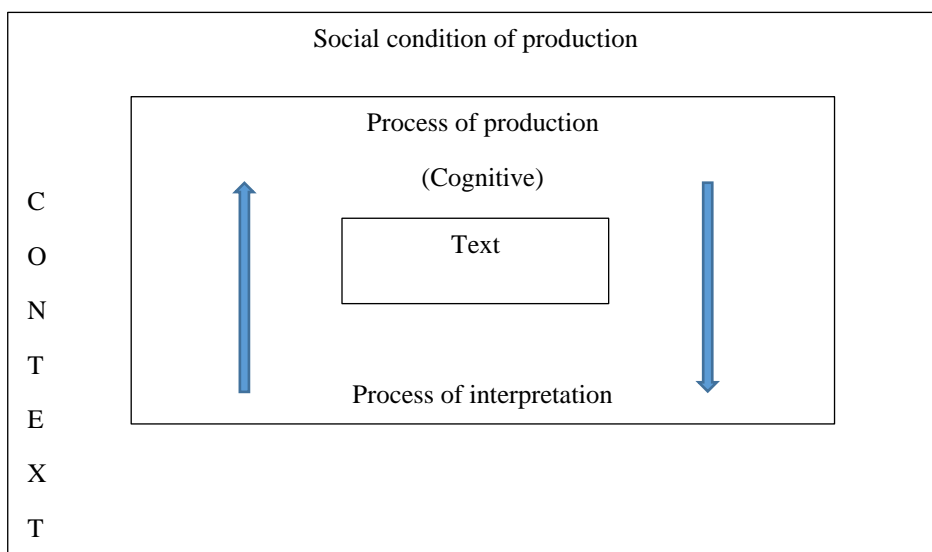
²⁰ M. Mukhti, 2011. *historia.id*. <https://historia.id/kultur/articles/di-balik-pembalut-P7pg6/page/3>. [Accessed 30 April 2021].

²¹ N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992).

²² N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (Routledge, 1989).

²³ M. Jorgensen & L. J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (Sage Publications Ltd, 2002).

people's brains and social since it has a social nature that depends on the social relations. See the following figure adopted from Fairclough.²⁴



Data Analysis

There are three dimensions of critical discourse analysis: description, interpretation, and explanation. The first dimension focuses on the linguistic features of the text; the second is concerned with the relation between the text and interaction; the last dimension, explanation, underlines the connection between the interaction and the social context.²⁵ The concepts of ideology and hegemony introduced by Foucault (1977) and Gramsci (1971) are applied on the third level as analytical tools. Fairclough concludes that discursive practices are ideological since they include signs either to restructure or support power relations. When drawing on mental models, the interviewees either reproduce or transform them.²⁶ In addition, the theory of women's agency introduced by Saba Mahmood will also be applied to analyze the role of female figures in Pesantren Annuqayah in dealing with sanitary napkins issues. It is worth noting that Mahmood was inspired by Foucault's concept of power that not only applies to domination over others with single intention, structure, and location. Instead, power should be understood as a strategy to generate a new form of relations. In addition, Mahmood argued that women's agency is a product of traditions

²⁴ N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (Routledge, 1989).

²⁵ N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (Routledge, 1989).

²⁶ N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (Routledge, 1989).

in which women live and are located that push women to position themselves against ideals maintained by these traditions.²⁷

Those three levels may overlap in the actual analysis. To answer the research questions, we will display four sub-headings we extracted from our data: (1) reproductive health and environmental reason, (2) Islam teaches us to keep cleanliness and how to protect the environment, (3) It is *haram* to use it, and (4) I want to prove that we can succeed.

