

PEER RELATION BETWEEN SENIOR AND JUNIOR STUDENTS AT AN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN INDONESIA

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The aim of this study is to understand peer relations among students studying at different grade levels at an Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Qualitative methods were employed in interviewing nine female students: 5 Junior High School level (MTs) students and 4 Senior High School level (MA) students. Data collection technique also used questionnaire toward 19 Junior High School level (MTs) students and 31 Senior High School level (MA) students. The results show that inter-grade level peer relations between students at the MTs level and those at the MA level are hierarchal. The concept of respect and guidance are important in framing the relationship, though they are understood differently between those at the MTs and MA level. Fear, inferiority, *sungkan* (combination of respect and fear) are examples of emotions felt by those in the lower grades when describing their relations with their seniors.

Keywords: peer relation, hierarchy, grade levels

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as the third most populous country in the world after China, India, and the United States. Based on data from the population census conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Indonesia amounted to 237.641.326 inhabitants. Based on geographical conditions, Indonesia is an archipelago that lies behind culture diversity, including religion. Six major religions recognized in Indonesia. Indonesia is known as the country with the largest Muslim population, account for 87.18% of Indonesia's population or about 207 million people.

The rapid development of Islam in Indonesia followed by the development of Islamic education. According to Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia (2012), religious education activities in Indonesia has started since 1596. That religious activity is then known as *pesantren* and with that *pondok pesantren* appeared. Up to 2012, there were 27.230 *pondok pesantren* spread all over Indonesia.

According to Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, *pondok pesantren* is an Islamic boarding school that all of students live together and learned by teacher is known as *Kyai*. Generally, *pondok pesantren* defined as a boarding school educational institution that has five key elements; (1) *pondok/dormitory*: is the place to stay for the students. That is the hallmark and the tradition of boarding school and differentiate it from other education that developed in Indonesia, (2) *mosque*: a place to educate the students, especially in practices such as prayer, recitation classics, cadre clerics, etc., (3) *teaching of classic books*: the main purpose of education in boarding schools, (4) *santri*: a term for students who are studying in boarding school. Male *santri* called santriwan, while female *santri* called santriwati, and (5) *kyai*: a leader of the boarding school. Title “*kyai*” itself is a title given to an expert community of Islam who became head of the school and teach classic books about Islam.

The development of Islamic education in Indonesia is not only related to boarding school, but also *madrasah* education. In the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) No. 90 Year 2013 on the Implementation of *Madrasah*, mentioned that the *madrasah* is a formal education unit guided by Minister of Religion which organizes general and vocational education to the particularities of Islam. *Madrasah* is divided into three levels of education, early childhood education shaped *Raudlatul Athfal* (RA), primary education shaped *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) and *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), and secondary education shaped *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA). RA is an education equivalent to kindergarten, MI equivalent to elementary school, MTs equivalent to junior high school, and MA equivalent to senior high school.

The current research is stressing on *Santri* both MTs and MA. *Santri* receive Islamic education not only from *pondok pesantren* but also from *madrasah*. Starting from the early prayer at dawn, learn school subject in *madrasah*, read and recite Al-Qur’an, and doing other religious activities till they sleep in a *pondok pesantren* is under the supervision and guidance. Therefore, the learning activities of *santri* is almost 24 hours a day in *pondok pesantren* and *madrasah* or like a full day school.

Adolescents from boarding schools spend more time mostly with peers. The amount of time with friends, before and after school, provides more opportunities for developing friendships (Pfeiffer, Piquart, & Krick, 2016). The same thing goes for *santri* in *pondok pesantren*. Friends could be the only social support of *santri* in *pondok pesantren*. It shown when someone become new student in *pondok pesantren*. The presence of friend for new student have high significance in adjustment and grow the feeling of comfort to study at

pondok pesantren (Shobihah, Rakmeni dan Arinda, 2014). Living away from parents require *santri* to be able to live independently and to adapt to the *pondok pesantren* environment. Many studies have suggested that friends have a powerful influence on school adjustment, attitudes, and behaviors. Perceived support from peers can give students a sense of motivation and help students see the importance of pursuing academic success (You, 2011).

