

# **THE PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA: NEGOTIATING VIEWS IN THE PUBLIC AND DOMESTIC SPHERE**

**A Thesis**

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by:

**Rachma Vina Tsurayya**

**01212110009**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA**

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## ABSTRACT

Name : Rachma Vina Tsurayya  
Programme : Islamic Studies  
Title : The Progressive Female Ulama: Negotiating Views in The Public and Domestic Sphere  
Email : [vinrachma@gmail.com](mailto:vinrachma@gmail.com)

This study focuses on the public and domestic negotiations of *pesantren's* progressive female ulamas. The interlocutors are six *Nyai*, a female *pesantren* leader, and women activist selected from several public organizations. This thesis indicates the two sides of domestic progressive negotiation, specifically "the changing and the unchanging" progressive perspective. The changing perspective indicate the lack of consistency in their progressive view (progressive in public life but yet conservative in their domestic sphere) while the unchanging ones show that those actors uphold their progressive view consistently both at domestic and public sphere. The factors that triggered inconsistency or "the changing progressive view" are culture, family background, and religious-dogma. Meanwhile, the consistency of the progressive view or "the unchanging one" is caused by education, social and family support, as well as other direct personal experience. I argue that these factors greatly influence the negotiation of progressive female ulama in domestic life.

**Keywords:** *Female Ulama, Pesantren, Progressive*

## ملخص

الإسم : رحمة فينا ثريًا

كلية : الدراسة الإسلامية

الموضوع : العلماء النساء المتقدّمة: تباحث النظرة في مجال العامة و الأهلية

تركز هذه الرسالة عن مباحثة النظرة التقدمية من العلماء النساء في المعاهد الإسلامية (pesantren). المتباحثات هي الستة العلماء النساء, مديرة المعهد, و ناشطة حقوق المرأة المختار عن بعض جمعيات العامة. تبين هذه الرسالة ان جزءين اثنين عن مباحثة النظرة التقدمية في المجال الأهلية, بخاصة, النظرة المتغيرة و غير متغيرة. الجزء المتغير يبين إفتقار التناسق في نظرهم المتقدمي (يتقدم في مجال العامة و لكن يتقلد في مجال الأهلية) إذ الجزء الثابت (غير متغير) يتضح أنّهم يبرهن نظرتهم المتقدمي بثبات كلا في مجال العامة و الأهلية. العناصر التي تسبب عدم تناسق او "تغير النظرة المتقدّمية" هي البيئة الحضارية, الخلفية العائليّة, و المبدأ الدينيّة. و أثناء ذلك, التناسق في النظرة المتقدّمية او " النظرة المتقدّمية الثابتة" ينتج عن التدريس, الددعم العائليّة و الإجتماعيّة و كذلك الخبرة الشخصية الأخرى. أحاول أنّ تلك العوامل تتأثرون كبيراً في مباحث العلماء النساء المتقدّمة في المجال الأهلية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية: العلماء النساء, "الفسنترن", المتقدمي**

## TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ا	a	س	S	ل	l
ب	b	ش	Sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'		
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	F		
ر	r	ق	Q		
ز	z	ك	K		

### Short Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
َ	a	جَلَسَ	<i>jalasa</i>
ِ	i	رَكِبَ	<i>rakiba</i>
ُ	u	كُتِبَ	<i>kutiba</i>

### Long Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
اِ/آ	ā	جَرِي/سَافِر	<i>jarā/sāfar</i>
يِ	ī	سَلِيم	<i>salīm</i>
وِ	ū	سُجُود	<i>sujūd</i>

### Diphthong

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
أَوْ	aw	مَوْلَا	<i>mawlā</i>
أَيُّ	ay	غَيْب	<i>ghayb</i>

Notes:

1. Consonant with shaddah (ّ) for instance, اُمَّة is written as *ummah* (double letters).
2. Arabic letter *hamzah* (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “`a”.  
For instance, اَحمَد is written as *aḥmad* not `aḥmad.
3. Arabic script of *alif-lam qamariyah* (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words and *alif-lam shamsiyah* (ا) is written in accordance with the first letter at the beginning of words. For instance:  
المائدة : al-māidah  
الرحمان : ar-rahmān
4. Arabic letter *ta' marbutah* (ة) is written as “h” when it is located at the end of the words, such as البقرة is written as *al-baqarah*. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as اُمَّة وسطا is written as *ummatan wasaṭan*.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY.....	ii
ANTI-PLAGIARISM STATEMENT.....	iii
THESIS ATTESTATION.....	iv
THESIS DEFENSE APPROVAL.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TRANSLITERATION GUIDE .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1    Background.....	1
1.2    Research Objectives.....	5
1.3    Research Question and Hypotheses .....	6
1.4    Literature Review .....	6
1.5    Theoretical Framework.....	10
1.6    Research Significance .....	12
1.7    Methods.....	12
1.8    Structure of Thesis.....	13
CHAPTER II.....	14
THE OVERVIEW OF PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA .....	14
2.1    The Progressive Muslim Meaning.....	14
2.2    Progressive Muslim Scholars.....	18
2.3    Progressive, Feminist, and Gender .....	21
2.4    The Characteristics of Progressive Female Ulama in Indonesia .....	30
2.4.1 The History of Progressive Female ulama in Indonesia .....	30
2.4.2 The Limit Definition of Progressive Female Ulama.....	31
CHAPTER III .....	37

<b>THE DYNAMICS OF PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA IN INDONESIA .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3.1 Colonial and Post-Colonial Era .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3.2 Reformation Era.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.3 Contemporary Era.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>3.1. Framing the Interlocutor’s Position.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>CHAPTER IV.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>THE PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA: BETWEEN CHANGING AND UNCHANGING IN THE PUBLIC AND DOMESTIC SPHERE .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4.1 The Factors of Changing View of Progressive Female Ulama .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4.1.1 Culture .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4.1.2 Family Background .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>4.1.3 Religious and Dogma Background.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>4.2 The Factors of the Unchanging View of Progressive Female Ulama .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.2.1 Education .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.2.2 Social Support .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>4.2.3 Family Support.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>4.2.4 Life-Reality Experience.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>4.3 Negotiating Progressive Views of Female Ulama in the Domestic.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>4.3.1 Internal Challenges.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>4.3.2 External Challenges.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>4.3.3 Solution Methods .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>4.4 Gender Agency Analysis to the Progressive Female Ulama .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>4.4.1 Resources .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>4.4.2 Agency .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>4.4.3 Achievements.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>CHAPTER V .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>68</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1	Women Ulama in Indonesia	39
Table 3.2	Interlocutor's Public Role	51

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Today, there are various kinds of Muslim identities and ulama such as the traditionalists,<sup>1</sup> fundamentalists, modernists, neo-modernists, liberals, moderates,<sup>2</sup> and progressives.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon occurs as well in *pesantren*. *Pesantren* is one of the oldest religious and educational institutions in Indonesia. There is no definite historical explanation that mentions with certainty the beginning of the *pesantren*. Even so, *pesantren* is a cultural heritage of Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> Various *pesantren* and madrasas in Indonesia are affiliated with all major organizations of Indonesian Islam. In most cases, they commonly teach Arabic religious texts and non-religious curricula. Most *pesantren*, and most of the larger ones, are affiliated with *Nahdlatul Ulama* or similar religious views. The core of their religious curriculum consisted of *Shafi'i* jurisprudence, often supplemented by Sufi ethics. Many of these *pesantren* are led by charismatic teachers (*Kyai*), who wield considerable authority in the wider community. From van Bruinessen, it can be seen that there are

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<sup>1</sup> Traditionalist groups are associated with groups that maintain Indonesian traditions in practising Islam and are identical to the religious organization, namely *Nahdlatul Ulama*. See "Konflik Dan Integrasi Muslim Tradisionalis Dan Modernis Di Indonesia." 4,

<sup>2</sup> Modernist: Muslims aspire to adapt and overcome the challenges of modernity by rejecting prejudice that tries to go back to the past. They have private and public ambitions in politics, sociology, and economics while at the same time perceiving Islam as an authoritative frame of reference that does not have to be exclusive. Fazlur Rahman, a Pakistani Muslim intellectual, coined the term "neo-modernist." The premise is that Muslims must objectively study the Western world and its concepts, as well as have a critical perspective on Islamic religious views and teachings. Liberals are academics who aim to embrace principles directed toward greater individual freedom. Moderates: A Muslim in the centre is not caught between the extreme left and suitable sides. This viewpoint represents the point of view of silent majority of Muslims. See Neng Dara Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2017), 12.,

<sup>3</sup> There is no definite definition of this. However, there is a detailed definition described by Omid Safi on *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (Simon and Schuster, 2003), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Abd Hannan, "Gender dan Fenomena Patriarki dalam Sosial Pendidikan *Pesantren* (Studi Tentang Hegemeoni Kiai *Pesantren* Terhadap Sosial Pendidikan Bias Gender)," (2016)

traditional *pesantren* and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> However, the focus of research here is traditional *pesantren*.

According to Geertz, *pesantren* are not only educational and social institutions but also social subcultures. This means that *pesantren* have a strategic role in shaping and maintaining local culture. They took this attitude through a cultural approach like their predecessors, synergizing local traditions and cultural heritage with messages from religious rituals. On the one hand, the *pesantren*'s commitment to sticking to the legacy of traditional values provides positive energy for strengthening local culture (localism). However, it becomes an issue that restricts the socio-cultural growth of public *pesantren*, especially from the perspective of development based on democracy.<sup>6</sup> While acknowledging the contribution of *pesantren* to educating Muslim women in Indonesia, another scholar, Eka Sri Mulyani, urges them to improve the quality of education for women.<sup>7</sup>

One of the crucial issues in the academic and social fields is the relationship between *pesantren* and gender. Gender inequality is not a new issue. This is inseparable from the social culture of *pesantren* education, which is ideologically and dogmatically biased. The ideological-dogmatic view makes *pesantren* trapped in normative culture. It is difficult to find a dynamic-responsive *pesantren* in responding to socio, political and cultural changes outside the *pesantren* wall.<sup>8</sup> With this, it can be said that *pesantren* has a patriarchal culture. Various factors influence the patriarchal culture in *pesantren*. It started from the factors of Javanese culture and certain interpretation of Islam. Furthermore, classical literature is used, which has numerous dichotomous-discriminatory principles. Such as the book of

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<sup>5</sup> Farish A. Noor, Martin van Bruinessen, and Yoginder Sikand, eds., *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789053567104>.

<sup>6</sup> Hannan, "Gender Dan Fenomena Patriarki Dalam Sosial Pendidikan *Pesantren* (Studi Tentang Hegemeoni Kiai *Pesantren* Terhadap Sosial Pendidikan Bias Gender)."

<sup>7</sup> Eka Sri Mulyani. "Muslim Women and Education in Indonesia: The Pondok *Pesantren* Experience". *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 27(1), (2007), 85-99.

<sup>8</sup> Ema Marhumah, *Konstruksi Sosial Gender di Pesantren ; Studi Kuasa Kiai atas Wacana Perempuan* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2011).

*Fiqh*, in which many messages about gender are not balanced.<sup>9</sup> As an institution, the *pesantren* has been criticised for being traditionally patriarchal. Regardless of the secular educational curricula that normally included in *pesantren* system, a *pesantren* is commonly perceived as a religious institution. A *Kiai/Nyai* couple and their students are considered the ‘guardians’ of Islamic traditions.<sup>10</sup>

As response to the prevailing patriarchal culture within *pesantren*, social non-governmental organization (NGOs) that focus on the women's empowerment has emerged. Some of the NGOs even established by people from *pesantren* setting. This movement was pioneered in the New Order era when women preachers began to appear and have continued to this day. Many women's movements have emerged from various Islamic organizations. This continued until the Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress (KUPI) was formed. KUPI has productively attracted global attention due to its progressive emphasis on women becoming religious scholars. However, it can be seen as promoting conservatism. In the local context, this ideological position against KUPI is gaining more support. Furthermore, Eva states that progressive and conservative Indonesian Muslim women stand out not only in the democratic pluralism of religious expression in Indonesia's offline and online spheres but also in the complex interactions occurring between Islam, civil society, and gender equality.<sup>11</sup>

This shows that *pesantren* actually can produce many progressive women. Recently, we see that many Islamic academics and female *ulama* lead public organizations such as the ministries NGOs, universities, as well as schools or *pesantren*. However, in patriarchal and conservative milieu, progressive *ulama*'s are frequently opposed in various locations. And in facing those opposition, some

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<sup>9</sup>Hannan, “Gender dan Fenomena Patriarki dalam Sosial Pendidikan *Pesantren* (Studi Tentang Hegemeoni *Kiai Pesantren* Terhadap Sosial Pendidikan Bias Gender).”

<sup>10</sup> Eka Srimulyani, “Women and *Pesantren* Education: History, Kinship, and Contents,” in *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia*, Negotiating Public Spaces (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 37–62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2fm.7>.

<sup>11</sup> Eva F. Nisa, “Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Online Conflicting Narratives behind the Female *ulama* Congress,” *Asian Studies Review* 43, no. 3 (2019): 434–54.

progressive female ulama sometime has to drop and surrender their progressive view, especially when they are at *pesantren* setting.

Why are some progressive female ulama tend to follow conservative view (such as in gender issue) after returning to the *pesantren*? Initially I suppose that because they are having progressive view publicly on certain religious issues, they will maintain their progressive attitude and paradigm in their private life, especially when they lead their *pesantren*. But that is not always the case. There are many progressive women outside, but they cannot develop and implement their progressive paradigm and attitude in their domestic life (in their institutions). My question to seeing those phenomena is: what factors that made those inconsistency happen? Is it because they cannot overcome the limits and the benefit of patriarchal culture?

The female ulama referred to in this study include women who study religion and have a role in addressing societal challenges, as well as those who are concerned with Islamic and social traditions that encourage women's independence and growth. Based on this description, this study will focus on female ulama who administer or owned educational institutions (become 'Nyai') and act in the social sphere through public women's organizations (public). Analysing the identities of female ulama indicates that the ideals and fighting spirit for women's emancipation represented in their organizations would influence their administration and preaching in their educational facilities.

Several prior research on female ulama in Indonesia has been conducted. In general, there are works by Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama di atas Panggung Sejarah*, and Nur Hasan in the *Khazanah Ulama Nusantara*, as well as an anthology of biographies of women academics produced by Jajat Burhanuddin, titled *Ulama Perempuan Indonesia*. The three texts mentioned above discuss female ulama in general rather than specifically discussing progressive female ulama. Neng Dara Affiah's critique of the *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia* is one of the works that directly examines it. This book serves as the

primary source for this thesis, particularly those dealing with the progressive Muslim movement and historically progressive female ulama. Apart from that, there is research by Eka Sri Mulyani on *Women in Islamic Educational Institutions*. Here Sri Mulyani discusses the public's role and the *Nyai*'s position in Jombang. After Sri Mulyani stated the position of public *Nyai*, this thesis will examine the issues mentioned above, and this study is going to address the research questions by conducting interviews with numerous female academics with the traits listed above. It will be clear from this how the dynamics of female ulama in the domestic and the public have changed, whether there has been a shift in perceptions, and what the causes and reasons are.