Reproductive Health and Environmental Reasons

There are about thirteen building complexes in Pesantren Annuqayah, and two of them (Lubangsa Utara and Sabajarin) apply ecological programs through gardening, zero plastic lifestyle, and obligating reusable sanitary napkins (RSN). However, this research focuses on the use of RSN. All female santri in these two building complexes have to use RSN for their menstruation periods. No more DSN are available in the shops inside these two building complexes. In explaining the reason behind this regulation, the interviewees declared some side effects of using DSN such as “itchiness”, “infertility”, and “chemical” accumulation. Besides, they revealed “complete flow” of the menstrual blood when they use RSN. All female figures in these two building complexes are aware of the detrimental effects of DSN for reproductive health and the environment. Asked about the reason behind the regulation, FF1 revealed:

“The main argument is [for] the health of santri, reproductive health ... long-term health. Apart from environmental reasons ... sanitary pads are indeed very dangerous, they cannot be decomposed in the ground ... So the environmental reason is the second reason. The first reason is for their own health”²⁸.

In line with her, FF2 pointed out the side effects of using DSN. She said:

“I don’t know if it’s fact or myth, the use of disposable sanitary napkins may cause infertility ... when using disposable pads the menstruation blood does not flow completely and they cause itchiness around the

²⁷ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*, (Princeton, University Press, 2005).

²⁸ “Argument utama kesehatan anak-anak sendiri. Kesehatan reproduksi ... kesehatan jangka panjang. Selain alasan lingkungan ... pembalut kan memang sangat berbahaya, tidak bisa diurai di dalam tanah. Nah itu alasan lingkungan, alasan kedua. Alasan pertama ya demi kesehatan anak2 sendiri”. Interview with FF1 on March 18, 2021

vagina ... when using reusable sanitary napkins, the menstrual blood flows out completely ...”²⁹

Both FF1 and FF2 referred to “long-term reproductive health” and “environmental reasons.” The fact that disposable sanitary napkins contain layers of plastic might damage nature since plastics “cannot be decomposed.” As a consequence, it will decrease environmental quality. Additionally, FF1 emphasizes the importance of long-term reproductive health. This is because DSN contain chemicals that come up during the production process such as bleaching. This process produces dioxin that is carcinogenic and very toxic.³⁰ Additionally, declaring this dangerous effect of DSN, FF3 said: “In general, [disposable sanitary napkins] are not good for health because they contain chemicals.” Besides their referral to reproductive health and environmental sustainability, FF2 also drew upon shared knowledge between “fact” and “myth”³¹ in regard to the side effect of long-term use of DSN that may cause infertility.

Their reference to reproductive health and environmental sustainability depicts how the female figures in Pesantren Annuqayah position themselves in opposition to market and media that propagandize their sanitary product as comfortable, hygienic, safe, and as giving more freedom to women by hiding their periods.³² This reference is also ideological and proof of their agency in the sense that it produces a new social relation of hegemony and domination vis-à-vis sanitary industries that ignore reproductive health and environmental sustainability.

Moreover, they know circulation of the produced waste and the overload status of the landfill of the pesantren. FF1 said:

“...The problem of waste [in this pesantren], whether we admit it or not, is our problem ... there are many people who think [waste] is not really a problem, since they do not realize ... I am not sure those *bu*

²⁹ “Entah ini mitos atau fakta saya kurang tau, [bahwa pembalut] bisa menyebabkan kemandulan ... kalau pakai pembalut sekali pakai itu darah tidak lancar dan menyebabkan rasa gatal di sekitar vagina ... kalau pakai pembalut kain itu darah itu deras keluarnya sampai sempurna haidnya”. Interview with FF2 on March 31, 2021.

³⁰ A. Borowski, *Are American women turning to reusable and greener menstrual products due to health and environmental pollution concerns?*. (Thesis ed, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2011).

³¹ This shared knowledge regarding the use of DSN is popular among Indonesian people especially those who live in rural area.