For most adolescents, social relations are concentrated on their peer group and regard it as the important relation to them. The transition from childhood to adolescence cause changes in the individual, social context, and social norms that raise the importance of peers. Therefore, peer group has a role as a significant relationship that influence on adolescent attitudes, activities, and emotional well-being (Brown & Larson, 2009). In Indonesia, peer-group plays an important role to elicit the positive emotion of Indonesian adolescents (Evanjeli, Prawitasari-Hardiyono, Hakim, Yuniarti, & Kim, 2011).

Friendship has been studied in interpersonal relationships. According to Baron and Byrne (2005) friendship is a relation with peers that occur because of common interests, resulting in the mutual liking based on positive feelings. Individuals with more similarity in attitude, personality, interests, and values tend to match each other. Dwyer (2002) stated that friendship is a relationship that is built based on sincerity individual against another individual of interest. Two individuals are related to friendship have free will to distribute help on those in need, mutual trust and respect for each other, and sharing and keeping personal secrets that have been shifted into interpersonal secret.

According to Rai and Fiske (2011), friendship could be a communal relation which people treat some dyad or group as equivalent and undifferentiated. In communal relation, individual tend to show an attitude to support the integration of the group, caring for each other, and empathize to each other, which are those could make friendship more closer.

Based on Relational Models of Theory by Fiske (as cited in Rai & Fiske, 2011), relation between senior and junior could be categorized as authority ranking (AR). AR allows us to know the relative position of individuals in a linear hierarchy, such as between dominant and subordinate individuals, adults and children, military officers, and people of different castes, ages, or genders in many societies. This model relation needs moral motive that namely by Fiske as hierarchy. Hierarchy is directed toward creating and maintaining linear ranking in social groups. Subordinates are motivated to respect, obey, and pay deference to the will of superiors, such as leaders, ancestors, or gods, and to punish those who

disobey or disrespect them. Superiors, in turn, feel a sense of pastoral responsibility toward subordinates and are motivated to lead, guide, direct, and protect them. However, hierarchy is meant by Fiske does not hierarchies as inherently immoral, exploitive, or even undesirable. Nor do legitimate hierarchies emerge out of pure force or coercion or even undesirable. In many cultures, people perceive hierarchy as natural, inevitable, necessary, and legitimate.

Awareness to seniority remains strong in the Javanese community. It is reflected on how Javanese treat people that are either older or younger in age. By being older, this does not only older in age, but also in social status, familial status, and status in an employment context. This particular hierarchical structure is apparent from practices of giving additional verbal expressions to the people that are older, such as *mas* (for older men), *mbak* (for older women), *bapak* (for men that are much older), and *ibu* (for women that are much older). These labels are basically valid in the familial and school context, and also work place.

The concept of *ngemong* appear from the family context. According to the Javanese Dictionary, *ngemong* (in the verbal form) or *among* (nominal form) refers to taking care of, guide, and educate a child with full affection. On the other hand, according to understandings of Javanese, the hierarchical seniority, places considerable social responsibility to the people that are older. Subandi (2008) stated that *ngemong* was an attempt by someone to assist people who are in a position "helpless" (subordinate). People considered to be senior, are obliged to practice *ngemong* to those younger. Therefore, *ngemong* could be valid in the school context, especially in the relation between senior and junior.

Geertz (1959) stated that the key behavioural pattern in the Javanese kinship system. Geertz also categorized the emotional component of respect by the three Javanese words, *wedi*, *isin*, and *sungkan*, which denote three kinds of feeling states felt to be appropriate to situations demanding respectful behavior. The child begins by learning to be *wedi* or afraid in the presence of strangers. Later he or she learns to be shy or ashamed (*isin*). Geertz defined *isin* as a complex anxiety reaction, involving not only fear but also lowered self-esteem, and concerns only social anxieties, usually those having to do with social distance, including distance self-imposed through social transgression. Besides, *sungkan* as reluctant to approach or take action toward someone of higher status; embarrassed before one's betters. According to the way Javanese treat older people that are either older in age or social status, respect could be the important concept not only in family system, but also in school context.

