

UNCOVERING THE MARRIAGE LIFE OF MODERN MADURESE WOMEN: THE SEXUAL CONTRACTS THEORY

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Abstrak. Studi tentang kehidupan perempuan Madura menarik untuk dikaji karena mereka hidup dalam masyarakat dan tradisi budaya yang sangat patriarki. Dalam hal perkawinan, perempuan Madura dihadapkan pada praktik-praktik tradisional yang merugikan seperti pernikahan dini dan perjodohan. Tingkat pendidikan yang rendah dan ketergantungan finansial adalah dua faktor utama yang mencegah mereka melepaskan diri dari praktik-praktik ini dan membuat mereka hidup dalam pernikahan yang tidak bahagia. Banyak dari mereka mengalami dominasi dan subordinasi dalam semua aspek kehidupan. Namun, kondisi seperti itu biasa dialami oleh perempuan Madura terdahulu yang hidupnya terbatas pada kepercayaan dan tradisi yang merendahkan perempuan. Saat ini, era modern telah secara signifikan membentuk cara orang dalam memandang sesuatu dan berperilaku. Selanjutnya, wanita Madura modern menolak tradisi pernikahan yang ada dengan menikahi pria pilihan mereka. Mereka juga memiliki latar belakang pendidikan yang lebih baik yang berkontribusi pada perspektif kehidupan yang berbeda dan mandiri secara finansial. Dengan menggunakan kerangka fenomenologis, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kehidupan pernikahan wanita Madura Modern dengan melihat hubungan suami-istri berdasarkan teori kontrak seksual. Wawancara tidak terstruktur digunakan untuk menghasilkan data untuk analisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada pergeseran hubungan suami-istri dalam kehidupan pernikahan wanita Madura modern. Hubungan suami-istri lebih kepada pola *partnership* bukan dominan-subordinasi.

Kata kunci: wanita Madura, pernikahan, kontrak seksual, studi gender

Abstract. The life of Madurese women is interesting to study as they live in a strongly patriarchal society as well as cultural traditions. In terms of marriage, Madurese women are confronted with unfavorable traditional practices such as early marriage and arranged marriage. Low educational level and financial dependence are two major factors that prevent them from escaping these practices and leave them in unhappy marriages. Many of them experience domination and subordination in all aspects of their life. However, such conditions are commonly experienced by former Madurese women whose life was restricted to beliefs and traditions that undermined women. Nowadays, modern era has significantly shaped the way people perceive things and behave.

Subsequently, modern Madurese women are rejecting the existing marriage traditions by marrying the men of their choosing. They also have better educational backgrounds that contribute to the different perspectives of life and are financially independent. Employing a phenomenological framework, the purpose of this study is to investigate the marriage life of Modern Madurese women by looking at the husband-wife relationship based on the sexual contracts theory. Unstructured interviews were used to generate the data for the analysis. The results of the study demonstrate that there is a husband-wife relationship shifting in the marriage life of modern Madurese women. The husband-wife relationship is more to the partnership rather than dominant-subordinated.

Keywords: Madurese women, marriage life, the sexual contracts, gender studies

INTRODUCTION

Madurese women are treated unfairly in their society. Such an assumption has been growing so vastly that many researchers are intrigued to unveil this phenomenon. The unfairness among Madurese women was from the culture that undermined women's rights, such as early marriage and arranged marriage. Madurese women do not have the freedom to determine when and with whom they will marry. Their father and the elders in their family take decisions regarding marriage. Madurese women are considered weak, therefore, they must be directed and guided in any decisions of their life (Masyitah Mardhatillah, 2014). That Madurese women unable to be autonomous for their marriage indicates their rights as an individual are not recognized. Marriage is differ from other relationship because an 'individual' and a natural subordinate enter into the contract, not two 'individuals' (Pateman, 1988).

Marriage begins in a contract (Pateman, 1988). The contract is sealed once a man and a woman say "I do" to marry each other affecting on their status changing as a husband and a wife. One of the implications of the marriage contract is the exchange of obedience for protection. A woman who since the beginning of the marriage has been dependant and powerless must give their obedience as the exchange of the protection given by their husband. Husbands in marriage provide protection for wives because of their superiority, however, they will have the right to determine how their wives will act to fulfill their side of the exchange (Pateman, 1988). Many of Madurese women are submissive to their husbands because they cannot reject the fact that they are powerless and need protection from their husbands. The tradition of early marriages increasingly places the position of Madurese women as the dependent parties.