Seeing the problems above, this study will attempt to answer the research question by conducting interviews with several women scholars with the characteristics above. From here, it will be seen how the dynamics of female ulama in domestic and public, whether it remains consistent or not, whether there has been a change in opinion or not, and the causes and reasons will be known.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the dynamics of progressive female ulama, particularly in seeing their consistency in maintaining progressive view publicly as well as in their institutions. This research is expected to reveal how progressive female ulama negotiate their progressive view in the domestic sphere, what motivates them to maintain that perspective, and what causes them to drop that view.

In addition, this study will examine how female *ulama* deal with various domestic challenges. This research is expected to be beneficial to the actors in the *pesantren*, such as teachers, students, and staff. A study of women in *pesantren* is still needed since it relates to their opportunities and space for development. This thesis attempts to present the field's issues and solutions.

### 1.3 Research Question and Hypotheses

In this research, I hypothesize that there are factors to prove, or refuse based on the interview; I use the following questions.

1. To what extent do Progressive Female Ulama in Indonesia negotiate their progressive views within the predominantly patriarchal setting domestically and publicly?
2. How do Progressive female ulama maintain their progressive view in domestic settings, such as *Pesantren*?

### 1.4 Literature Review

Female ulama is a frequent word in Indonesia. This signifies that women can become scholars or masters of Islamic religious knowledge. The research on this topic is huge, encompassing all-female ulama in Indonesia from diverse groups, each with distinct duties. For such, the work on this topic produces a variety of female ulama backgrounds.

Several scholars have previously researched the female ulama and the progressive female ulama. However, they focus on the theme in general. Meanwhile, the difference and similarity of progressive female ulama opinion in the domestic and public has yet to be explicitly studied. To find out the historicity of the research, I divide the literature review into two themes, Research about Female ulama in Indonesia and research about progressive female ulama.

First, the book by Pieterella van Doorn-Harder is in the form of research on female ulama from *Nahdlihatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* organizations. She concluded that the female ulama in the book was creative in facing various challenges, especially during the Soeharto era. She considers the book as a story of their struggle in voicing their opinions and sharing their knowledge as female ulama.

<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, there is a study by Rodliyah Khuzai and Parihat Kamil that shows

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<sup>12</sup> Pieterella Van Doorn-Harder, *Women Shaping Islam: Reading the Qu'ran in Indonesia* (University of Illinois Press, 2006).

the presence of Female Ulama and Men Ulama from the past to the present, with fluctuations both global and in Indonesia. They conducted a study on the *Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia* (KUPI).<sup>13</sup>

Second, research on women *Pesantren* scholars. Sri Mulyani researched female ulama in *Pesantren* and their organizations. The focus of this research is on the life of the *pesantren*.<sup>14</sup> Similar to that idea, Rohmah investigated female ulama as *Pesantren* leaders. The research used qualitative methods with observation, interviews, and documentation data collection techniques. From this research, it is known that *Nyai Umi* is considered to have charisma by her followers, including her extraordinary ability to listen, being guarded by supernatural beings, bringing blessings, and loyal followers.<sup>15</sup>

Third, research on female ulama from various regions in Indonesia. The article written by Gumiandari and Nafia describes the role of the female ulama in Cirebon against religious radicalism.<sup>16</sup> Following that, there is a work of Muhtador, who examines the religious authority of women in *pesantren* in Kudus. He states that women's authority is only among women, not touching men. Women still cannot have authority over men.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Muttaqin sparked the revival of women's ulama in digital da'wah, opposing the discourse of patriarchal interpretation. This research describes three things. First, discussing the phenomenon of urban women's

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<sup>13</sup> Rodliyah Khuza'i and Parihat Kamil, "Female ulama Partner Men Ulama (an Analysis of Critical-Historical-Religious)," 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Srimulyani, "Women and *Pesantren* Education."

<sup>15</sup> Hanifah Siti Nur Rohmah, "Woman as Charismatic Leader at *Pesantren*," *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial* 1, no. 2 (December 23, 2020): 189–204, <https://doi.org/10.35878/santri.v1i2.246>.

<sup>16</sup> Septi Gumiandari and Ilman Nafi'a, "The Role of Cirebon Women Ulama in Countering Religious Radicalism," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 1 (June 22, 2020): 33, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v8i1.6430>.

<sup>17</sup> Moh Muhtador, "Otoritas Keagamaan Perempuan (Studi atas Fatwa-Fatwa Perempuan di *Pesantren* Kauman Jekulo Kudus)," *Kafa'ah: Journal of Gender Studies* 10, no. 1 (June 30, 2020): 39–50, <https://doi.org/10.15548/jk.v10i1.267>.

da'wah in the digital era and second, revealing women's religious roles in the public sphere. Third, describe the models of women's da'wah on social media.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, Kusmana examines how female *ulama* in Indonesia use legal sources, especially the Qur'an, in the moral movement activities seen in the mass media. They attempt to display their identification and sentiments of concern by contributing to the improvement and unity of the nation by using a descriptive-analytical approach. This article concludes that female *ulama* can make alternative views by using sources of law (al-Qur'an) and other sources through moral movements in elevating the status and role of women, children's welfare, and sustainable environmental issues. Their movement attracted media attention to strengthen their opinion and movement as an alternative message to moderate nationalism.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, four significant research studies on progressive female *ulama* have been conducted in Indonesia. Beginning with Neng Dara Affiah's work, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*. This article using the progressive terms behind the term 'Islamic women in Indonesia' suggests that the development of Islamic women does not have to leave beneficial things that are still relevant in the past to be brought to the present, but outstanding and positive things in the future. The present is for Muslim women to adopt to celebrate their development in the present.<sup>20</sup> In addition, a book by Eka Sri Mulyani discusses *Pesantren*, including the *Nyai*, students, and others. This study shows that women in *pesantren* are no longer limited by private domestic are but have a role in the domestic and public. The factors influencing this shift are their capabilities, experiences, and support from their counterparts (husbands).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jamalul Muttaqin, "Ulama Perempuan Dalam Dakwah Digital (Studi Kebangkitan Dan Perlawanan Atas Wacana Tafsir Patriarkis)," *Living Sufism: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 1, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 92–104.

<sup>19</sup> Kusmana, "The Qur'an, Woman and Nationalism in Indonesia: Ulama Perempuan's Moral Movement," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 57, no. 1 (June 29, 2019): 83–116, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2019.571.83-116>.

<sup>20</sup> Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*.

<sup>21</sup> Srimulyani, "Women and *Pesantren* Education."

Afterwards, in an article by Nurmila, she analyses the contrasts in opinion between progressive and conservative Muslim women, particularly on the themes of sexual abuse, child marriage, and polygamous marriages. Unlike earlier Muslim women's groups in the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of Muslim women from *pesantren* backgrounds who are better educated and critical of the male-biased reading of the Quran. They prohibit domestic violence, child marriage, and polygamous marriages. However, an increasing number of educated women with secular and pure science backgrounds tend to read the Quran literally and disagree with the enactment of the Bill on the Elimination of Sexual Violence, promoting child marriage and polygamous marriage.<sup>22</sup>

The last is a doctoral dissertation by Ismah entitled *Women Issuing Fatwas*. This examines the validity of Muslim women as Islamic scholars (ulama) and society's acceptance of the power to read religious texts and issue fatwas. As a result, the study is concerned with the idea of religious authority and how it is regulated by gender. It investigates how and why women issue fatwas in various areas of interaction, such as women's branches of Islamic organizations and institutions, local communities, and women's publications, using combined anthropological, religious studies, and gender perspectives. The primary argument of this dissertation is that Muslim women in Indonesia are more influential as ulama, both at the grassroots and in the public domain. Although males seldom acknowledge their involvement, when we highlight women's perspectives, an entirely different image emerges, one in which women are awarded religious authority equal to that of male ulama in issuing fatwas. On the one hand, their authority is a community-based authority founded on local interests and knowledge networks. On the other hand, these women contribute to a bigger mission, namely establishing a national organization of female ulama in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Nina Nurmila, "The Current Battles Between Progressive and Conservative Muslim Women In Indonesia," *Agenda: Jurnal Analisis Gender Dan Agama* 2, no. 1 (March 18, 2020): 1,

<sup>23</sup> Nor Ismah. "Women Issuing Fatwas: Female Islamic Sholars and Community-Based Authority in Java, Indonesia" (Leiden University, 2023)

From the studies above, female ulama in Indonesia, especially recently, has played a vital role in developing Islamic issues, specifically regarding women's issues. This confirms that they have the authority and ability to play a role in the public and domestic fields. This point becomes a solid basis for my research on how female ulama negotiates their progressive and public domain in the domestic sphere.

### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

Before coming to the theory, the critical thing to deal with here is the definition of some words in this thesis. First, progressive. There has yet to be an absolute definition of progressive. Many scholars claim themselves as progressive thinkers or academicians, and each has a definition. So, there are many definitions for progressive. In this thesis, I will use the definition by Safi that progressive means a person or scholar that supports every idea that helps the marginal people, using the contextual view for looking to the Quran and Hadith.<sup>24</sup> This definition aligns with the activities of *Nyai* or the interlocutors of this research. Meanwhile, the progressive refers to female ulama's perspective regarding negotiating in the domestic area, specifically *pesantren*.

Second, progressive female ulama are Muslim women who understand religious studies and spread them in a religious school or community, such as *pesantren*, majlis ta'lim, madrasah diniyah, and other religious individual schools. Not only that, but this women's ulama has a progressive perspective. Third, domestic. Domestic here refers to a private and restricted world only a few individuals access.<sup>25</sup> It might be a home, a neighbourhood, or an educational institution, and in this study, domestic referred to the interlocutors' *pesantren*. The fourth term is public. This refers to a sector everyone has access to, such as public opinion, society, and governance.

I intend to use Naila Kabeer's agency theory as a tool to process research data and achieve research objectives. This agency theory requires aspects of the

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<sup>24</sup> Safi, *Progressive Muslims*.15

context to be investigated; in this case, the agency is a woman. Her theory departs from the understanding that women's empowerment is about the process through which those who have been rejected can make life-choice strategies. This process's idea of empowerment differentiates significantly from more instrumentalist campaigning approaches, including measuring and quantifying empowerment. The ability to exercise choices entails three interconnected dimensions: resources (broadly defined to include not only access but also future claims to both material and human and social resources), agency (including decision-making processes as well as less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception, and manipulation), and achievement (welfare outcomes).<sup>26</sup>

Several studies on women's empowerment were analysed to make some important methodological points about the measurement of Empowerment. Kabir argues that these three dimensions of choice are integral in determining the meaning of an indicator and hence its validity as a measure of empowerment. The notion of choice is further qualified by referencing the choice conditions, content, and consequences. This qualification attempts to incorporate individual structural parameters of choice in analysing women's empowerment.<sup>27</sup>

There is an article that uses this theory which is my reference. The research results found that women's agencies in *pesantren* that have a bargaining position are placing themselves in vital positions and taking essential roles in the *pesantren* environment and society through their power. The power is obtained from the empowerment process through resources, agency, and achievement. This research is about women's agencies in several *pesantren* in South Kalimantan.<sup>28</sup> By using these theories, I was able to find the agency of progressive female ulama.

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<sup>26</sup> Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," *Development and Change* 30, no. 3 (July 1999): 435–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>.

<sup>27</sup> Kabeer.

<sup>28</sup> "Agency Perempuan Pada Pondok *Pesantren* Di Kalimantan Selatan | Susanti | Al-Banjari: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman," accessed July 3, 2023, <https://jurnal.uin-antasari.ac.id/index.php/al-banjari/article/view/5596>.

## 1.6 Research Significance

To show the factors and causes of Changing and Unchanging of female ulama in the Public and Domestic, this study will have some significance, there are:

1. Give a novelty for the gender scope in Indonesia, especially Gender in school and educational system
2. Document the influence of progressive female ulama in Domestic
3. Reveal the cause and dynamic of the consistency and inconsistency of progressive female ulama opinion in domestic and public
4. Progressive Muslim study in Indonesia

## 1.7 Methods

A methodology is a fundamental instrument in scientific study. This research will be examined using qualitative methodologies and a semi-structured interview. It examines an issue in depth but does not use structured questions. This procedure can be approached in a variety of ways. There include observations, interviews, group discussion forums (FGD), and other methods.<sup>29</sup>I use a library research and interview approach to obtain more in-depth research results in this study.

Before conducting the interview, I compiled the steps first. I started with writing the background and research objectives to find the list of questions that would be asked to the resource person. In this case, the sources are female ulama from different social organization, their families, students, and staff. I will write down the interview results in the data through reports and analyses based on theories and opinions on this theme. And after doing research, I will analyse data with three sub-process, data reduction, display, and verification.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> "Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook - Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman

The interview will use the semi-structured mode, so there is a guidance question here

1. The activities of the female ulama in the individual education system (*pesantren, majlis ta'lim*, etc), the teaching schedule and the curriculum
2. The role of the female ulama from the point of view of the student and family
3. The teaching methods of female *ulama*
4. The progressive opinions or activities of the female ulama in Public

The above guideline is critical to ask since it relates to how we know the progressiveness of the interlocutors to answer the research questions.

### **1.8 Structure of Thesis**

Chapter 1: **Introduction.** This part will explain the research background, methodology, literature review, research question, significance, and thesis structure.

Chapter 2: **The Overview of Progressive Female Ulama.** This part will picture the general explanation, history of female ulama in Indonesia and the profound explanation of progressive female ulama and the dynamic in Indonesia.

Chapter 3: **The Dynamics of Progressive Female Ulama in Indonesia.** This part will explain the activities of progressive women in the domestic and the relation with their role in the public and the progressive perspective.

Chapter 4: **Between Changing and Unchanging View in The Public and Domestic Sphere**

This part will explain the role of some progressive female ulama that has been researched in the library and field. This is the result of research that explores aspects and factors of female ulama's changing or unchanging face in the domestic and public.

Chapter 5: **Conclusion.** This part is the final chapter, the arguments and summarizes this research.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OVERVIEW OF PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA

#### 2.1 The Progressive Muslim Meaning

Academics have not defined the exact definition of progressive Muslims. Therefore, there are several opinions about Progressive Muslims. Some argue that progressive Muslims are those who advocate and aligned with marginalized groups.<sup>31</sup> The term progressive Muslim emerged after the al-Qaida plane bombing in the United States on September 11, 2001. Omid Safi discussed this term in his work *Progressive Muslims on Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*.<sup>32</sup>

The characteristics of progressive Muslims are those who have high respect for human values such as women's rights, religious minorities and beliefs. This group appreciates its Islamic scientific legacy and is critical of the new interpretations offered in the contemporary context.<sup>33</sup> According to Ebrahim Moosa, there is progress in Progressive Islam, and it is not a school (*madhab*), dan Progressive Muslims have no certain limitations.<sup>34</sup>

Omid Safi has the characteristics of Progressive Islam.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Adnin Ibrahim and Asmak Ab Rahman, "Methodology of Ijtihad Jama'i: A Mechanism for Contemporary Fatwa Issuance," *Malaysian Journal of Islamic Studies (MJIS)* 6, no. 2 (December 17, 2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.37231/mjis.2022.6.2.202>.