This study would focus on *santriwati*'s relation toward each other or we can call it as same-sex friendship among *santriwati*. Same-sex friendship had been studied by many researchers. Sex differences in friendship become the interesting thing to discuss. Hall (2011) stated that male and female have different expectations in friendship. Females more expect symmetrical reciprocity (e.g., loyalty, genuineness), communion (e.g., self-disclosure, intimacy), solidarity (e.g., mutual activities, companionship) than males, but males more expect agency (e.g., physical fitness, status). That is parallel with study conducted by Caldwell and Peplau (1982) that women showed emphasis on emotional sharing and talking, while men emphasized activities and doing things together. It is shown that women and men express their intimacy differently. Therefore, that is more interesting to know how *santriwati* build and maintain their relationship with others *santriwati*.

Relation between senior and junior among *santriwati* are interesting to be studied more deeply. Furthermore, difference grade levels context could be influencing the relationship among *santri* in *pondok pesantren*. Therefore, this study aims to understand peer relations among students studying at different grade levels at *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia, especially relation among *santriwati*. Hence, this study conducted at one of the oldest *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia and also the largest in Yogyakarta which the *santri* from MTs and MA live in the same building.

METHODS

This study used qualitative method. The qualitative method was chosen to explore and understand peer relations among students studying at different grade levels at boarding school. Meanings of the individuals' experience is important in this study to gain an understanding of the object of the study, thus that qualitative methods be appropriate for use in the present study (Creswell, 2014).

This study conducted in one of the oldest *pondok pesantren* in Indonesia and also the largest in Yogyakarta. Data collection techniques used were interviews and questionnaire. *Santri* who became participant on this study for interview are 11 *santriwati* (women *santri*) at age 14-18 years old that consist of 4 *santriwati* who studying at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) or as we known as MTs and 7 students or *santriwati* who studying at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) or as we known as MA. While the participant for questionnaire method are 31 MA *santriwati* and 19 MTs *santriwati*.

Interviews and questionnaire data were analyzed using coding techniques (Creswell, 2014) outlined the steps of analysis: (1) processing and preparing the data, (2) read the data as a whole to find the idea of the whole of the data, (3) analyzed in more detail by coding the data with categorization and give a special label, and (4) concluded a theme that became the main result of this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result shows that the meaning of friend includes all the *santri* that are studied in *pondok pesantren*, not only for same batch but also senior and junior. *Santriwati* who are in Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) or Madrasah Aliyah (MA), acknowledges the hierarchical relationships in their friendship. Relation that have developed between the senior and the junior cannot be separated from how senior and junior running expectations role attached to them. Senior is expected to be *pengayom* for the junior. While the junior is expected to play a role as a subordinate. That role affects the growth of relationship between senior and junior. As described by Fiske that in the relational model ranking authority, junior are motivated to respect senior. However, *santriwati* recognizes that respect to older people is a moral obligation that needs to be done by younger people. It is also because senior have more experienced and knowledge that make them must be respected. It means that the existing hierarchy in *santriwati* friendship is natural, inevitable, and become the way they maintain their relation, not something intimidating and coercive element. Relation between senior and junior could be understood by this pattern.