The factors perpetuate early marriage and arranged marriage still occur in Madura is low education level of the women (Bawono et al., 2019). Madurese women are not permitted to pursue higher education. There is a belief among Madurese society that the best career for a woman is as a wife and a mother. Therefore, it is better for a Madurese woman to marry as soon as possible. Subsequently, they are not mature, passive, and financially dependant. This conditions lead them to experience domination and subordination in husband-wife relationship. Young brides tend to have less bargaining power within the household and may be viewed as the property of their husband (Natanael et al., 2013). As the consequence, most of them are trapped in an unhappy marriage. Early marriage and arranged marriage effectuate disharmony in husband-wife relationship which may lead to divorce (Yusuf & Widati, 2017).

Seeing the facts occured in marriages done by following the tradition of early marriage and arranged marriage, Madurese women in the modern time today refuse to perform these traditions. Modern era has significantly shaped the way Madurese women perceive things and behave. Accordingly, they become more open-minded and are eager to fight for their rights including to determine when and with whom they will marry. Modern Madurese women provide themselves with higher education and financial security so that they can be considered as individuals and get

equal rights as men in marriage. The link between education and age married become importance since the education has lengthily discussed as economic driver (Natanael et al., 2013).

There are myriad studies about the marriage life of former Madurese women whose life was restricted to beliefs and traditions that undermined women. The focus of that studies are mainly about the role of Madurese women in marriage and the exploration of marriage life of early marriage women. However, the various studies that have been conducted have not been observed about the marriage life of the modern women. It is undeniable that modernization brings on changes in social character, therefore, a study of the marriage life of modern Madurese women is needed to be conducted.

Specifically, this article is going to investigate the marriage life of modern Madurese women by uncovering the husband-wife relationship. Referring to the results of the previous studies revealing men domination over women in Madurese marriage, this study is going to observe the husband-wife relationship pattern of modern Madurese women marriage. This study also focuses on answering the question about the authority modern Madurese women have in marriage and whether or not domination and subordination continuesly exist in the marriage life of modern Madurese women. To analyze the issues, this study uses the perspective of Carole Pateman about the sexual contracts. The sexual contracts discusses marriage as a contractual relationship. Husbands can exploit wives because wives are constituted as subordinates through the marriage contract. The results of this study are expected to give contribution to the discussions of women's studies particularly to the study of Madurese women and their social life.

METHOD

A phenomenological approach was employed to focus on the marriage lived experience of modern Madurese women. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Typically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience. In this study, unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted with a group of Madurese women who are chosen randomly as the informants. The informants must meet certain criteria: 1) madurese women 2) financially independent 3) have higher education background 4) not experiencing both early marriage and arranged marriage. The location of the study was in Bangkalan, Sampang, and Pamekasan. The interviews were conducted around September-November, 2021. The data analysis was done by sorting the data obtained, synthesizing the data, describe and analyze the data using the sexual contract theory by Carole Pateman. The last step for the data analysis is drawing a conclusion to summarize the results of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Characters of Modern Madurese Women

Modern Madurese women are those who welcome changes. They have strong willingness to break cultures and traditions undermined women. They have witnessed the life of former Madurese women is so unfair due to gender discrimination. To get equal and fair treatment, they have to work very hard to fight against the discrimination. Therefore, modern Madurese women characters are different with their formers.

Previously, women's position in Madura is marginal. There is a big gender gap between men and women. The gender gap causes limitations to former Madurese women's movement, especially in education. Only few former Madurese women have a chance to pursue higher education. Most of them are graduated from elementary school. A misconception spread in Madurese society about women and education. Former Madurese women considered unnecessary to obtain higher education because they are not expected to have good career in the future (Sudarso, 2017). *Ne' bine' paggun abalih ka depor* (women would still return to the kitchen) (Suhaidi, 2021). This statement is

often given to Madurese women in order to remind them where they belong. Domestic life and motherhood are their future. These circumstances contribute to the passiveness of former Madurese women because they have to depend their life to their husbands.