<sup>32</sup> Omid Safi, Farish A. Noor, and Ebrahim Moosa, along with other Muslims, created a new Islamic Movement to challenge the dominance of capitalism in modern times. The Islamic movement, which includes both extreme and moderate branches, has faced criticism for its doctrinal and political contexts. Progressive Islam aims to find practical solutions to real-world issues, focusing on developing a way of thought based on reality, rethinking monotheism, fostering social justice, protecting human rights, promoting gender equality, multiculturalism, and reinvigorating societal cohesion. By implementing this agenda, Muslims can transition towards a more progressive Islamic movement. See Reza Adeputra Tohis, "(Telaah Sosial Gagasan-Gagasan Keislaman Tan Malaka)," *UIN Sunan Kalijaga*, Master Thesis (2019): 4.

<sup>33</sup> Safi, *Progressive Muslims*.

<sup>34</sup> A. Duderija, *Constructing a Religiously Ideal "Believer", and "Woman", in Islam: Neo-Traditional Salafi and Progressive Muslims' Methods of Interpretation* (Springer, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Safi. *Progressive Muslims*, 2.

- a. Has high respect for human values such as women's rights, religious and belief minorities, and the rights of sexual minorities, and views people from diverse cultures as equals.
- b. Translating Islamic ideals with concrete actions and realizing social justice
- c. Taking a firm position that social justice will only be realized by ensuring justice for women. Gender justice is absolute and is a scale of social justice and pluralism
- d. Progressive Muslims appreciate the Islamic scientific tradition they have, because of the Islamic scientific tradition which has a long history, the power of social justice from within Islam with its various sources can be displayed. However, he must be critical because with this critical attitude, Islam's interpretation can be presented in the present context.<sup>36</sup>

According to Farid Esack, in the Muslim discourse the term “Progressive” is usually used in various contexts, and for many, it often represents simply an anti-authoritarian or anticonservative Muslim discourse. The expression “progressive Islam” was first popularized by Suroosh Irfani with his *Revolutionary Islam in Iran Popular Liberation or Religious Dictatorship*, published in 1983.<sup>37</sup> According to him, the only systematic attempt to define progressive Islam hitherto was the initiative undertaken by the Progressive Muslim Network (hereinafter “PMN”) late in 1998 on the internet by several activists and scholars, including the present scholars, from various parts of the Muslim world.

After several drafts, consensus was reached on a final document titled “Progressive Islam: A Definition and Declaration.” The following definition is offered in this Declaration: Progressive Islam is that understanding of Islam and its sources which comes from and is shaped within a commitment to transform society from an unjust one where people are mere objects of exploitation by governments, socio-economic institutions and unequal relationships. The new society will be a

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<sup>36</sup> Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Farid Esack, “In Search of Progressive Islam beyond 9/11,” *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, 2003, 78–97.

just one where people are the subjects of history, the shapers of their destiny in the full awareness that all of humankind is in a state of returning to God and that the universe was created as a sign of God's presence. Essack argues that a progressive rereading of the theological heritage of Islam should take its point of departure from the concerns of marginalized people and the actual situation of people of low income and that an alternative vision of the world and being in it is possible.

In addition, according to Kecia Ali, progressive Muslims have difficulty dealing with Islamic law. Progressive Muslims have a problematic relationship with Islamic law. Many Progressive Muslims have taken up a close alternative recitation of the Qur'an or delved into Islam's ethical and mystical aspects to discover its teachings which can be used as the basis for a progressive interpretation of Islam. For many people, that means most of it, especially in family matters. Paradoxically for progressive Muslims, this is where traditional Islamic law is considered the most conservative. Even though Muslim marriages are generally not considered progressive institutions, even progressive Muslims generally want to marry. However, we don't want our relationship tied down so tightly by the hierarchical rules we assume are enshrined in Islamic law. Some Muslims in the West set aside Islamic law in private matters, choosing to abide by it exclusively by secular laws, which tend to be more egalitarian. This couple working to keep up the spirit of the Qur'an's proclamation of the nature of marriage, live in their relationship but do not take its legal statements literally apply. Other progressive Muslims, perhaps most, follow key elements from the classic wedding in marriage but can reduce the dowry to a symbolic number due to discomfort with its "commercial" connotation.<sup>38</sup>

In the preceding context, "progressive" refers to Progressive Muslim organizations (MPs) that attempt to improve Islamic thought and practice by reading the Qur'an and Sunnah in a more contextual and reasonable way. This legislative group additionally supports gender equality, pluralism, and human rights.

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<sup>38</sup> Kecia Ali, "Progressive Muslims and Islamic Jurisprudence: The Necessity for Critical Engagement with Marriage and Divorce Law," *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*, 2003, 163–89.

*Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* covers the works of the MP group and compares them to the Salafi or Non-Traditionalist Salafi (NTS) groups regarding their interpretation process and opinions on certain Qur'anic subjects. In this work, MP (Progressive Muslims) and NTS (Non-Traditionalist Salafi) vary in their interpretation methods and perspectives on various Qur'anic subjects. MP aims to improve Islamic understanding and practice by using a more contextual and logical approach to interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah. On the other hand, the NTS fights for the purity of Islam while maintaining traditions and using a textualist and literalist approach to interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah. The NTS group tends to reject notions associated with Western culture and to hold conservative views on gender and society.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, according to Saeed, the concept of "progressive" is in the context of contemporary Islamic thought. It describes how some Muslims engage in "progressive *ijtihad*," which involves rethinking traditional Islamic jurisprudence and adapting it to contemporary realities. The document provides examples of progressive *ijtihad* writings, including those that challenge patriarchal and discriminatory elements in Islamic jurisprudence and argue for a fresh interpretation of the Qur'an that considers women's concerns and needs. His work discusses the emergence of a Western tradition of Islam, challenging traditional understandings of important issues and putting forward bold solutions to contemporary concerns while not turning their backs on their traditions. This Western tradition of Islam is potentially one of the most important developments in modern Islamic thought and is driven mainly by the indigenization of Islam in the West.<sup>40</sup>

Based on the definitions stated above, this research aligns with Omid Safi's definition of progressive. A progressive Muslim is one who appreciates human

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<sup>39</sup> Yusuf Rahman, "Penafsiran Tekstual dan Kontekstual terhadap al-Qur'an dan Hadith (Kajian terhadap Muslim Salafi dan Muslim Progresif)," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 1, no. 2 (December 20, 2012): 298–303, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v1i2.1329>.

<sup>40</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 149.

values such as women's rights, religious minorities, and religious views. They support any concept that benefits marginalized people by referring to the Quran and Hadith in context. The *Nyai*, as interlocutors in this study, gets classified as progressive in terms of their position in the public, particularly in women's issues, as indicated by their participation in women's organizations.

## **2.2 Progressive Muslim Scholars**

Several prominent figures in Progressive Islamic studies globally are considered Progressive Muslims. The first was Omid Safi and the other scholars such as Farid Esack, Kecia Ali, Ebrahim Moosa, Amina Wadud and the other authors of the book *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*. Eventually, A. Duderija appears with his thoughts on the Muslim Progressive Method and the impotence of Progressive Muslims. In addition, Abdullah Saeed proposed Progressive Ijtihad. The views of the personalities mentioned above established the foundation for later progressive thought, including those of Indonesian intellectuals. Several studies on progressive Muslim individuals, such as Dawam Rahardjo and Budhy-Munawar Rachman, have been conducted in Indonesia.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to these terms, several terms are related to the role and position of this group, namely modernist Muslim, neo-modernist Muslim, liberal Muslim, and moderate Muslim. The difference between progressive Muslims and others lies in the breadth of the scope of knowledge, which even advocates traditions outside of Islam, is involved in gender activism for social justice, is not exclusive to Muslim intellectuals and does not place itself among other groups. Still, its primary concern is realising social justice and gender justice through social order. This reinterpretation was carried out because they believe that Islam, like other religions and ideologies, has an open character and has extraordinary adaptability to various

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<sup>41</sup> There have been some studies about them. See Reza Adeputra Tohis, "(Telaah Sosial Gagasan-Gagasan Keislaman Tan Malaka)," *UIN Sunan Kalijaga*, Master Thesis (2019): 4.

cultures and local communities as well as economic and political conditions. This means various ways to adopt Islam.<sup>42</sup>

This group believes that many good values can be adopted from Islam for contemporary civilization, which places the values of independence and progress for women. The struggle emerged in the 1990s. This battle is part of a wave of new reformist groups attempting to frame Islam as compatible with modernity rather than in opposition, following and building on the work of previous reformers, these new reformist thinkers state that human understanding of Islamic holy texts is flexible, texts can be interpreted to promote pluralism, human rights, democracy and gender equality. Furthermore, this new religious thought and the language it uses can open a new dialogue between Islamic law and international human rights law which helps develop standard agreements and provides conceptual and language tools for human rights defenders to engage the Muslim community.<sup>43</sup>

The review and analysis of existing literature by Ihsan and Purwaningtyas stated that this discourse redefines Islam like other contemporary Islamic discourses, such as liberal Islam and neo-modernism. This document concludes that the concept of progressive Muslims is not significantly different from other Islamic discourses regarding background, aim, and character. However, progressive Muslims aim to reinterpret and uphold the universal values of Islam in a way that is more relevant and ethical in contemporary times. They advocate for social justice, gender equality, and pluralism and seek to engage with both tradition and modernity critically and respectfully. The main issue for progressive Muslims is humanity, and they work alongside other Islamic discourses to redefine and reimagine how they approach this issue.<sup>44</sup>

The progressivity of Islamic law can be seen from the fact that Islamic legal thinkers are so sensitive and responsive to the problems that arise among their

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<sup>42</sup> Haideh Moghissi. *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (Zed Books, 1999), 190.

<sup>43</sup> Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*.

<sup>44</sup> Nur Hadi Ihsan and Dhita Ayomi Purwaningtyas, "Omid Safi's Concept of Progressive Muslims" 17, no. 2 (2019): 6-12

people. answer the problems faced by the people. For that purpose, it is typical for them (the jurists) to formulate a methodology for extracting law from the Al-Qur'an and as-Sunnah. Imam Abu Hanifah, for example, formulated the theory or concept of *Istihsan*, Imam Malik bin Anas spawned the concept of *Maslahah Mursalah*, and Imam ash-Syafi'i came up with the concept of *Qiyas*.<sup>45</sup>

As the principal player in this group (Progressive Muslims), Omid Safi introduces and roots Progressive Muslims, beginning with the naming, agenda, and reasons for attendance, to centre them in Islamic philosophy. The term "progressive" is used has issues because the word "progress" contains the meaning (forward towards), which raises the question "to go where?" This meaning has an exclusive connotation. Aside from these issues, the word progressive or Progressive Muslim is meant to serve as an umbrella idea for persons seeking an open and safe environment to participate in a serious and honest engagement with tradition, and it is expected it will lead to further action. Omid Safi and his fellow activists carry out three significant agendas (missions) of Progressive Muslims. The three agendas are as follows: first, achieving social justice that is not limited by social strata, race, class, ethnicity, religion, or any other social divide; second, achieving gender equality in all aspects of life, including economic, social, cultural, religious, educational, legal, and others; and third, accepting plurality as a reality that must be respected and implemented.<sup>46</sup>

Omid Safi used the multiple critique approach to develop the Progressive Muslim concept. In a basic sense, this concept might be interpreted as double criticism in which all of us as Muslims must be able to critique ourselves on the one hand and the West on the other. A multi-headed approach based on a continuous critique of the many groups and discourses in which we are part is often referred to as double criticism. Comparing Progressive Muslims to present Islamic concerns or trends helps confirm the distinction between each movement. However, if we

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<sup>45</sup> Shalahuddin, "Teori Naskh Mahmoud Muhammad Taha dan Sumbangsihnya bagi Pembaruan Hukum Islam Di Dunia Modern," *Al-Mazaahib: Jurnal Perbandingan Hukum* 3, no. 2 (December 12, 2022): 402, <https://doi.org/10.14421/al-mazaahib.v3i2.2838>.

<sup>46</sup> Safi, *Progressive Muslims*.

examine Abdullah Saeed's eight classifications of contemporary Islamic trends, it appears that progressive Muslims are more appropriately included in the Progressive *Ijtihadi* group, namely modern thinkers on religion who seek to reinterpret religious teachings to fulfil the needs of modern society, and Saeed himself quotes Omid Safi's writings when defining this latest trend.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3 Progressive, Feminist, and Gender

Progressive, feminist, and gender frequently pose some considerations about gender issues. This discussion is essential, especially between progressives and feminists, because a progressive female ulama is similar to a feminist. We will start with a discussion on gender. Talking about gender issues, according to Husein Muhammad in Islam, refers to the following verse.<sup>48</sup>

*"..... We created you from a male and a woman and made you nations and tribes so you may know each other. Indeed, the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious you (taqwa). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." (QS.al-Hujuraat [49]: 13).*

In social terms, "*taqwa*" refers to respecting God through obeying His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. The statement expresses the significance of human equality in the eyes of God's laws. This, of course, implies that human thought is always subject exclusively to universal rules. The Prophet Muhammad made a similar statement with the same meaning. For example, he stated, "Humans are like comb teeth, there is no superiority of the Arab nation over foreign nations (non-Arabs), except based on piety, and there is no superiority of white people over black people, except based on piety."

Gender as a topic and gender as a worldview is fundamentally different. It may be exclusive as a topic. Discusses the male-female connection. Considering that gender-unequal interactions frequently regard women as inferior, women require

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<sup>47</sup> Ali Murfi and Rahmad Nursyahidin, "Muslim Progresif" Omid Safi dan Isu-Isu Islam Kontemporer," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 12, no. 2 (December 2, 2015): 240, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2015.122-08>. 240

<sup>48</sup> K. H. Husein Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan* (IRCISOD, 2021), 61.

particular concern for a balanced partnership. Furthermore, gender is frequently regarded as identical to women. However, and perhaps more importantly, gender may be employed as a perspective. It is inclusive in this context. Gender as a perspective is similar to a lens linked to the eye. It's critical to use it when looking at stuff. Gender, as a point of view, is a way of viewing the world and the afterlife. It is additionally crucial to understand from a perspective of gender justice. Lies Marcoes frequently reminds us that gender is a completing lens to other lenses. Humanity, nationality, and Islam lenses are supplemented with a gender lens.<sup>49</sup>

Among scholars, gender is considered a term that is still unfamiliar. They, in general, to say nothing of all, do not know or have never known this term. The first impression they get is that gender is English or the language of Westerners. This can be understood a priori negatively. Some scholars even suspect that the gender movement or feminism attempts to incorporate Western, orientalist, and other ideologies that can destroy Islamic law.