³² Y. Kim, “My Body is the Evidence, Assess My Health: Women's Disposable Sanitary Pads Social Health Movement in Korea”, *Health Care for Women International* (2021).

nyai have ever observed that terrible landfill [of this pesantren] that's no longer able to accommodate the waste".³³

In line with her, FF2 also pointed out the problems arising from the landfill for the surrounding community. She said:

"I personally see the condition of the garbage that has piled up around the pesantren. Well, it just so happens that the route from [my] house to the school has to pass through the landfill of Pesantren Annuqayah on the side of the road ... besides the pungent smell when the waste was burned—for some people when it was burned, it was a solution—in fact, it is very disturbing to the residents around the landfill and also the people passing by around there".³⁴

Both FF1 and FF2 referred to the real condition of the landfill of Pesantren Annuqayah that is overloaded and polluting the surrounding community. The "pungent smell" and "very disturbing" are the salient words in this explanation. In line with them FF3 also said: "Sanitary waste is an eyesore. Besides the smell, it is also polluting". This reference is evidence of the agency of those female figures in the sense that it produces a new relation of power that pushes them to regulate a new decision in prohibiting DSN in favor of RSN. Moreover, indirect discourse representation appears when FF1 referred to "*bu nyai*" who might never observe "that terrible landfill of [this pesantren] that's no longer able to accommodate the waste". Again, this reference is ideological and confirmation of their agency since it generates a new social power relationship in regard to waste production and management that is generally ignored by other *bu nyai*.

Islam Teaches Us to Keep Cleanliness and How to Protect the Environment

³³ "Masalah sampah di sini mau kita akui atau tidak adalah masalah kita bersama ... Banyak yang menganggap itu bukan benar-benar masalah karena mereka tidak melihat ... Saya nggak yakin bu nyai itu pernah melihat secara langsung kondisi tempat pembuangan sampah akhir yang mengerikan dan nggak nampung lagi". Interview with FF1 on March 18, 2021.

³⁴ "Saya pribadi itu melihat kondisi sampah yang sangat menumpuk di sekitar pondok pesantren. Nah kebetulan memang jalur dari rumah menuju sekolah itu harus melewati tempat pembuangan sampah di Annuqayah di pinggir jalan itu. Ya di samping baunya yang menyengat kemudian ketika dibakar, menurut mungkin bagi orang2 ketika dibakar itu merupakan solusi agar sampah tidak ada. Nah kenyataannya itu sangat mengganggu sekali terhadap warga yang ada di sekitar dan juga orang yang lalu lalang di sekitar situ". Interview with FF2 on March 31, 2021.

Asked further about the reason behind the regulation of using RSN instead of DSN, FF1 revealed:

“Besides rational foundations, the reality of the global waste problem is shown to them ... there are many [theological] arguments from the Quran and Hadith for such matters, about how to protect the environment and so on, [there are] a lot [of arguments from the Quran and Hadith]”.³⁵

In line with her, FF4 noted:

“They are dangerous for health because they contain chemicals, almost all santri already knew about this; moreover, Islam teaches us to keep cleanliness”.³⁶

Besides their reference to “global waste problem” and “health” reasons, both FF1 and FF4 referred to religious teachings, namely cleanliness in Islamic teachings and the importance of protecting nature in both the Quran and Hadith. However, the word order of the texts shows that their reference to Islamic teachings is not as dominant as their emphasis on health and environmental reasons. Their reference to religious voices is used to emphasize their main concern on health and environmental issues.

It Is *Haram* to Use It

One of the female figures (FF3) in Pesantren Annuqayah explained the history of the regulation to use RSN. She said:

“We communicated with *bu nyai* and told her our problem regarding the DSN waste. Because it causes a lot of *madlarat* (harms), *bu nyai* [produced a fatwa]: it is *haram* to use it. From that moment onwards we did change, even though it was difficult for santri [to change this habit]. Gradually, because it is *haram*, santri understand that [single use sanitary napkins] are indeed dangerous. So, it strengthens santri to be patient. Since there are regulations and policies, until now our

³⁵ “Selain alasan rasional, realitas problem sampah yang global itu ditunjukkan pada mereka ... Landasan dari Quran dan Hadits itu kan banyak untuk soal seperti itu, tentang bagaimana menjaga lingkungan dan sebagainya, banyak”. Interview with FF1 on March 18, 2021.