Due to this fact, Madurese women nowadays are more educated. Education empowers them to be more 'human'. By having good education, modern Madurese women can have more options for their future. Although as women they cannot neglect their nature as wife and mother for their children, their educational degree offers some positive benefits for their life. First, they can have a more rational way of thinking so that in their relationship with men they can negotiate anything that can harm themselves as individuals. Second, higher education creates the character of independent modern Madura women. They can work and make money like men. They can be financially independent because they have opportunities to have a job. This of course can save them from oppression. Third, education can bring up the character of modern Madura women who are more daring to fight for their gender rights.

The change in the character of Madurese women has a huge effect on the treatment they get in society. One of these changes in character can create a new identity for Madurese women. With this new identity, Madurese women can be considered more present so that they can gradually eliminate the discrimination that has existed so far. Husband-wife relationships, for example, can become more fluid. Besides, the concepts of women's obligations in the household can also be redefined in a more balanced way to accommodate women's rights.

B. Husband-Wife Relationship Pattern

Marriage changes the status of men and women to husbands and wives. The status change impacts on roles that both husbands and wives have to perform in a marriage. Neither a man nor a woman can choose or decide what roles they want to perform. This is due to the fact that marriage adopts the values of patriarchal society. Men and women's role are differentiated based on the sexual difference. Pateman (1988) further mentions this condition in marriage as the sexual contract. Marriage is differ from other relationship as marriage is a long-term arrangement and legal, therefore, there are agreements united men and women as husbands and wives. These agreements are like a contract, although the narration of the contracts are not written but it comes naturally based on the sexual differences of men and women which create different gender role.

In patriarchal culture, men and women are in gender relation. Men is considered more superior than women and get more privileges in their individual rights. Women is lack of capacities as an individual because the sexual difference acknowledges them as the subordinate party. Marriage also recognizes gender relation in husband-wife relationship. Marriage is a social institution and the archetype of patriarchy. For that reason, it is very possible that in marriage domination over women exists. Men with their superiorities use their power to rule women. Husbands are the head of the family and they are able to determine any decisions of the family matters including what the wives can do and cannot do. In such condition, it indicates that marriage is not a free relationship, instead there is a structure that regulate the husband-wife relationship.

There is nothing much known about the complexities of the relationship between husband-wife in marriage. Marriage in society is still seen as a romantic relationship aimed to form a family. In Madura, marriage serves many purposes, not only for romantic relationship but also for family matters. One of them is for mantaining the social status of the family (Noer, 2012). This reason leads to the tradition of arranged marriage and early marriage in which parents marry their kids especially daughters with the chosen partner in their very young age. Lack of knowledge and readiness for marriage may affect on difficulties in facing the realities of the marriage. Marriage involves social expectations, social values, culture and traditions.

In marriage there are some patterns of husband-wife relationship (Pateman, 1988). The first form is mastery and subjection. Husbands as the master are able to exercise over their wives. Pateman (1988) states that once women had been enslaved and families formed, men had the

concept of slavery and the means to extend their mastery: 'he found himself free to limit and to conquer other human beings; and he was fully secure in that his "wife" - that is to say, his female slave - would roast his meat and attend to any other of his needs.' This pattern implies no equality between husbands and wives in marriage. Husband get total freedom while wives have to subject themselves. In running the household, this pattern positions women as the servant of the family. Their main job is to do the request from their husbands. Wife and servant are the same, but only differ in the name. Besides, the mastery pattern in marriage is the major means through which men affirm their manhood (Pateman, 1988).

The second pattern of husband-wife relationship in marriage is the owner and the property. Husbands as the owners must protect their wives as their property. Protection that husbands must give to their wives are both psychologically and financially. However, this protection is not free. Wives have to pay for this protection with their obedience. This condition by Pateman (1988) is called as an exchange. Protection is exchanged with obedience. Husbands as the owners have an authority to ask for services from their wives because while wives cannot refuse all the requests because they are only the property of their husbands. This condition lead to women subordination in marriage. They have no individual rights in marriage. This relationship pattern only gives advantage to one party only, the husbands.