According to Husein Muhammad, if we learn from the failures of secular feminists, this problem was caused by secular feminists' inability to explain or socialize gender issues in society. When gender issues were highlighted in the 1980s, most Indonesian women activists who pushed for gender justice blamed religion as one of the causes of women's subjugation. And it includes blaming religious experts and interpreters. However, they do not have religious solid reasons to defend their ideas, and their fights with distrust, resistance, and negative stigmatization of gender issues and their carriers are becoming increasingly serious. Activists are unable to distinguish between religion and religious interpretation.

The revolution began when Indonesian Muslim feminists led by Wardah Hafiz (currently the leader of an urban poor group) and her colleagues acknowledged speakers from abroad, such as Rifat Hassan (1990) and Asghar Ali Engineer (1992). Both are Islam scholars who have expertise in the gender problem.

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<sup>49</sup> Nur Rofiah, *Nalar Kritis Muslimah: Refleksi Atas Keperempuanan, Kemanusiaan, Dan Keislaman*, 1st ed. (Bandung: Afkaruna, 2020), 16.

Aside from that, they began translating high-quality English literature on Islam and gender, such as Riffat Hassan's *Equal Before Allah*, *Gender and Islam* by Amina Wadud Muhsin, and others.

So far, although references have been made to approaches more relevant to the modern Islamic world, this approach is considered only to meet the needs of intellectuals with access to the references either in English or Indonesian. Meanwhile, most Muslims, especially in the *pesantren* world, still use Arabic references written in Islamic classics. These books are viewed with high respect and are close to sacred.

Several Muslim activists who joined the realm of *pesantren* through advocacy campaigns for women's reproductive rights in Islam made a breakthrough. Masdar F. Mas'udi and Lies Marcoes Natsir, were the first to promote this discourse to the santri and Kiai communities. These two people's and other activists' initiatives raise and bring gender debate to *pesantren*. At the same time, "learn" Islamic feminists to recognize the relativity of local wealth, which may be used as a reference for the concept of gender justice. Abdurrahman Wahid previously remarked that his achievement in domesticating gender issues into the pattern of Islam in Indonesia was the reason for the success of developing gender issues in Indonesia. What is meant by local wealth may be the traditions and Islamic treasures that exist in *pesantren*.

In addition, feminists in Indonesia have consistently attempted to influence national legislation by organizing their resources in certain political situations. I have detailed how a women's movement in Indonesia evolved, from Kartini through Maria Ulfa and Siti Musdah Mulia, and how some ideals were formalized and absorbed into the country's legislative system. While existing law may not entirely

satisfy feminists who pushed for full accommodation of women's concerns, it has advanced women's empowerment during the current century.<sup>50</sup>

Efforts to socialize the idea of gender equality and justice by activists from Islamic women's NGOs and *pasantren*-based NGOs have finally yielded optimistic results. At least, this can be seen from the increasing number of ulamas, especially young ulama from *pasantren* who understand this discourse well on the one hand and are actively involved in developing these discourses on the other hand. Some are even more advanced by carrying out concrete actions or movements to defend women.

This success in many experiences is due to at least three things. First, activists' presentation of gender begins by presenting empirical facts and social realities that cannot be denied related to injustice against women in the Muslim community itself. The most strategic issue for this is the violence against women, which spreads everywhere and it happens daily. Violence against women is a social phenomenon that occurs almost every day. This is the result of unequal power relations. Those who are weak or considered weak, inferior and subordinate often become victims of violence.

Departing from that fact, they confronted the issue with religious texts to see if there were religious texts that justified this violence. It turns out that these religious texts are legible, providing support for the creation of a social reality that is strictly speaking, the activists put forward a more impartial counter text and offered it as a solution. This approach is more relevant to raising awareness of a new discourse among *pasantren*. This is more due to all this time, the *pasantren* community has trusted the classic texts written by medieval scholars, compared to other methods, including presenting social reality. The third factor is due to the growing awareness of the Muslim community about the necessity of upholding

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<sup>50</sup> Zezen Zaenal Mutaqin, "Culture, Islamic Feminism, and the Quest for Legal Reform in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 423–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2018.1524549>.

human rights and democracy. People are increasingly aware that human rights and democracy are the main messages of religion.

These factors are only some of the possibilities. Many other things can support the movement's success and acceptance, for example the gender mainstreaming program by the government and some other legal instruments, both national and international.

Regarding Indonesian Feminist Ulama, feminists are aware of women's disappointment, discrimination, and oppression. This is followed by attempts and activities to solve the situation. A person can be classified as a feminist, male or female, if he is conscious of the discrimination and oppression of women caused by numerous factors, and they participate in efforts to reduce this oppression.

According to Husein Muhammad, several young ulama are still concerned about raising awareness among the Indonesian Muslim community to free women from subordination, discrimination, marginalization and violence. They include Shinta Nuriah, K.H. Muhyiddin Abdussomad, Nasaruddin Umar, Badriyah Fayyumi, Siti Musdah Mulia, Farha Ciciek, Syafiq Hasyim and Faqihuddin Abdul Kadir, Marzuki Wahid, Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, to mention just a few.<sup>51</sup>

Before these figures, young figures who were considered the most progressive male feminists were Mansour Fakih (late), Lies Marcoes, and Masdar F. Mas'udi, director of P3M (Center for *Pesantren* and Community Development) The Wahid Institute, in its research as reported by Gatra magazine, January 2006, stated that they are the fourth wave of the Islamic feminist movement in Indonesia. The *pesantren* feminists, both men and women, move not only to campaign for gender equality and justice. through religious study forums, seminars, discussions and training, but also writes books and freelance papers in various scientific journals, newspapers and other mass media.

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<sup>51</sup> K. H. Husein Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama di Atas Panggung Sejarah* (IRCISOD, 2020). 215

More than that, even though it is not a reference in scholarly forums for scholars, it is a book taught continuously, from generation to generation in almost all traditional Islamic educational institutions, especially *pesantren*. This book seems to represent the legitimate view of the scholars and has become a guideline for Muslims in regulating husband-wife relations in the name of Islam. As stated at length, the contents are loaded with views detrimental to the wife and more profitable to the husband.

Afterwards, these Indonesian Muslim feminists made analyses and critiques of *Kiai* Nawawi's book's discriminatory hadiths in the same language (Arabic), while providing a new perspective that is more fair to women. The transmission of hadiths (*sanad*) and their content, "*matan*," are the primary targets of analysis and critique. They believe this book will inform the Muslim community that many theological reasons about gender issues are weak and cannot be utilized as a legal foundation. Not only is it poor in transmission (*sanad*), but it could also be more decisive in meaning. This, of course, will have an effect.<sup>52</sup>

Women's experiences of becoming good Muslims are nuanced since they have been excluded from law, humanity, and civilization due to their sexuality and presence as women. While Islam offers a platform for agency, its interpretation intersects with the masculine epistemology of agency. According to the feminist understanding of women's rights as human rights, all women must endure the masculine realm. In the private domain, women are sometimes consigned to their domestic, secondary, dependent status as sexual beings, while their rights in public are limited or non-existent. Women are dominated by a male-dominated network of social, family, cultural, and political institutions, which places them in a position where they view the world and human activity quite differently from men and in ways that The Islamic feminist framework encourages the exploration of the Islamic concept of equality with men before God.

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<sup>52</sup> Muhammad, 215.

While any sexism aggression in human relationality ultimately contradicts the Qur'an's focus on implementing *birr* and *qist* (justice and equality in action), it finds its way into women's life via the juristic paradigm of women as sexual, domestic, and secondary creatures. As a result, women's efforts to break free from the authoritative and hegemonic narratives of masculine Islam not only enrich women's lives via active interpretation of the Qur'an, but also establish a new space and authority in both the private and public arenas. Women may speak for themselves about what is best for them in this way. The Qur'an was used for rituals, ethics, politics, and other purposes.<sup>53</sup>

Etin emphasizes the accomplishments of Muslim feminists, arguing that the most significant contribution of Muslim feminists is women's self-determination with a focus on spirituality and morality. She believes, with moderate and conservative viewpoints, that moral and spiritual autonomy for women is inherent in Islam. Feminism is rediscovering and stimulating the importance of women as moral agents. Individuals' capacity for carrying out and conduct through religious tasks gives them authority in Islam. In an ideal world, empirical religious worship (*ibadah*) at the personal and societal levels leads to fulfilling personal responsibilities and commitments to serve God and benefit humanity. Both received the spiritual power to serve God healthily (*Ihsan*).

Pleasantly, Islam connects God's love with personal knowledge of God (*taqwa*). Islam removes assertions of male supremacy or God's favour for males over women by placing God's consciousness at the centre of humankind. From this perspective, Islam as an ethic is fundamentally agnostic to men's and women's spiritual superiority. Given the liberating potential this gives women, it is critical to rediscover the character of Islam as an ethos by identifying locations of female subjugation via accumulation. Analysing Islamic feminism, strategically addressing women's individual needs and problems, giving answers, and constructing and emphasizing principles that Islam provides for women's rights.

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<sup>53</sup> Etin Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism: Pattern and Change in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2018), 229.

Islamic feminism places women at the centre of emancipation by placing a discursive model of how Muslim women face discrimination and how they overcome the opposing ideas of equality and gender hierarchy. This approach permits Islam and feminism to merge as moral systems. Islamic Feminist Ethics encourages men and women to form equal and fair partnerships.<sup>54</sup>

The combination of Islam and feminism results in Muslim women embracing the thought of Islam as a source of progress and equality. Islamic feminism reclaims knowledge that Foucault describes as "buried and disqualified" inside orthodox Islam.<sup>55</sup> In this concept, Islamic feminists, like early feminist advocates in the West who saw women as moral actors, subscribe to Islam as a feminist ethic. They resignify women's importance in societies and recharge the collective effort to improve their social and political situations by criticizing patriarchal behaviours that block women's advancement and promoting the re-emergence of egalitarian voices. This transformation occurs at every contact between Islam and feminism, beginning with the emancipation age and progressing through the eras of association, development, integration, and proliferation. The contacts between Islam and feminism reconcile the different interpretations of Islam as a patriarchal religion. While Islam is a source of empowerment, growth, and wise decisions for Islamic feminists, it is a patriarchal faith that marginalizes women as ethnocentric outsiders.<sup>56</sup>

By putting women at the centre of their freedom, Islamic feminists contribute to producing gender equality and action. While centring on women, they recover the knowledge of Islam's egalitarian values that have been neglected due to assimilation with various cultures and civilizations. Feminist epistemology is characterized by recovering historical forms of egalitarianism during masculine-dominated knowledge production and practices and male authoritarian control. For example, Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey use the phrase "knowledge" to describe

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<sup>54</sup> Anwar, 251.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 83.

<sup>56</sup> Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism*, 255.

black women's achievements in academia and knowledge production as resistance against white hegemony and authority.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Islamic feminists reclaim Islam's egalitarian voice and use it within their communities to local and global issues, such as Western feminism, while equally positioning themselves as the centre of their agency.<sup>58</sup>

A challenge of Islamic feminism is the analysis that breaks down the discursive dominance of male interpretation in Islamic traditions as well as institutional practices of gender. Such disruptions give rise to the myth that Western feminism threatens Muslim women. Anti-feminist sentiment resurfaced as Islam as a political ideology proliferated during the post-1998 reform. The fall of the Suharto dictatorship in the late 1990s and the war on terror. Since 2001 has changed the political landscape of Indonesia as well as the trend of Muslims. The Era of Reform ended political persecution against Islam as a political ideology and thus paved the way for the practice of Muslim politics by Muslims. Politically oriented Muslim groups have found support among members of the revolutionary Islamic movement, such as *Jama'ah Tabligh* (1974), *Darul Arqom* (1980), and *Hizb al-Tahrir* (1978) many of these organizations operated underground.<sup>59</sup>

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the characteristics of progressive Muslim preaching have at least three things; do not use textual understanding in understanding the Qur'an or Hadith; prioritise rationality and being able to filter various popular discourses against new paradigms; and provide certainty to Muslims. There are several progressive Muslim da'wah attitudes in addressing the gender paradigm, namely; critical of gender issues; not being apologetic, moderate, providing understanding and educating about gender, and

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<sup>57</sup> Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey, "Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives," no. McGraw Hill Higher Education (1998).

<sup>58</sup> Anwar, *A Genealogy of Islamic Feminism*, 255.

<sup>59</sup> Anwar, 255.

positioning women as equal to men in the social, political and economic spheres in everyday life and opening insights into gender issues.<sup>60</sup>

Abdullah Saeed acknowledged that this progressive *ijtihadi* worldview faces several challenges. The most difficult obstacles are internal, such as Muslims' unwillingness to accept different points of view, as well as their pleasure in *takfir* culture, which begins with truth claims. Many Muslim academics see it as cynical, if not an alteration from the original Islam. In reality, this progressive Muslim, according to Abdullah Saeed, is a continuation of the modernist movement, which evolves into neo-modernist and progressive. This progressive Muslim accommodates all organizations and circles that have alignment with global Islamic ideals in order to be a part of modern society as a trend, not a movement. Omid Safi raised several critical issues that progressive Muslims must address, including gender inequality, discrimination against minority groups, both religious and ethnic minorities, violations of human rights, a lack of freedom of expression, belief and practice of one's own religion, unequal wealth distribution, and authoritarian government. When asked who had the most right to interpret Islam, who had the most influence in channeling the colour of Islamic interpretation, Abdullah Saeed responded, "although Islam does not have a centralized church structure, Muslim religious establishments produce considerable influence in terms of how Muslims view and practice their religion." If they oppose progressive Islam, their audience will be as well."<sup>61</sup>

## **2.4 The Characteristics of Progressive Female Ulama in Indonesia**

### **2.4.1 The History of Progressive Female Ulama in Indonesia**

When the word ulama is stated, many instantly think of a male who knows and understands numerous Islamic ideologies. As a result, the ulama is seen as just a

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<sup>60</sup> Ridhatullah Assya'bani, Ghulam Falach, and Ghulam Falach, "Dakwah Muslim Progresif Dalam Menyikapi Kesetaraan Gender," *Lentera* 4, No. 2 (February 2, 2021): 131, <https://doi.org/10.21093/Lentera.V4i2.2560>.