³⁶ “Itu bahaya untuk kesehatan karena mengandung bahan kimia, santri sudah kebanyakan tahu memang, apalagi Islam ini mengajarkan kita untuk bersih”. Interview with FF4 on April 3, 2021.

pesantren is free [from sanitary napkins]. It's roughly [been running] for ten years".³⁷

Conforming this statement, FF5 also described the prohibition of using DSN. She stated:

"The female santri who are in their periods are *diharamkan* (prohibited) from using disposable sanitary napkins. It is *haram*, so they have to use reusable sanitary napkins, wash them and use them again".³⁸

In the previous text, FF3 described how *bu nyai* referred to one of five Islamic *taklifi* laws, namely *haram*. In terms of Islamic law, *haram* literally means "forbidden". It refers to sinful acts that are forbidden and those who omit them will be rewarded. *Madlarat* or harms in Islamic law is one of the causes in determining legal status of any action. The legal classifications are based on the assumption that God asks Muslims to do what is valuable and forbids them from doing any harmful action (Kamali, 1991). The repetition of the word *haram* and its derivative *diharamkan* depicts the importance of this regulation for santri in regard to the prohibition of using DSN. The text also referred to the reaction of santri when this prohibition is announced to which they need gradual adaptation. This reference is ideological in the sense that it strengthens a new power of *bu nyai* and represents women's voices to decide the best solution for their own bodies through this regulation. This is also ideological since it supports santri to a new fatwa namely *haram* that pushes them to obey this new regulation although it was difficult for them to switch from DSN to RSN. Those ideological clues demonstrate their agency in dealing with DSN issues.

To support this regulation to be well applied, the shops in these two building complexes do not sell DSN anymore. In explaining this, FF6 said:

³⁷ "Kami menyampaikan masalah terkait sampah pembalut kepada bu nyai. Karena banyak madlorotnya gitu mbak. Jadinya pengasuh [memberi keputusan] diharamkan memakai itu. Nah dari situ kami memang berubah, meskipun awalnya teman-teman itu sulit [merubah kebiasaan ini]. Terus, ya lambat laun dengan ya karena sudah diharamkan, jadi teman-teman sudah mengerti bahwa ini memang bahaya. Jadi itu menguatkan teman-teman, sabar. Semenjak ada peraturan ya kebijakan seperti itu, ya sampai sekarang di pondok kami itu bebas [dari sampah pembalut]. Ini kira-kira sepuluh tahunan". Interview with FF3 on April 6, 2021.

³⁸ "Santri untuk perempuan ya yang menstruasi memang diharamkan menggunakan pembalut yang sekali pakai. Diharamkan, jadi harus menggunakan pembalut yg tidak sekali pakai, dicuci dan dipakai lagi. Interview with FF5 on April 7, 2021.

“It is forbidden to sell [disposable sanitary napkins] in [our] shops. If there are santri who violate this regulation, they will be punished ... So, only the [reusable sanitary] towels are sold in our shops”.³⁹

This text contains normative statements with obligational modalities that imply the obedience of santri in regard to the sale and use of RSN instead of DSN. This statement is ideological and a validation of the agency of the female figures in this pesantren through their opposition to the hegemony of market and media that prioritize capitalists' interests rather than long-term reproductive health and environmental sustainability.

I Want to Prove that We Can Succeed

Asked about her effort to apply the regulation of using RSN instead of DSN in her pesantren, FF1 stated:

“The problems that have to be unified [in Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah] are a lot, not only the problem of waste, yes ... Eventually, the problem of waste is not a priority, so we are still focusing on more strategic matters, such as education units. Well, the problem of waste is still neglected ... Even though I have pushed ... I can't wait for a decision from the central committee of the pesantren. I finally created [an environmental] program here. I want to prove that we can succeed. So, who knows if it will inspire others. Maybe someday, when we sit together in a meeting [I can show them] the evidence that this kind of program can be done”.⁴⁰

Her sentences “the problem of waste is not a priority” and “the problem of waste is still neglected” have experiential values that describe the knowledge of FF1 regarding the common sense of the leaders in the pesantren in facing waste problems. By using the inclusive *we* (*kami*) she also positioned herself as one of the leaders which means that she is aware

³⁹ “Di toko nggak boleh dijual gitu, kemudian kalau ketemu santri yang melanggar juga ditindak ... Jadi di toko hanya dijual yang [pembalut] handuk”. Interview with FF6 on April 5, 2021.