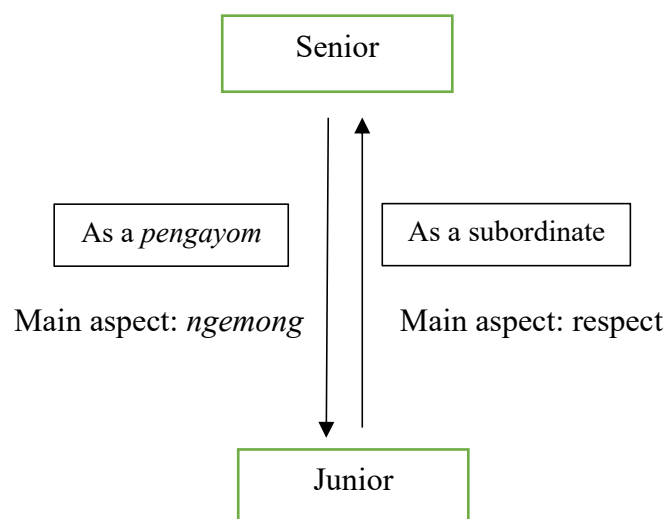


Figure 1. The pattern of relation between senior and junior in *pondok pesantren*

Senior as a *pengayom* and junior as a subordinate

Hierarchical relationships are not one-dimensional, that those who have power are benefited. Another dimension of the hierarchical relation is the responsibility carried by those who have a higher position. Senior feel morally has to guide, protect, and stand up for junior (Rai & Fiske, 2011). Those who have more power also has the responsibility to *ngemong*. Senior position, which is considered higher, making junior has hope that the senior can play a role as *pengayom*. *Ngemong* attitude is showed by caring attitude and not easy to denounce, not much demand, helping junior, and was able to give a good example. So, although in relation hierarchy between *santriwati* showed that seniors have the great power distance, *santriwati* who are in junior positions not hesitated to the great power distance, because they also take a lot of advantages from hierarchies (Ramaswami, Huang & Dreher, 2014) like they can ask for help when faced difficulties. For example, if junior experience difficulties in learning, they will ask seniors to teach them. They also have a role as a sharing partner about how to live at *pondok pesantren*, or even sharing about personal problems.

“We have homework, then asking to them, they will teach us”
(Amalia, *santriwati*, 2nd grade MTs student).

“...if there any difficult homework, (I) could ask for help (to them) to teach me...” (PI.MTs.010).

“We could share our opinion, experiences, helping each other, sharing personal problems.” (PI.MA.004).

Santriwati, both who are in MTs or MA, feel that the hierarchy in their friendship is an important thing to have. It is because senior have a lot of knowledge and experience, as well as having a good understanding of *pondok pesantren* life. Efforts to maintain the hierarchy including junior awareness of their obligations initiate interaction with senior by greet first and passive in the conversation. It is also with seniors who seek to speak or dominate the conversation as needed to maintain the existing power distance. For juniors, it was regarded as a senior rights who does have more power. Bond et al (1985) which stated that in the social environment that has a large power distance, warning a subordinate to those who have a higher status would be considered an insult. Instead, contempt for those who are in a subordinate position would be considered as a common thing.

Senior has a role as a transfer values in *pondok pesantren* among the junior. It is because they know about *pondok pesantren* and how to maintain the self-adjustment more than junior. They become junior's role model. They also guide junior to behave properly.

“(They) guide the junior, when I am a freshman at pondok pesantren, I don't know about pondok pesantren routines, then senior would tell me.” (PI.MA.007).

“...Senior has to guide junior. If junior had a mistake, senior has to tell them. Junior has to listen to their senior, imitate good attitudes, and remind each other if someone done wrong.” (PI.MTs.012).

However, there are some senior are trying to shorten the distance power. Efforts to shorten the distance between senior and junior, is usually performed by senior who wants to establish closer relations with the junior. This is likely to be influenced by how person faces situation social relations, as written by Oyserman (2006). Oyserman stated that the use of power can be influenced by personal factors, so its use will be different in different situations. For example, if a junior is a roommate, senior will attempt to get closer to junior with an open mind, invites joke together, and help when experiencing difficulties.

Santriwati have to obey to the rules at *pondok pesantren*. If the junior made a mistake, senior rebuke because it is senior's obligation to oversee and give a proper presentative.