<sup>61</sup> "Trend Pemikiran Islam Progresif (Telaah Atas Pemikiran Abdullah Saeed)," *Al-Mabsut : Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Sosial* 7, no. 2 (September 1, 2013): 10, <https://doi.org/10.56997/almabsut.v7i2.29>.

male-gendered individual with the authority to share Islamic doctrines. The term ulama can refer to both men and women with intellectual capacity and in-depth knowledge of Islam. According to Azyumardi Azra, using the term female ulama from a gender viewpoint is an irony that contains "the clearest contradiction." This implies that the term ulama can refer to either male or female ulama without the words behind them.<sup>62</sup>

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress (KUPI) defines: female ulama is a compound word consisting of two words: 'ulama' and 'woman'. The word 'ulama' has been mentioned in the Qur'an and several hadith texts. Linguistically, the word 'ulama' is the plural form of the word 'alim, which means a person who knows or is truly educated without specific discipline limitations. It is not limited to a certain gender. Socially, the term 'ulama' is often attached to religious figures or leaders who understand Islamic sources well, behave nobly, and guide people daily. According to KUPI, it can have two meanings: biological and ideological. According to the definition of the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the meaning from a biological point of view is that a person with a women's genitals can menstruate, get pregnant, give birth, and breastfeed. Meanwhile, ideologically, the meaning of women can mean perspective, awareness, and movement in favour of women to realize justice in relations with men, both in family and social life.<sup>63</sup>

#### **2.4.2 The Limit Definition of Progressive Female Ulama**

According to Faqihuddin, the two meanings are to differentiate the words 'women scholar' and 'women scholar'. According to him, 'women religious scholars' are all women who have the capacity of scholars, both those who have a gender justice perspective and those who do not. Meanwhile, 'female ulama' are all ulama, both male and women, who have and practice a gender justice perspective. The knowledge he has is to realize a just and civilized humanity. This interpretation necessitates the involvement of women as subjects and beneficiaries in all activities

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<sup>62</sup> Jajat Burhanuddin, *Ulama perempuan Indonesia* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Nur Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara* (IRCISOD, 2023); Erik Sabti Rahmawati and Melinda Aprilyanti, "Metodologi Fatwa Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia,"

of the ulama. In this long process, the identification and appreciation of female ulama from the early days of Islam to the present is necessary to affirm the existence and legitimacy of women's ulama.<sup>64</sup>

According to the KUPI, female ulama are persons with excellent knowledge, including men and women, who have a fear of Allah, possessing a noble personality (*akhlaqul karimah*), maintaining justice, and benefiting the universe (*rahmatan lil 'alamiin*). Fear or piety to Allah is required not only for humanitarian issues in general but also for women's issues in specific. Not just in public affairs, nevertheless in private life. Similarly, displaying integrity, maintaining justice, and bringing benefit not only in problems concerning men but also in situations concerning women are identical. Thus, healthy reciprocal connections between men and women are established, free of violence, to achieve the aspirations of just and civilized humanity.

In the history of Islamic civilization, the female ulama has a valuable position regarding theology, social functions, and agents in propagating Islamic teachings. The presence of Islam itself is to elevate the dignity of women. The Prophet Muhammad SAW. has an attitude that respects women and gives way to freedom for them in preaching Islam. In addition, the scientific tradition in the Islamic world written by Abdurrahman as-Sulami proves that in the history of Islamic civilization, women have played a significant role in the dynamics of the ulama.<sup>65</sup>

Women's roles are being broadened outside of the scientific field. In reality, they play an essential part in Allah's wage war. Nasibah bint Ka'ab Ra, for example, took part in the Uhud War, as did Aminah bint Qaysh al-Ghifariyah and Ablat Bila' Khusna in the Khaybar War. Women were very significant under the Islamic caliphate. Umar bin Khatab Ra. They appointed Asy-Syifa' bint Abdillah Ra. as a finance supervisor, a critical role for the government. Women's participation in many public activities persisted into the subsequent centuries. Many women's

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<sup>64</sup> Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara*.

<sup>65</sup> Hasan.

names have been recorded in history as having taken part in enlivening public activities. Sayyidah Nafisah was one of them, and she became Imam Syafi'i's instructor when the other person visited her halaqah in Fustat City. Another well-known person in history is Syaikhah Syuhda, who teaches various subjects ranging from literature to stylistics to poetry. Only two endless names filled three centuries of Islamic history as prominent figures.<sup>66</sup>

In the history of the Indonesian struggle, women have the freedom to fight with men for the interests of religion and the nation. The facts that women are given space to freedom in fighting for their religion and nation in Indonesia are the emergence of Acehnese heroines, say names like Teungku Fakinah, Malahayati, Cut Nyak Dhien. The Kingdom of Aceh was once under the woman's leadership, there are names such as Syaikhah Rahmah El Yunusiyah, Rasuna Said, and Rohana Kuddus is part of the history of women's struggles and women's ulama. Likewise, in Java, there are names like *Nyai* Khairiyah Hasyim, *Nyai* Siti Walidah, and *Nyai* Sholichah Wahid. In Sulawesi, there is the name Opu Daeng Risadju. In Kalimantan, there is the name Fatima al-Banjari.<sup>67</sup>

These historical events show that women work academically and practically to maintain a decent and civilized humanity, combining the perspective of gender justice with Islamic sources in response to life's realities. However, women's contributions to the growth of religion, science, literature, and the beautiful arts are sometimes disregarded and unappreciated due to a bias towards women. In truth, her primary job, housework, is not even classified as labour and must be factored into economic figures instead of intellectual work.

Based on this argument, the female ulama can interpret the Quran. They are not only the basic pillar of civilized life, but they also protect their people. Women are involved in an increasingly intricate life process. When women stand up and announce an interpretation with a more women's perspective, their existence will

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<sup>66</sup> Hasan.

<sup>67</sup> Burhanuddin, *Ulama perempuan Indonesia*.

be increasingly recognized of female ulama as a manifestation of the justice of the duty of mankind. The function of humanity does not discriminate between genders but is defined by the amount to which a person can contribute positively to civilized life for all of nature.

Apart from being progressive, there is a discussion of feminist scholars, which Husein Muhammad proclaimed. Feminists are aware of the humiliation, discrimination and oppression of women. This awareness is followed by efforts and actions to overcome the problem. A person can be categorized as a feminist, man or woman, as long as he/she has awareness of the existence of discrimination and oppression of women caused by various things, and at the same time simultaneously eliminating through this formulation, Husein would like to mention several young ulama still concerned about raising awareness among the Indonesian Muslim community to free women from subordination, discrimination, marginalization and violence. They include Shinta Nuriah, K.H. Muhyiddin Abdussomad, Nasaruddin Umar, Badriyah Fayyumi, Siti Musdah Mulia, Farha Ciciek, Syafiq Hasyim and Faqihuddin Abdul Kadir, Marzuki Wahid, Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, to mention just a few. Before these figures, young figures were considered the most progressive male feminists namely Mansour Fakhri (late), Lies Marcoes, and Masdar F. Mas'udi, director of P3M (Center for *Pesantren* and Community Development).<sup>68</sup>

As the inheritors of the prophet, the primary duties of female ulama, along with male ulama, are to continue prophetic missions, spread knowledge, liberate people from the system of servitude to other than Allah, do good and forbid, humanize all human beings, and perfect noble character. to realize the vision of the mercy of the universe (*rahmatan lil alamin*). Our question today is, what is the most necessary thing female ulama must do. To this question, Husein first wants to convey several things that have worried Husein. Mainstream sources of Muslim religious knowledge are still the product of medieval Muslim thought/ijtihad in Arabian

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<sup>68</sup> Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan*.

nuances and political, social, economic, and cultural systems. patriarchy. A social system that gives authority to men to regulate life together. <sup>69</sup>

Conservatism and repetition of a thought or religious understanding that is carried out for a long time and without criticism, and transferred through doctrinal methods, will, in turn give rise to the belief that the product of a thought that is inherited is the truth of religion or belief itself along with all its sacred and universal meanings.

So, what happens is the universalization of particular norms and the particularization of universal norms. This situation caused serious problems in the dynamics of culture and civilization. This long-standing view of conservatism has the potential to develop into extremism. Rationality only develops progressively if it can be said to experience stagnation. Intellectual activity or the use of reason is often stigmatized as a liberal way of thinking, implying pejoration. Too often quoted the statement that "one who uses reason is a misguidance that will lead him to hell". Faced with several crucial problems and these, Husein formulates points that need to be done by women scholars:<sup>70</sup>

1. Women and male ulama develop an understanding of Islamic sources or religious texts through a more open (inclusive), critical, rational, substantive and contextual approach. Women and male ulama work hard (ijtihad) to produce sources of Islamic knowledge and fatwa that are just and non-discriminatory.

2. It is time for women and male scholars to move towards reconstruction from an interpretive model approach to a *takwil* (hermeneutic) model, from conservatism to progressivism, and from around interpreting the text (*fahm al-khitab*) to finding the ideals of the text (*fahm al-murad min al-khitab*/the ideals of God's law) or in today's popular context it is called "*maqashid asy-shari'ah*". The

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<sup>69</sup> Muhammad, *Perempuan Ulama di Atas Panggung Sejarah*.

<sup>70</sup> Muhammad, 205.

ideal is the upholding of justice and the principles of humanity. This is the joint task of scholars, intellectuals, scholars, and scholars, both men and women.

3. Female ulama are expected to be actively involved in spreading Islam Wasathiyah. Namely, a moderate perspective, tolerant, respecting diversity, and anti-violence in all its forms.

Female ulama have rights and duties as members of the Indonesian community to achieve the principles of nation and state as expressed in the Republic of Indonesia's constitution in personal, family, community, and state life, and are actively involved in formulating national policy.

Based on the preceding debates, if we use a narrow definition of progressive female ulama in this research, it is a female ulama from *Pesantren (Nyai)* who is concerned with a progressive perspective as evidenced by the engagement of female activists in female groups next a broad discussion on progressive female ulama. The next chapter will be divided into sub-chapters focusing on the dynamics of progressive female ulama in Indonesia.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **THE DYNAMICS OF PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA IN INDONESIA**

Dynamics refers to changes that occur gradually or continuously from the beginning to the present. We learned about the history and general views of progressive female ulama in the previous chapter. As we can see, progressive female ulama in Indonesia faced various problems and were unique in their period. In this chapter, we will examine more closely the changes, advancements, and obstacles faced by progressive female ulama from their early days to the present day in both the public (general) and domestic (their private educational institutions) domains. We will look at the early era by tracing literary studies and supplementary references from interview findings, while we will know the current era by analyzing the results of interviews with progressive female ulama players in this research.

It should be noted that the definition of domestic and public here is related to the gender term. Domestic means a particular area or region that belongs to a particular group, for example, in households, friendship communities, private educational institutions, and other places where membership access is not open to the public. Meanwhile, the public here means a circle that anyone can access, and there are no restrictions on members and certain conditions, such as the community and government.

Before discussing the dynamics of progressive female ulama in public, we need to clarify the definition of public here. So, the public boundary here is an area that everyone can access and or intended for many people. If devoted to this discussion, public means Indonesian society in general and organizations that aim to empower women or society in general. Meanwhile, progressive female ulama here are female ulama who wear and or behave according to a progressive perspective. This discussion will examine Indonesian female ulama's history, role, and position from the beginning to the present. Therefore, the objects here are

library research and field research. The early era begins with an introduction regarding the emergence of female ulama in Indonesia.

Before classifying the roles and contributions of progressive female ulama in Indonesia, in the following table, I compiled the well-known female ulama in Indonesia based on the two main reference books of this research, Indonesian female ulama and Khazanah female ulama of the Archipelago. These names are grouped by year of activity. This table certainly does not represent all of the female ulama who existed in that era, but it can illustrate how the ulama of that era emerged and contributed. Regarding the selection of progressive ulama, these names are included in the progressive ulama because they support humanism values, as explained in the criteria for progressive ulama in the previous chapter.

*Table 3.1: Female Ulama in Indonesia*

Name	Year	Origin	Era
Fatimah al-Banjari	Dead 1828	South Kalimantan	Colonial and Post Colonial
Fathimah al-Falimbani	Around 1900	South Sumatera	
Arnah Cimanuk	d. 1923	Banten	
Tengku Fakinah	d. 1938	Aceh	
Pocut Baren	d. around 1900	Aceh	
Rohana Kudus	d. 1972	West Sumatera	
Nyai Siti Walidah	d. 1946	Yogyakarta	
Rahmah El-Yunusiyah	d. 1969	West Sumatera	
Rasuna Said	d. 1965	West Sumatera	

Siti Manggopoh	d. 1965	West Sumatera	
Nyai Nur Chadijah	d. 1980	East Java	
Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim	d. around 1970	East Java	
Nyai Sholichah Wahid Hasyim	d. 1994	East Java	
Suryani Thahir	d. 2015	Jakarta	Reformation
Hadiyah Salim	Born 1920	West Java	
Nonoh Hasanah	d. 1986	West Java	
Nyai Chamnah	b. 1943	West Java	

### 3.1 Colonial and Post-Colonial Era

This era began before 1945-1997. This section will discuss the scholars who supported women's empowerment. The standards for “progressive” at that time were different from now. This was due to the political situation that occurred. The appearance of female ulama in Indonesia has existed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, this was not recorded in history because the ulama was identical only to men at that time.<sup>71</sup> If we discuss women’s figures in early Indonesia, we could not forget some prominent figures. Such as Nyi Ageng Serang (1752-1825), Marta Christina Tiahahu (1818), Cut Nyak Dien (1850-1908). These figures become historical inspirations for the next generations. Meanwhile, the first actor of women’s rights is R.A Kartini (1879-1904). She builds an educational institution for women. Besides that, there was Dewi Sartika (1884-1997), who built a school, namely *Keutamaan Istri*, in Sunda. Meanwhile, the woman organization started in 192, *Putri Mardika*, which struggled the women’s empowerment. From that

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<sup>71</sup> Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara*.

followed the other regional organizations that struggled for women's rights in several regions and developed until the first Women's Congress was born in 1928.

Meanwhile, progressive female ulama in this era appeared in 1917, beginning with *Aisyiah*,<sup>72</sup> which *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan* built. There is *Sarikat Siti Fatimah* (1918) and *Nahdatoel Fataat* (1920). In this era, progressive female ulama pioneered their movement in Indonesia. According to this, it was started by *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan* from *Aisyiyah*<sup>73</sup>, then continued by *Rasuna Said* and *Rahmah El-Yunusiyah*.<sup>74</sup> *Nyai Ahmad Dahlan* started her idea to establish *Aisyiyah* after her husband became a leader of *Muhammadiyah*, the first Islamic organization in Indonesia. The data summarized by *Neng Dara Affiah* is comprehensive enough to corroborate the opinion that progressive female ulama in this era consisted of these three people.

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<sup>72</sup> *Aisyiah* initiated directing the *Muhammadiyah* women so that they could improve women's empowerment in Indonesia.