⁴⁰ “Problem yang harus disatukan itu banyak hal, bukan hanya sampah ya ... Akhirnya, [problem] sampah ini tidak jadi prioritas, jadi masih mengejar hal-hal yang lebih strategis misalnya tentang satuan Pendidikan. Nah, masalah sampah ini masih terselip sambil lalu. Meskipun saya sudah mendorong ... jadi saya nggak sabar menunggu keputusan dari pengurus pusat itu akhirnya saya bikin sendiri di sini program. Sy ingin membuktikan bahwa kami bisa berhasil. Nah kalau barangkali ada yang tergerak. Misalnya nanti kami duduk bersama rapat ada buktinya bahwa program semacam ini bisa dilakukan”. Interview with FF1 on March 18, 2021

of this common sense. However, her reference to her decision to create “[an environmental] program” is ideological that shows her agency since she generated a new relation of power by disputing the existing “decision from the central committee of pesantren”.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although the case study is at a pondok pesantren—an Islamic-based education institution—the religious voices are not that dominant in this discourse. There are also other rational/logical voices, such as environmental and health. Moreover, their reference to long-term reproductive health, environmental sustainability, and global waste problems indicates that female figures in Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah are open-minded in the sense that they are aware of those issues and put them as the basis of the regulation to use RSN instead of DSN.

The agency of female figures in these two building complexes of Pesantren Annuqayah is a sort of power negotiation through which those figures produced a new relation of power and domination vis-à-vis sanitary industries and the propaganda of media that prioritize capitalists’ interests and ignore long-term reproductive health and environmental sustainability in their DSN products.

Those negotiations then result in regulations to prohibit santri of these two building complexes from using DSN for their menstrual periods and change to the eco-friendly napkins that are also healthier for their reproductive organs. To resist the domination of sanitary industries and media, those female figures do not only explain rational and theological arguments regarding the danger of DSN for their long-term reproductive health and environmental sustainability but also stop selling DSN products in their shops.

Moreover, using religious term such as *haram*, those female figures challenge male domination in *fatwa*. Although gender is not the main requirement of someone to be a *mufti*, this authority is rarely given to women especially in traditional pesantren that reproduces patriarchal structures and ban women from authority and leadership positions (Hamdi, 2014). However, those female leaders break this tradition by issuing the *haram fatwa* of using DSN as an adaptation of Islamic doctrines to the continuous growing circumstances.⁴¹ Their understanding of Islamic legal maxims, awareness of reproductive health and environmental sustainability are a great combination that supports their authority in issuing this *fatwa*. Although a *fatwa* officially is not a binding ruling and people may decide not to follow it, this *fatwa* reveals a type of pedagogic element within the

⁴¹ H. A. Agrama, “Ethics, Tradition, Authority”, *American Ethnologist*, 37(1) (2010).

pesantren environment where it is used to cultivate health and environmental values in santri.⁴² Even after graduation from the pesantren, the santri of these two building complexes continue to apply the values they learned and some of them become environmental activists in their neighborhood.

Their agency to insist on women's voices to control their own bodies and challenge patriarchal traditions that neglect both women's and environmental issues conforms to ecofeminist ethics that insist on the interconnectedness between environmental issues and women issues. Warren explained three features that prolong the relationship between the domination of nature and that of women in patriarchal tradition: a hierarchical concept of value, dualism in value, and logic of domination. These three oppressive concepts authorize domination of human beings along the lines of gender, ethnic, social class, and also nature. Additionally, patriarchal tradition identifies women as nature with their passive character. Accordingly, it justifies men to subordinate women like they subordinate nature since human beings have a capacity to change the community consciously while nature does not.⁴³

⁴² H. A. Agrama, "Ethics, Tradition, Authority", *American Ethnologist*, 37(1) (2010).

⁴³ K. Warren, "The power and the promise of ecological feminism", *Multitudes*, 36(1) (2009).

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