The husband-wife relationship pattern in Madurese traditional marriage follows either the mastery and subjection or the owner and the property. Modern Madurese women witness such circumstances through the marriage of their parents, relatives or people in their neighborhood. Based on their statement, since the modern thought brought new perspectives to their understanding about gender relation, modern Madurese women do not want to experience those two patterns in their marriage. One of the informants mention that the husband-wife relationship patterns in Madurese traditional marriage are sexist. The mastery and subjection pattern gives women more burden to dedicate their entirely body and soul to the marriage life. Moreover, women become passive and lack of initiative in the owner and property pattern. Madurese society with their strong patriarchal values believes that any jobs, services and responsibilities to the household and childcare in a marriage must be done by women. However, once there is a problem or mistake about the household and childcare, Madurese society tends to blame women and consider them incapable in taking care their family. This fact shows that in Madura there is no equal treatment for women in marriage.

Referring to that condition, modern Madurese women voice a change to husband-wife relationship pattern. Change starts with choosing husband by themselves and breaking away from the culture of arranged marriage and early marriage. The respondents state that it is very important to know with whom they are going to marry with. By choosing the partner themselves, they will know the characteristics and personalities of the men. Some respondents explain that they also discuss several important things with the men related to their married life, including the role of each party in the marriage. The discussion can avoid them from unequal treatment and subordination in the marriage. It shows that modern Madurese women position themselves as an individual equal with men before entering into marriage, so that their rights will be recognized.

Furthermore, according to the answer of the respondents, the husband-wife relationship pattern in their marriage are more into partnership. So, it is neither one of the two patterns as mentioned earlier. They call their relationship pattern as partnership because there is no superior and inferior party. Both the modern Madurese women and their husband agree to divide any roles and responsibilities in their marriage equally. So, they are partner and a teamwork in their marriage. However, equal here does not mean the same portion. The concept of equal proposed by the respondents is each party has roles, but the roles do not necessarily to be gender based. It furtherly means that husband and wife can change roles if one party is not eligible to do so for certain reasons. For example, if the wife is working outside of the house and she has limit time to take care of the house and the kids, so the husband must be willing to help or even to take over that role. So,

there is no certain role that must be done by certain party because of their gender. This relationship pattern can help the husband and the wife have more spaces for individual rights and can avoid subordination in a marriage.

Husband-wife relationship pattern is very essential in a marriage. Therefore, modern Madura women believe that in order to eliminate discrimination and subordination of Madurese women in marriage, a new relationship pattern must be implemented. There must be awareness in the Madurese community about gender equality and recognize that Madurese women are also an entity whose individual rights cannot be distinguished from men. The partnership pattern began to be implemented in modern Madurese women's marriages. With this pattern, Madurese women can enjoy their individual rights while still carrying out their roles and responsibilities both as wives and as mothers.

CONCLUSION

Modern Madurese women are still faced with cultural and traditional realities that do not support women's rights. The strong patriarchal cultural values in Madura still view women as subordinate entities that do not have the capacity to be autonomous. Efforts towards change have been made by modern Madurese women to make their lives different and better than the lives of former Madurese women. Character change is a way to show their identity as individuals and to eliminate gender discrimination that has existed so far. Modern Madurese are more educated, brave in speaking and financially independent. These three things are able to eliminate the passive stigma of women and contribute to changes in the treatment given by society, especially in the relationship between men and women as husband and wife. The big influence of the character of modern Madurese women on the relationship between husband and wife is the emergence of a partnership relationship pattern. The relationship pattern is known as partnerships because there are no superior or subordinate parties. A modern Madura woman and her husband agree to share all roles and responsibilities in her marriage equally. In short, they are partners and marriage teamwork. However, equality here does not mean equal share. The concept of equality proposed by the respondents is that each party has a role, but the role does not necessarily have to be gender. It also means that the husband and wife can switch roles if one party is not eligible to switch for a particular reason. Therefore, there is no specific role that a particular party must play based on gender. This pattern allows Madura women to enjoy their individual rights while fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as both wives and mothers.

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