<sup>73</sup> *Nyai Dahlan* is a figure who has received the role and support of the family for her public career. *Kiai Dahlan*, her husband, knew how important it was to involve all groups, both men and women, in building the nation and preaching religion. This awareness was instilled in his wife by teaching knowledge about women from an Islamic perspective. At the same time, *Kiai Dahlan* provided the same opportunity. From a young age, *Nyai Siti Walidah* spent much time studying religion. Moreover, in *Kauman* then, girls were facilitated to study religion. *Nyai Siti Walidah* got the opportunity. She was guided by her parents or the *Kauman* scholars in *langgar-langgar*.<sup>73</sup> Until she was a teenager, *Nyai Siti Walidah* had never enjoyed public education. The general education in question was formal education organized by the Dutch East Indies Government. This is influenced by the general public's belief that formal schools are only for men, not for women. In addition, not a few thought that entering a school run by the Dutch East Indies Government was against the teachings of Islam. Going to school at an educational institution in the Netherlands Indies meant studying at a school that was against Islamic teachings. However, such views were not valid for *Nyai Siti Walidah* because education was not exclusive to men. See *Burhanuddin, Ulama perempuan Indonesia*. 39-65

<sup>74</sup> *Rahmah El-Yunusiah* is one of the famous female ulama from West Sumatra. *Rahmah's* aspirations arose from the awareness of the injustices experienced by her people, in addition to social inequality in her society. *Rahmah* saw that the difference in intelligence between women and men was since they did not get the same learning opportunities. She felt this when he studied at *Diniyah School* with a coeducation system; women students do not get an in-depth explanation of religion on issues related to women. During the 46 years under his leadership, *Diniyah School Putri* has developed so rapidly. *Rahmah's* struggle is not only in the field of education. There are still many records about her work that needs to be taken into account, both in social and political life and specifically in increasing the dignity of women. See *Aminuddin Rasyad*, "Rahmah al-Yunusiyah, Mu'assisah al-Ma'had al-Dini li al-Banat Badanj Banjari—Sumatrah al-Gharbiyyah," August 3, 2016,; *Burhanuddin, Ulama perempuan Indonesia*. 1-38

The Minang community is known for its advanced education system, with 23 private schools in Padang and many in Java and Madura. The first women's newspaper in Indonesia, "Sunting Melayu," was led by Rohana Kudus, Sutan Syahrir's older sister. The Minang community is higher in terms of Arabic literacy, indicating the progress achieved by the people of West Sumatra in religious reform and education.

So, we know that Rasuna Said <sup>75</sup> and Rahmah El-Yunusiyah were from Minangkabau, a high participation of women in Minangkabau, an area of Indonesia that has experienced significant progress in religious reform and education. There is other women's figure like Rohana Kudus<sup>76</sup>, and Siti Manggopoh.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Rasuna is a descendant of Minang royalty and has a well-respected family in the community. Her father, Haji Said, is an activist for the movement and is concerned about the education of his children. Rasuna's family is respected, wealthy, and educated, but she refuses to attend public schools established by the Dutch. Rasuna married Dasuki Samad, a movement activist, at 19. Despite their initial love, their marriage was challenged by Rasuna's family, who were both respected and wealthy. However, Rasuna remained adamant in her decision, leading to her rebellion against the confines of tradition. They got married in a simple way in Maninjau, and their relationship remained strong. Rasuna married twice, first in Medan to Bariun AS, who was preoccupied with travel and politics. Their second marriage ended in divorce, and they never married again until the end of his life. Her religious beliefs strongly influence Rasuna's views on marriage, as marriage is natural and should not limit a woman's freedom. Rasuna, a prominent figure in Indonesia's Minang community, is known for her strict adherence to religious provisions and belief that young people respect women more than old people. This belief is influenced by the Islamic style of the youth group, which imposes onerous conditions for polygamy, causing women to suffer greatly. The history of the Minang community in Indonesia demonstrates the importance of religious reform and education in promoting women's emancipation and a more inclusive society. Rasuna is secretive about her relationship with Duski Samad and Bariun AS, which led to her being ostracized by her friends at PERMI. Rohana, born in Koto Gadang, Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, was a sibling of Sutan Syahrir, a Chairman of the Indonesian Socialist Party. Her father was a journalist, and Dutch East Indies Government employee, and Rohana learned to read and write from her father. See Burhanuddin, *Ulama perempuan Indonesia*; 68-100. Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara*. 150-171.

<sup>76</sup> The Minangkabau community, where Rohana was born, adheres to Islamic teachings and uses them to guide daily life. The proverb "Minangkabau adat is based on the Islamic religion, while religion is based on the Qur'an" is closely related to these teachings. All forms of Minangkabau community activities are based on Islamic religious teachings, and Rohana Kuddus taught children in his school. Rohana Kuddus' father remarried Rabi'ah, the son of Sutan Syahrir, who later became Indonesia's founding father and the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia. She is the aunt of the famous poet Chairil Anwar and the cousin of H. Agus Salim, who served as the first Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Syahrir-Hatta cabinet (1947-1949). After marrying for the second time, Rohana Kuddus returned to her hometown in Koto Gadang and lived with her grandmother. At 24, Rohana married Abdul Kudus Pamuncak Sutan, a socially motivated and active political party member. See: Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara*. 79-98.

<sup>77</sup> Siti Manggopoh was born in Manggopoh, Lubuk Basung, Agam, in May 1880 AD, and died in Gasan Gadang, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, in 1965 AD. Her real name was brief, namely Siti. Her father's name is Sutan Tariak, and her mother is Mak Kipap. Siti is the only daughter in her family because her five siblings are all boys. The Minangkabau people, who adhere to matrilineal customs, consider the existence of women to be highly significant to continue their lineage and is the pride of the family. Siti was born into a poor family, but her presence is a matter of pride, like being filled with a gadang house, a traditional Minangkabau house, which has been empty for so long. Siti never attended public school because there were no schools in her village at that time. However, he often participates in recitation activities with his five older brothers. His childhood was spent in his hometown. She grew up in a family environment that

Besides the participation from figures at Minang, there is another role of Javanese women, especially in *Pesantren*. There is *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim*<sup>78</sup> and additionally, there is *Nyai Solichah* in Tebuireng.<sup>79</sup> She does not teach, as she did in Denanyar. In addition to her family, her daily time is used to help her in-laws'

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adheres to Islamic teachings. She grew into a brave girl. In fact, some notes about her stated that even her male friends felt reluctant to tease her simply. Growing up in an environment where all of the brothers were male, little Siti got used to going to mosques, markets, rice fields, and even to the martial arts arenas, which were only attended by men in the past. Her parents and older siblings taught and educated her to be a brave woman. Even in making friends, Siti grew up in a male environment. Siti Manggopoh, born in Manggopoh, Lubuk Basung, Agam in May 1880 AD, was the only daughter in her family, as her five siblings were all boys. Siti was raised in a traditional Minangkabau house, which had been empty for a long time. She never attended public school but participated in recitation activities with her older brothers. Siti was taught to be a brave woman in a male-dominated environment by her parents and older siblings. See Hasan.171-187.

<sup>78</sup> *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim*, a woman unable to attend school like her brothers, received her education from her father and later from her husband, KH. Ma'shum Ali and Shaykh Muhaimin al-Lasemi. Despite her father's concern for women's education, *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim* chose to attend *halaqah* in the Islamic boarding school hall or the *Kiai's* residence. This demonstrates the importance of education in Islam, as it upholds equal rights among human beings. However, cultural upbringing patterns often influence the notion that women's education is unimportant. Boys are educated to make a living and are given the opportunity to create high ideals outside the home, while girls are prepared to be good mothers and devoted wives. *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim's* life journey with KH. Ma'shum Ali demonstrates her dedication to her husband and her family. Despite her husband's death, she married young and had three children, Abdul Aziz and Azizah. Despite her busy household management, *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim* attended a *halaqah* organized by the Haramain ulama, which helped her become more intelligent and better equipped to recognize her identity. *Nyai Khairiyah Hasyim's* curiosity and dislike of men's tasks, such as setting up wall clocks, led her to question the role of men in her education. This was due to the social conditions at the time, where women were considered sidekicks and were not given the opportunity to advance in their education. See Hasan.255-282; Muzayyanah Hamas, *Nyai Hj. Khoiriyah Hasyim 1908- 1983: Tinjauan Historis Tentang Figur Pendidik Dan Pejuang Emansipasi*, 1997.

<sup>79</sup> *Nyai Sholihah Hasyim*, a young woman living with her in-laws, faced numerous challenges in her new life. *Nyai Hasyim*, Munawaroh's mother-in-law, was strict in her cooking and socializing, even if she tried to follow her mother-in-law's recipe. Munawaroh's parents-in-law supervised her spirits, requiring her to wear proper clothes and a double headscarf. Despite these restrictions, Munawaroh felt uncomfortable leaving the house. Wahid Hasyim, aware of the negative influences on Munawaroh's household, found a friend for her during his early adjustment to Tebuireng. Abidah, who had a child, became a friend of Munawaroh and helped her with technical matters and lessons. Sholihah was active in Muslimat recitations and opened a shop in front of her house, supporting her family. She served the needs of her in-laws' guests at her house. *Nyai Sholichah Wahid*, a forward-thinking woman, was often criticized for violating strict rules in the *pesantren* location. Her parents would wait for the right time to advise her, often at night when there was no one around. *Nyai Sholichah Wahid* was a forward-thinking woman with a strong desire for freedom and independence. See Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara*, 283.; Ahmad Faizan "Ibuku inspirasiku : *Nyai Solichah Wahid Hasyim* (ibunda Gus Dur dan Gus Sholah), 2015 .

household life, and of course, it is no less important to develop his knowledge by reciting the Qur'an to his husband. As the leader of the *pesantren* and a well-known figure, *Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari's* house was never empty of visitors. Even late at night and often continues into the early morning hours. Because she lives with his parents-in-law, *Nyai Sholichah* can't avoid the demands of the guests who come. He, among other things, must spend his time tending to their needs, such as serving food and drink, especially if there is no helper to attend to them.

On the other hand, an ulama from Cirebon, Mrs Hj. Chamnah, born in Buntet on March 2, 1943, was the third child of *Kiai Imam* and *Nyai Maryam*. She received an education from her parents, who did not implement a strict education as was common in the *Kiai* families at the time. This allowed her to become different figure from her father and mother, unlike the *Kiai* families who aimed to mold their children into future successors. Mrs. Chamnah's life experiences demonstrate the emergence of women's leadership within the Muslim community, especially Tarekat, due to cultural openness in the family environment. This freedom allows her children to communicate with family and community groups, which is only possible for boys in traditional society. This freedom allows her to be dynamic in her relationship with the community.

Asmah Syahrani, a woman ulama, began to feel the difference in her thinking from her parents and began to enjoy her education. Despite facing opposition from her family, including her father's family, she was dismissed from school for two years. She studied with her aunt, a true nationalist, and learned a poem that symbolized the struggle for independence. At that time, no one dared to recite poetry openly, and Asmah Syahrani and her aunt did not. Their presence was a matter of pride, like the empty gadang house in her village.

In 1947, Suryani Thahir began her formal education at the People's School in Bukit Pasirduri, Kebon Baru, South Jakarta, and later attended the Madrasah Diniyyah Awwaliyah As-syafi'iyah in Balimatraman, South Jakarta. She received direct guidance from K.H. Abdullah Syafi'i for two years. Suryani's parents allowed

her to choose her game model without limiting it based on gender, which liberal feminists emphasize today. This approach to education has implications for forming personality differences, such as girls being shy and boys being aggressive. K.H. Thahir Rahili's family did not discriminate between sexes in education, allowing her to play like a boy. This allowed her to develop a strong, disciplined, and firm personality. Suryani's parents did not discriminate between sexes, encouraging her to pursue higher education. After three years at Diniyah Putri Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, Suryani and her nine siblings were sent to the Middle East to study Islam in various Islamic countries.

### **3.2 Reformation Era**

According to Affiah, the progressive Muslim women's movement in Indonesia has had challenges in general for some years. In 1990-1998, their everyday challenges were the government and the opposition to government policies. Whereas from 1998-2010, their enemies were the Puritan Muslim movement and those opposed to the exclusivity of thought, the use of violence, and the rejection of human rights.

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The emergence of progressive Indonesian Islamic intellectuals and the reformation wave of 1998 must be seen as part of a chain of renewal in the history of Indonesian Islamic intellectuals. Progressive Muslims carry out a process of searching for a renewed perspective on Islam in the context of a developing world.<sup>81</sup> Movement means the effort/activity of a person/several people regarding a matter, while an organization is a community or a group of people who gather to achieve a common goal.

Progressive Muslim movements in Indonesia started in the Dutch colonial era but became more proliferative in 1990-2010. According to Affiah, the movement that emerged in the two decades above had a different pattern, this was due to the political situation in Indonesia. The difference in these patterns lies in the purpose

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<sup>80</sup> Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*, 1.

<sup>81</sup> "Studi Tentang Pluralisme Dalam Islam Progresif di Indonesia," *Jurnal Dewantara* 10, no. 02 (September 30, 2021): 164.

of forming the Movement. In the first decade, the founding of the Movement was aimed at demonstrating and voicing women's rights. Afterwards, in the following decades, the Movement was formed to push the government to become part of state policy.<sup>82</sup>

The progressive Muslim women's movement began in the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese colonial period, the Liberal Democracy period and the Guided Democracy period. If we sort it according to year and purpose, the progressive Muslim movement in the first decade, 1990-1998, was filled with various religious organizations. Among them are the Institute for the *Study of Islamic Philosophy* (LSAF), the *Pesantren and Community Development Association*, the *Paramadina Foundation* and the *Fatayat NU Welfare Foundation*. During this period, movements focused on the nature of women, human creation, women's leadership, polygamy and the right to determine a life partner. In the following period, from 1998-2010, the Muslim women's movement focused on efforts to be recognized and supported by the government. Among the organizations at this time were the *Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama Central Executive*, *Rahima*, the *Fahmina Institute*, and the *Islam and Women's Institute for Islamic and Social Studies* (LKIS).<sup>83</sup>

The progressive Muslim women's movement was initiated because Indonesian society at that time needed an answer to the problems of the time, which did not support women's empowerment. During the Dutch colonial period, the Dutch government supported women's empowerment, but the native government did not respond well. This is because the patriarchal culture is still used and is a nightmare for Indonesian women. Thus, various women's movements were formed to overcome them.

The progressive Muslim women's movement will not be formed without the general women's movement first. In Indonesia, the women's movement began with the establishment the *Kartini* School in 1913. It was followed by various

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<sup>82</sup> Affiah, *Potret Perempuan Muslim Progresif Indonesia*.

<sup>83</sup> Affiah.

movements from the government regarding women's empowerment. Then, in 1917, the first progressive Muslim movement, *Aisyiyah*, was founded. This movement focuses on empowering women as mothers and schools for their children. The *Aisyiyah* movement grew in size until in 1930, it established a congress with 5,000 participants and decided unanimously against polygamy. Meanwhile, in the 1920s, it was followed by the establishment of the women's movement from *Sarikat Wanita Siti Fatimah* and *Nahdlatol Fataat*. This Progressive Muslim women's movement continued to grow until the Japanese colonial period.<sup>84</sup>

All women's organizations formed during the Dutch colonial period were disbanded during the Japanese colonial period, and the *Fujinkai* organization was re-established. However, only a little development in this era was due to the focus on efforts against Japanese colonialism. This continued until the period of guided democracy. During this period until the liberal democracy era, the women's movement that emerged was a movement under the auspices of the government, and there was no establishment of a progressive Muslim women's movement. It was only during the New Order government that this organization was formed. Beginning with the Mukhtar *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama*.<sup>85</sup>

The wide networks of two prominent Muslim organizations, *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), produced Muslim women leaders. Since the early twentieth century, several organizations have directed and impacted Indonesian Muslims. They have historically had female branches, allowing female members to be active as preachers and instructors. The reformist or modernist *Muhammadiyah* (established in 1912) and the conservative *Nahdlatul Ulama* (formed in 1926) dominate Indonesian Islam.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Affiah.