“To junior? Instead, (I) directly told them” (Ana, Santriwati, 3rd grade MA student).

Senior attempted to initiate communication with junior. For example, when senior is a junior's roommate, senior will attempt to get closer to junior.

“I went to school that day and fainted at school, then mbak-mbak (senior) helped me...then asked me, are you feel better?” (Intan, santriwati, 1st grade MTs student).

“Because in the same room like there is no gap between batches... mbak-mbak didn't demanding to be respected” (Sarina, santriwati, 2nd grade MTs student).

In addition, junior has a role as subordinate. Junior is expected to call senior with "mbak" (for older women). *Mbak* is a Javanese term that shows respect to older. The term

also reflects the sense of politeness among junior to senior. Sometimes, *mbak* also be used to call or say hello to strangers as a sign of respect.

“Yap, still call them mbak.” (Ira, Santriwati, 2nd grade MA student).

“Yes, we have to polite. Well, that is because they are older.... have to respect” (Amalia, Santriwati, 2nd grade MA student).

Junior has to call senior with “*mbak*” because they regarded senior as santriwati who have excess knowledge and having more experience, as well as having a good understanding of pondok pesantren life. In addition, the politeness is also demonstrated through body language, like smiling when greeting a senior.

“Think that they are older, having more experienced. They are older so we have to respect them” (Safira, santriwati, 2nd grade MTs student).

“In fact, I am as example for junior” (Ijah, Santriwati, 3rd grade MA student).

“Yes, if we met...smile, greet them” (Intan, Santriwati, 1st grade MTs student).

It is also encouraging junior to start the communication with seniors as to greet then when they met, but junior is being passive in the conversation. For example, if they meet, junior should greet first. However, the junior was not free to start a topic of conversation because the junior is expected to act as a listener and affirm what is delivered by a brother generation.

“If we met, we chat rarely.... We had chat if we had business with them” (Ira, Santriwati, 2nd grade MA student).

Santriwati have to obey to the rules at *pondok pesantren*. If the junior made a mistake, senior rebuke because it is senior’s obligation to oversee and give a proper representative. It is affect the way junior should behave as doing a perfect behavior and do not make a mistake. In addition, junior want to avoid a negative label, namely *songong*. *Songong* is a term used to reflect audacious, take against and disrespectful to the senior. However, this label is only used by some seniors.

“It is like..umm..being audacious, disrespectful, take against to senior...(I was) afraid to call songong” (Ana, Santriwati, 3rd grade MA student).

Respect

Relation between junior and senior emphasized on respect as an important concept to understand the relation. In addition, respect concept is referred to as an important concept that affects how the relationship develops. Junior realized that senior as elder figure and have more knowledge, so senior must be respected.

“Their role as elder people. They have matured opinion in solve a problem.” (PI.MA.014)

“(They) respected because they are elder.” (PI.MA.031)

This concept also make junior has different response when senior done wrong things. Based on the questionnaire, junior will take action or avoidance to senior. Junior who did action will rebuke the senior if they did wrong. On the other hand, junior who did avoidance will be quiet, not against, or not imitate what senior had done if they did wrong.

“I realize that I am powerless than them (senior), I only dare to occasionally advise and not imitate that behavior.” (PI.MTs.011).

The concept of respect is understood differently by each of the *santriwati* who are in MTs and MA, even though both of them living in the same building at pondok pesantren. At the level of MTs, fear underlying respect for seniors. The attitude that appears is to do not take the fight against anything done by the senior.

“Just be quiet because (I) am afraid to senior.” (PI.MTs.004).

Another example is that bathroom in *pondok pesantren* used together so they have to queue up to use it. *Santriwati* called this queue activity as "bare". Sometimes, some seniors would put her friends on the same batch with them to queue up along though junior had to queue first.

“When I said ‘mbak bare (queue)?’ she didn’t answer. Then when she came out, she told to her friend ‘where are you queue? Come here, there is no one here’ though I did bare. She concerned to her friend. (Intan, Santriwati, 1st grade MTs student).