<sup>85</sup> Safi, *Progressive Muslims*.

<sup>86</sup> Van Doorn-Harder, *Women Shaping Islam*, 4.

### 3.3 Contemporary Era

Meanwhile, there are more progressive female ulama in the current era.<sup>87</sup> Many women's organizations cause this have been formed in the previous era. So, progressive female ulama in this era are female ulama who have personally and organizationally progressive thoughts following the progressive female ulama movement above. Besides, Progressive Muslim thinkers in Indonesia in the 21st century: neither traditionalists nor modernists, secularists nor Islamists. It seeks to emphasize the increasingly layered complexity of discourse and identity formation among Indonesia's Muslims at the beginning of the twenty-first century by the level of specifics offered in this chapter's mapping of old and new organizational entities and the profile sketches of the intellectuals involved in the formulation of new ways of Islamic thinking. It challenges Karel Steenbrink's assessment, a seasoned observer of Islamic education in Indonesia. He stated a few years ago that the

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<sup>87</sup> In the twenty-first century, Indonesia experienced new critical and sophisticated ways of thinking about Islam, particularly regarding its relevance to public life and its place in society. These strands of thought were initiated and developed by intellectuals who defy neat pigeonholing into existing categories. Many intellectuals contributing to these discourse formations come from traditionalist Muslim backgrounds, received their education at *pesantren*, and continue to maintain links with the National Islamic Institute (NU). However, their ideas and views suggest they have overtaken their modernist counterparts in critical and creative thinking. A meeting of minds between NU and Muhammadiyah activist-intellectuals of the second and third postcolonial generations is more accurate. By mapping the intellectual landscape, profiling some of the key actors, and surveying some outlets for new ideas, the author intends to provide a setting for the confluence of various strands of progressive Muslim thinking unified by a desire to safeguard and secure secularism, liberalism, and pluralism as the ruling principles of Indonesia's sphere, in the face of Islamist antagonism. The *Mazhab Ciputat* and the *Mazhab Jogja* are two informal clusters of scholars associated with the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta and Yogyakarta's IAIN Sunan Kalijaga. These names are derived from the location of their campuses, while the designation *mazhab* is the Indonesian rendition of the Arabic term *madhhab*, originally used to refer to traditional Islamic schools of law. The *Mazhab Ciputat* and the *Mazhab Jogja* included students and academics from NU or Muhammadiyah backgrounds and individuals without such associations. The Liberal Islam Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, JIL) was one of the most high-profile exponents of this rapprochement between traditionalists and modernists. In 2004, two Indonesian graduates from al-Azhar University in Cairo published *The Doctrine of Progressive Islam*, while six years later, Budhy Munawar-Rachman used the term progressive Muslim intellectuals to transcend the traditionalist-modernist dichotomy. Students of modernist Islam in Indonesia identify several doctrinal and ideological blocs within the Muhammadiyah. The Puritan mainstream, called the 'Dahlan Group,' the reactionary Ikhlas bloc, the leftist strand strongly influenced by social and political theories, the nationalist bloc Munas (Muhammadiyah Nasionalis), and the presence of a group of Muhammadiyah activists from NU backgrounds, Munu (Muhammadiyah-NU), are indicative of the narrowing gap between certain Muslim modernists and traditionalists. See Carool Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 41–80.

difference between traditionalists and reformists, between "traditional Mecca" and "modern Cairo," and between those who received a secular Western education and those who dedicated their youth to religious studies, whether in Indonesia or Mecca, Cairo, or elsewhere was what played a role from the early twentieth century onward. But Herman L Back argues that isn't true at the start of the twenty-first century.<sup>88</sup>

Growing numbers of young Muslims from religious backgrounds who pursue a career in religious studies have received a mixed education, attending both secular and religious universities, state schools and (reformed) *pesantren*. They have travelled abroad for advanced degrees in the study of religion, Islamic history, and even social sciences at universities in North America, Australia, and Europe, just as much as they have done to Muslim-majority nations for more formal education.

Younger generations are still exploring and critically engaging with the ideas and concepts despite the passing away of Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Kuntowijoyo, and Moeslim Abdurrahman. The Paramadina Youth Forum has some members who admit that their intellectual forebears have left them with a heritage of "monuments." However, this description contains some uncertainty—possibly on purpose. Is it intended to be interpreted as a reference to concepts that have a massive effect? If they aren't routinely updated and given new meaning in constantly shifting situations, are they past artefacts.

Cultural hybridity is still crucial to how intellectual Muslims build their identities. When examining Islamic forms of freethought and the conception of novel ideas, hybridity is not a flaw but rather a characteristic proving advantageous. These exercises are conducted through critical dialogue with the works of their intellectual forebears, including Muslim and non-Muslim foreign interlocutors and their direct Indonesian mentors. It provides a chance to see if they have converted their intellectual professions into what Robbins refers to as "secular vocations."

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<sup>88</sup> Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia*.80-81.

More specifically, progressive female ulama, based on the book Portrait of Progressive Muslim Women in this Era, is determined based on which movement or group is progressive. These movements are *Fatayat NU*, *Rahima*, and the newly formed KUPI. Therefore, the female ulama/*Nyai* who join the organization are progressive female ulama. Female ulama in this era are Musdah Mulia, and Nur Rofiah, As for *Nyai*, they are Badriyah Fayumi and Masriyah Amva, who is seen as a progressive scholar through her works. However, because of their well-known progressive stance in many books and other studies about them, my research here does not explore them. I referred to the *Nyai* below.

The figures that I chose as the primary informants in this study were six people. *Nyai* Azizah Hajar, *Nyai* Fauziah al-Balgis, *Nyai* Muyassaroh, *Nyai* Siti Muthmainnah, *Nyai* Nining Khurotul Aini, and *Nyai* Maghfurotun. I chose these six *Nyai* sources because they met the criteria of being *Nyai* (a *pesantren* leader) who actively support women's issues in public.

Initially, I would interview progressive female ulama other than those from NU circles. However, after tracing, most ulama outside NU do not have domestic private organizations, and even teaching in institutions is shared (organization). Therefore, knowing how to negotiate progress when domestic and public is complex. Therefore, this study focuses on interviewing *Nyai* from NU.

If a table mode, the main sources of this research are as follows.

Table 3.2: Interlocutor's Public Role

Name	Domicile	Positions
<i>Nyai</i> Azizah Hajar	Central Java	Chief of Fatayat NU Banjarnegara, Leader <i>Pesantren</i> Nurul Qurán
<i>Nyai</i> Siti Muthmainnah	Central Java	Chief of Fatayat NU Purbalingga Leader <i>Pesantren</i> Al-Falah

<i>Nyai</i> Fauziah al-Balgis	West Java	Fatayat NU, member of MUI, Nawaning Nusantara, Leder of <i>Pesantren</i> MAM Al-Fath Bogor
<i>Nyai</i> Muyassaroh	Yogyakarta	Fatayat NU Yogyakarta, member of Simpul Rahima, Leader of <i>Pesantren</i> Bil Qalam
<i>Nyai</i> Nining Khurrotul Aini	East Java	Muslimat NU, <i>Bunyai</i> Nusantara, Leader of <i>pesantren</i> Uluwiyah
<i>Nyai</i> Maghfurotun	Central Java	Fatayat NU, Leader of <i>Pesantren</i> Darul Ulum Pati

*Nyai* Azizah is the Chairperson of the *Fatayat NU* in Banjarnegara, as well as *Nyai* Siti Muthmainnah is the Chairperson of the *Fatayat NU* in Purbalingga, as well as *Nyai* Maghfurotun. Meanwhile, *Nyai* Fauziah al-Balgis is a member of the MUI and is active in the *Fatayat NU* and *Nawaning Nusantara* organizations. Meanwhile, *Nyai* Muyassaroh is a member of the *Rahima* branch in Yogyakarta, who is active in *Fatayat NU*, she is active in voicing gender through literature by writing a novel about victims of sexual violence in *pesantren* entitled "Hilda". Meanwhile, *Nyai* Nining Khurotul Aini is the rector of the Islamic Institute of Uluwiyah in Mojokerto, who is active in *Muslimat NU* and *Bunyai Nusantara*. The fact that all of the interviewers joined the NU organization follows the statement of Eka Sri Mulyani,

*"Almost without exception, all Nyai are affiliated to either the Muslimat or the Fatayat NU organizations, and their affiliation to these organizations is revealed in their social activities. Many among them find that the Fatayat/Muslimat NU is the channel best suited to their broader socio-religious participation. The Muslimat and the Fatayat NU have also provided an outlet for their political activities."*<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Eka Srimulyani, "Nyais of Jombang *Pesantrens*: Public Roles and Agency," in *Women from Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia, Negotiating Public Spaces* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 156, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2fm.9>.

I looked at previous studies and conducted interviews with several progressive ulama to find out who the progressive female ulama are. Among the actors I interviewed were the Chairperson of the Fatayat organization and members of Aisyiyah in Banjarnegara Regency, members of the KUPI in Bogor City, and several other regions in Indonesia.

Apart from the public, progressive female ulama has some difficulties in domestic areas. At the same time, the public is against other movements, especially Puritan movements, in the domestic area against the tradition and perspective from the inside.

Among the progressive women scholars that I studied, several were active and received support from those around them in spreading knowledge and women empowerment in their private institutions. One of them is *Nyai Nining Khurrotul Aini*. He was active and became the prime mover of private educational institutions at his *pesantren*, Uluwiyah, and even became the Rector of that Islamic Religious University. The fact of *Nyai Nining* as a rector here can certainly show how the family and surrounding environment are open to women's progressivity. Apart from that, *Nyai Nining* is an active activist in women's organizations in public, and this status gives her more power to become an activator in her institution. This is slightly different from *Nyai Azizah Hajar*, who became a pioneer in her *pesantren* due to her husband leaving her. Therefore, she must seek additional power outside the *pesantren* through women's organization.<sup>90</sup>

### **3.1. Framing the Interlocutor's Position**

Following the discussion of the contemporary period, certain scholars and interlocutors in this research, including those in the present current era, are included. As previously said, there are six interlocutors present here. They are affiliated with NU, an Islamic organization. I establish them in various ways by selecting a different location in Java. The rationale for using Java is due to the *Nyai* is well-

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<sup>90</sup> Nyai Azizah, *The Female Ulama* from PP Nurul Quran, Mei 2023; Nyai Nining, *The Female Ulama* from PP Uluwiyah, June 2023.

known there. However, after performing a search, I discovered that female ulama in other organizations other than NU does not operate individual educational establishments. I attempted to ask the one from *Muhammadiyah*, but she just talked about education. Do not react to the woman's point of view in public. As a result, I concentrate on the NU *Nyai*, which is also related to the traditional *pesantren*.

As explained, males and females have rigid limits in traditional *pesantren*. Because *pesantren* are historically patriarchal, this phenomenon was connected to the interlocutor's position. According to patriarchal tradition, their participation in the public should be restricted to the domestic sphere. The interlocutors are progressive female ulama based on their public roles. Therefore, obviously they will be progressive at home. However, the patriarchal culture of *pesantren* affected their logical, progressive expression. As a result, we would need and observe how they negotiate their progressive position domestically.

We can observe the interlocutors, the six of them, negotiating in their everyday lives and interacting with one another in the *pesantren*. If we look at their daily activities, we may see that they have a busy schedule both in the public as activists and at home as teachers and parents for the *pesantren*. As we discussed in the theoretical framework, I raised some questions to them about how they negotiate their progressive viewpoint. It is about their teaching approach, their public position on women, how they overcame barriers and problems, and their wish for pupils, particularly female students, to apply a progressive perspective.

After performing the data analysis, I split the variables of their views as change or not in the progressive perspective, as well as what the problems are and how they overcame them. And once we know their position, we will also know their agency.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROGRESSIVE FEMALE ULAMA: BETWEEN CHANGING AND UNCHANGING IN THE PUBLIC AND DOMESTIC SPHERE

This section will categorize progressive female ulama as changing or unchanging face, with the first assumption that an ulama can be classified as both based on their attitude and behavior. However, after reviewing the sources and statements, it is unclear whether the categories are based on the person. That's because one character can change his or her face in one situation but not in another. As a result, this discussion will be based on the scope of a specific life and will group the sources and research subjects according to their opinions and actions.

The changing face here means there are changes in the opinions, attitudes, and actions of progressive women scholars in public and domestically regarding women's issues, gender, and other social issues. Various things caused the change. It could be due to cultural differences, *pesantren* culture, or other things. Meanwhile, the opposite of changing face means the similarity of opinions, attitudes, and actions of progressive women scholars in domestic and public. The literature search and interviews conducted for this study will answer these questions.

#### 4.1 The Factors of Changing View of Progressive Female Ulama

##### 4.1.1 Culture

Culture is one of the backgrounds of someone doing something. Where the earth is carried, that is where the sky is carried. There is an Indonesian proverb like that. This also relates to the progressive female ulama's daily practice and implementation. Their progressive thoughts and actions cannot be practiced everywhere, including their home environment and *pesantren*. Their environment has an inviolable rigid culture. The culture is in the form of family, regional, and *pesantren* traditions.

One of the sources who experienced this was *Nyai Azizah Hajar*. She does the activities of women's organizations in public. Still, she did not bring that

enthusiasm to her *pesantren* environment because of the tradition around allowing women to be active in public if the permission of their husbands which she should remember the nature of women as mothers and wives, to be housewives.

This follows her statement when I ask about her opinion about organization followed by women and women's participation in public space.

*" From the first time, LKD (first cadre event) has taught gender. And gender here is based on spirituality, religious values, how can a woman worship and not leave her nature as a woman, she still participates how fatayat women build the economy "*

*" So that's why I say that ibu-ibu who follow Fatayat do not leave the kodrat, so automatically in Fatayat it is an organization but does not leave nature, she must still ask for the support of her husband, both parents " <sup>91</sup>*

This was agreed upon by one of the *santri* and her *pesantren* staff who used this opinion in living their social life.<sup>92</sup>

*" Yes, there is. I know the mas2 (male student). So, if I make a post story (on social media) about the event that attending and I participating in, sometimes he says it's okay for women to go anywhere like that, that's fine. Still, when it's time to recite the Qur'an, it's time to respect your husband too. The important thing is not to break the limitation."*

#### **4.1.2 Family Background**

The essential item in a person's life, including acting on a particular issue, is their family background. This classification includes Nyai Sholichah Wahid Hasyim. This is evident from her life history, in which she was previously engaged in pursuing knowledge and experience both outside and inside the *pesantren*. Because of the restricted options provided by her in-laws, she was unable to be active in public after marrying. She limited her focus to mainly home things. This is due to Wahid Hasyim's family history, which still clings to Islamic principles that forbid women from undertaking activities outside the home. Although this did not last long, A Wahid Hasyim eventually relocated Nyai Sholichah to a different house so that she would no longer be alone.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Nyai Azizah, *The Female Ulama* from PP Nurul Quran.