“But, (I am) scared (and) embarrassed (to senior) because if they’ll call ‘*songong*’” (Titis, *Santriwati*, 3rd of MTs student).

Because of fear, a junior at MTs level also limit themselves to interact with seniors. Interaction occurs only when they are doing activities together. Furthermore, when junior should talk to senior, then they will be more careful in choosing the words to be spoken.

“... (we are) in the meeting together, thus I know her....” (Safira, *Santriwati*, 2nd of MTs student).

“We talk (should) more careful” (Safira, *Santriwati*, 2nd of MTs student).

As the result shows that junior at MTs respect their senior caused by fear. Respectful to seniors often equated with not take the fight against anything done by the senior. The fear is often cited as a cause of the absence of fight against senior, and it is considered as the best way to maintain relationships with seniors. Fear caused a junior at MTs also limit themselves to interact with seniors. It is only occurs when they are doing activities together. Furthermore, when the junior was talking to senior, then they will be more careful in choosing the words to be spoken. They will try to choose words that are considered polite. This had led some junior is less open to senior caused by embarrassed or awkward. It shows that the fear that underlies respectful behavior has grown to be a feeling of shame. Conceptually, that shyness could be related to the explanation given by Gertz (1959) about *isin*. Geertz defined *isin* as a complex anxiety reaction, involving not only fear but also lowered self-esteem, and concerns only social anxieties, usually those having to do with social distance, including distance self-imposed through social transgression.

The concept of respect is understood by those in the MTs are different to *santriwati* who are in education MA. *Santriwati* at MA tend to equate respect with the word *sungkan*. Conceptually, *sungkan* could be understood as reluctant to approach or behave toward someone of higher status; embarrassed in front of superior (Gertz, 1959). Based on the result, *sungkan* caused by the assumption that seniors are older, and have more experienced and knowledge. It also shows if junior want to make a contact with senior first, it is usually driven by important business or they really need their senior. Junior will limit the interaction when senior got busy with her friend from her same batch because they feel *sungkan* when interrupting *senior*.

“If we met.... (I will) ask to teach (by senior)” (Faul, *santriwati*, 3rd of MA student).

“(I was) afraid if (I) bothered her....Sometimes, (I) saw that *mbak* were busy with her friend...so ‘oh it is okay then, she is with her friend” (Ira, *santriwati*, 2nd of MA student).

Not only being more bold initiative when interacting with seniors, those in MA are also more willing to rebuke when seniors make a mistake or violation of their rights, but indirectly with intermediary. It is also because they feel *sungkan* if they have to rebuke directly.

“Nope, just write down on paper says ‘please, put *mukena* (worship equipment) in order’” (Ana, *santriwati*, 3rd of MA student).

In contrast with the respect that is motivated by fear, relations with the respect caused by *sungkan* didn’t make a barrier for those who are in a subordinate position to interact with those are having higher position. Junior can more initiate interaction with seniors, especially when there is a need that is considered important. The need is often become the reason humans interact basis (Thibaut & Kelley in Griffin, 2008). However, the junior still limits the interactions that are informal or casual. Furthermore, those *santriwati* at MA also more dare to rebuke seniors when they made a mistake or violation of junior's rights by indirectly reprimand used intermediary. The closed and smooth way of against becomes an important part of the effort to subordinate to survive (Scott, 1985; 1992).

CONCLUSION

Santriwati who are at the level of MTs and MA realize existence of hierarchical relationships in their senior and junior relationships. Junior’s role as a subordinate indicate that the junior should have respect for seniors. However, the concept of respect is understood by *santriwati* who were in MTs are different to *santriwati* who are in education MA. For those *santriwati* who are in MTs, respect based on fear. Meanwhile, *santriwati* who were in MA express his respect with *sungkan*. Therefore, respect is an important attitude to establish good friendship relations on *santriwati* at the boarding school, especially in the senior and junior relationship.

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