<sup>92</sup> Nyai Azizah.

<sup>93</sup> Nur Hasan, *Khazanah Ulama Perempuan Nusantara* (IRCISOD, 2023), 76.

In addition, *Nyai Maghfurotun* stated that she is active domestically and publicly because of her family's traditions. When asked if she recommended that students follow another organization, she returned to family and *pesantren* traditions.

*" Alhamdulillah, dalem (I) grew up in a family environment that was active in organizations. From a young age, I was used to participating in Muslim activities and sometimes joining mothers (ibu-ibu) invited to give lectures. Kulo (I) only motivated them to nurture the organization founded by Hadlratusy Shaykh KH Hasyim Asy'ari ."*<sup>94</sup>

### 4.1.3 Religious and Dogma Background

This component most frequently serves as the backdrop for changing the beliefs and attitudes of progressive female ulama while they are at home. This is evident from the biographies of various ulama, including Rahmah el-Yunusiyah, *Nyai Azizah Hajar*, and *Nyai Khairiah Hasyim*. They maintained that, in some instances, their progressive perspectives could not be employed in *pesantren* because other *pesantren* members could not let go of conventional religious understandings. They are terrified of disobeying the rules and committing a sin. If anything like this happens, some women scholars will stick to their views and disagree with others, while others will join the dominant position in the *pesantren*.

In this case, one example was when the *Pesantren Seblak* did not allow women to wear trousers because they resembled men. Here *Nyai Khairiah Hasyim* firmly continues to express her opinion that it may be done as long as it does not violate Islamic law. The incident was repeated when *Nyai Khairiah Hasyim* refused to teach the *pesantren* reference, *Uqudu al-Lujain*, which benefits men in husband-wife relationships.<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, *Nyai Al-Balgis* took a different way and chose to merge with the general opinion that had been adhered to by the *pesantren*.

*" In pesantren, everyone has highly religious rituals or traditions, right? It's like a patent. It's like separation. Things that are, for example, the opposite are rather sensitive. But suppose in an organization. We must be able to tolerate, accept, and interact. In that*

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<sup>94</sup> *Nyai Muyassarrah*, *The Female Ulama from PP Bilqolam*, June 2023.

<sup>95</sup> *Hamas, Nyai Hj. Khoiriyah Hasyim 1908- 1983*.

*case, there is no satire and separation, for example, something we don't have to accept and become the opponent of our discussion. Most listed, for example, in an organization, some people violate norms, such as thugs, so it's like non-Muslims, that is, we sit together and discuss something, communicating is commonplace, being together but in the pesantren world it is something that is not beautiful, even though we don't oppose it, it's something that shouldn't be shown in front of the students."*<sup>96</sup>

## **4.2 The Factors of the Unchanging View of Progressive Female Ulama**

### **4.2.1 Education**

Undeniably, education is the main factor that makes a person defend the opinion in various rejections and difficulties. That is because the person already knows the main purpose of the thought and has their own choice after knowing various opinions about the science, including this matter. Of the six sources, as well as several women figures in earlier times, those who maintained their opinions were those with higher education. For example, *Nyai Kahairiyah Hasyim*, *Rasuna Said*, *Rahmah el-Yunusiyah*, *Suryani Thahir*, to *Nyai al-Balgis*, *Nyai Nining*, *Nyai Muyassaroh*, *Nyai Siti Muthmainnah*, and *Nyai Azizah Hajar*, all of whom took formal education and some of them active in the academic world, for example, *Nyai Fauziah Al-Balgis* and *Nyai Muyassaroh* and *Nyai Nining*. Their background affects how they look at issues that are becoming more tolerant, although, as outlined above, some remain to follow. There are views of the *pesantren* that have to follow the earlier traditions. For instance, when I ask to *Nyai Muyassaroh* about her educational activities.

*"Teaching is applying the knowledge I have obtained both at pesantren and formal education. Organizations are part of the process of developing self-potential, adding to networks, as well as learning to be able to organize. Incidentally, I also like management, yes, my master's degree is in Education Management, in management, there is an organizational theory, so if you can take both, why choose just one."*<sup>97</sup>

### **4.2.2 Social Support**

What is meant by social support in this context is both domestic and public support from the environment and society as a whole. This has a significant impact since the ulama interacts with the community frequently, particularly during preaching.

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<sup>96</sup> Fauziah Al-Balgis, The Female Ulama from PP MAM Al-Fath, June 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Nyai Muyassaroh, The Female Ulama from PP Bilqolam.

If the audience agrees with the ulama's progressiveness, she will be able to maintain her position. This is similar to what *Nyai Azizah Hajar* experienced. She frequently encountered members of the public who benefited from progressive actions and da'wah, particularly women's congregations, in various of her da'wah organizations. Many women's organizations express dissatisfaction with patriarchal culture and feel helped by their organization and movement. This is precisely what she said.

*"Yes, recitation activities, education, the husband likes it because his wife is getting smarter and more qualified, the activities at posyandu, BUMDES, it helps at least in the village, PKK, posyandu." "The economy in Fatayat is UMKM and cooperatives. We train These entrepreneurs every month, trained on how to have specific skills and how to package them so that their products are attractive and more desirable. It turned out that the community's enthusiasm was extraordinary. "<sup>98</sup>*

### **4.2.3 Family Support**

Parental education is the primary basis of a mindset and attitude. Progressive women scholars who have been encouraged to spread knowledge and not be restricted actively will be more assertive in the future in facing various challenges and rejections. An example is *Nyai Suryani Thahir*, who has been educated fairly by her parents since childhood, there is no difference between boys and girls. That is something that is rarely done because the majority of people still use patriarchal culture. The steps taken by *Nyai Suryani Thahir's* father became a strong foundation until now, he has become one of the most well-known preacher figures in Indonesia.<sup>99</sup>

This can be seen from *Nyai Maghfurotun*, who revealed that she is upbringing from her parents. She follows her parents' advice to become valuable individuals for society and wallows in scholarship. Besides that, *Nyai Muyassaroh*, supported by her husband, established good cooperation in the relationship between both. This is the explanation When I ask How he overcomes existing challenges.

*" .....I and my husband do domestic work together, so we have agreed on who will take care of it the children, washing clothes, cleaning the house, and caring for the kids too, which more I often wash clothes in the machine, unless there is we are unclean, I check*

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<sup>98</sup> *Nyai Azizah*, *The Female Ulama from PP Nurul Quran*.

<sup>99</sup> *Burhanuddin, Ulama perempuan Indonesia*.187.

*first, it usually turns out well for husband nor me, and when drying clothes, usually the husband, because I take a shower first give food to the child, so husband drying clothes outside, if any a passing neighbour must be the question and asked, "your wife go outside again?" So sometimes I laugh from the inside when I Listen, I stay at home, but how come it's my husband who is drying it, maybe it's because they are not common to see a man do domestic work, whereas we are quite common about that. But sometimes I, as a woman, am shy, even though I understand about theory of equality, I was Embarrassed until I told my husband let me dry it, but he said it's okay.... I am grateful to have an understanding husband like him."*<sup>100</sup>

#### **4.2.4 Life-Reality Experience**

In a way, this is the most substantial reason someone doesn't change his opinion. She has experience with a certain thing, whether something good or bad and wants to help others who are going through it. The first example is that experienced by Rahmah el-Yunusiyah, where she saw the phenomenon of women around her not getting the same education as men. At the same time, she, the child of a respected figure, did. She helps others by establishing a girls' school, Diniyah Putri, which became a place for women to develop themselves without limits. When building Diniyah Putri, there were many obstacles and challenges from various parties, but Rahmah was not afraid and continued to build it.

This case happened to *Nyai* Muyassaroh in several stories. The women around her made it consistent with using a progressive perspective.

*"So, if there is the view that Women should just stay at home and don't need to be active in public spaces, that means a view from outside, right? Not from the woman itself, you don't need to admit it, because of that, there may be religious interpretations that are still must interpret again, why can't women be in the public sphere? For example, Because There is hadith says that the woman is a source of slander (aurat), her voice is slander (aurat). Their goals are good, right to guard women, but that's it limits the role of women. However, a woman is human completely just like men who have intellectual and spiritual, and she is also the caliph on earth who should be role active for the good earth. So, a person, man or woman, has the same potential to give benefit in the public sphere, unlimited his benefit where it matters. The woman chooses with her heart, not because of compulsion or simply because of religious views that should not be in the public domain, so she stays at home, I often find some people, even my sister, when in a university, already take a degree for a midwife, but when she married, she just stays at home and does not open practice because her husband just told to stay at home. When I asked whether she wanted to open it , the answer was wanted, but because her husband had told her to stay home, she had no choice. That's*

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<sup>100</sup> Nyai Muyassaroh, The Female Ulama from PP Bilqolam.

*where there is should a good communication between husband and wife so they don't get in the way of each other goals and should that couple yes support to each other.*"<sup>101</sup>

### **4.3 Negotiating Progressive Views of Female Ulama in the Domestic**

In maintaining the progressive views in the domestic, female ulama have various challenges and obstacles. I will elaborate on some cases from the interview result. To make an efficient flow, I will divide it into two categories, internal and external challenges, and each of them will be followed by the way female ulama negotiate and solve.

#### **4.3.1 Internal Challenges**

This part includes all of the challenges from the female ulama itself. Most of them are time management, teamwork with the husband and family, and how to respond to the social environment's comments. The first case happens to almost all of the interlocutors. They feel difficulties at the beginning active in public. They must set time for their children, students, and husbands. It can be seen from the acknowledgement stated by *Nyai Al-Balgis* and *Nyai Muyassaroh*.

*"The challenge at first was difficult to find a Badal (substitute teacher), so the students were a bit overwhelmed, but over time they began to condition, arrange, already have Badal, namely the function of sharing roles so that the stage is not all taken alone."*<sup>102</sup>

*".....I am a mother of 3 children, my husband and I are both overseas in Jogja. At the same time, events at Fatayat are mostly Saturdays and Sundays, which should be time for family, but I have no choice because it's an organization activity. Still, it doesn't matter, so sometimes I take my child to events and get-togethers. "Apart from that, apart from being an Islamic mass organization, I am also active in the KUPI. To be more precise, I am a member of Simpul Rahima Jakarta in Jogja, and sometimes I hold events in Jakarta for days. So, my challenge is how to be able to communicate well with my partner so it's not too heavy. Once or twice, for example, when my children are sick, I have to choose between participating in an activity or being at home. I was also in the middle of activities like just yesterday at Jakarta a week. Only on the third day my child was sick or got a fever. Then my husband said what if I go home, at that time, there was confusion, so when I came home, I was embarrassed because there were still three days of events where I could meet with many friends from Indonesia. In contrast, if my child is sick, I usually attempt to make peace with myself. I suggest reading Wirid and praying from away for my child. Later if they could not be better, I would go home, but thank God, usually at night, my husband*

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<sup>101</sup> Nyai Muyassaroh.

<sup>102</sup> Fauziah Al-Balgis, The Female Ulama from PP MAM Al-Fath.

*informs me that my child is better. Thank God I'm grateful for my husband's understanding.*<sup>103</sup>

Another example comes from Nyai Muyassaroh, she divided the teaching schedule with her husband. Whenever she has an organizational event, her husband take care of the students in Pesantren. This is also occurred in the Nyai Al-Balgis case. In her statement, Nyai Nining mentioned a similar instance.

*"The extraordinary challenges that we have to live and we don't postpone, whatever we face, we have to do with a cool head. It didn't match what we expected. The biggest difficulty was when my children were small, I was running Postgraduate Masters studies with all the busyness paid off, and the children could grow well. Because of the support from my father, mother, brothers and sisters who are always motivated, my husband takes part in carrying out my duties and responsibilities."*<sup>104</sup>

Indonesian communities still adhere to patriarchal values, which assume women are primarily responsible for domestic chores. This makes it difficult for female figures to pursue their involvement in the public space. They are viewed as good wives and mothers, and having a good arrangement for their domestic activities is crucial to expand into the public space. This issue is crucial in understanding the proper position of Muslim women in society. Muslim women do not necessarily perceive family and kinship ties as hindering women. For example, Nyai Mahshunah<sup>105</sup> married while still a university student, demonstrating that she did not see marriage as a barrier to her studies. Being a mother and a wife meant that she spent just a portion of her time on family concerns because they had domestic assistance.<sup>106</sup>

A well-managed domestic realm gives a woman the "legitimacy" to negotiate entrance to public life with her household's significant males. Women with religious, cultural, and educational capital might want to live in public and private realms. However, the question of whether lower-class women show a double burden emerges. The *Kiai* family, which resembles an upper-class or 'aristocrat' family, includes helpers for various duties from various backgrounds. Lower-class women's

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<sup>103</sup> Nyai Muyassaroh, The Female Ulama from PP Bilqolam.

<sup>104</sup> Nyai Nining, The Female Ulama from PP Uluwiyyah.

<sup>105</sup> One of *Nyai* in the *Pesantren Seblak* which Eka Sri Mulyani researched. She is the third generation of *Nyai* which has wide acces in public since her born. See Srimulyani, "Women and Pesantren Education," 100–109.

<sup>106</sup> Srimulyani, "Women and Pesantren Education," 100-109.

participation in economic activities in the public realm does not always imply equal gender relations. On the other hand, middle-class women in the public sector had more equitable relationships with their male counterparts since they were interested in public life for self-actualization rather than pressing economic necessities. Middle-class women are more likely to have servants conduct their domestic tasks, which is related to *Nyai's* experiences detailed above.<sup>107</sup>

The phenomenon above, if we refer to the gender discussion, will appear as a question, is there any double burden here, and the suitable answer is no. That is because *Nyai's* family resemble the upper-class or aristocratic family. They have several assistants for different jobs and come from different people such as their santri, families or local people.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.3.2 External Challenges

Meanwhile, this part is the challenges from external female ulama. For instance, the disagreement from the family to support them to be active in public, the response from societies, and the other members of their private institution and from the societies in common. So, the challenge is from the inside (domestic) and outside (public)—for instance, the story of *Nyai Muthmainnah* dan *Nyai Nining*.

*“.....Oftenly lobbying techniques/abilities with special parties, which require special abilities and learning as well.”<sup>109</sup>*

*“The various obstacles that we face when dealing with different characters of people are different, but how can we serve the young, the middle-aged, and the old must be smart, and we must appreciate and respect different characters.”<sup>110</sup>*

#### 4.3.3 Solution Methods

When I ask the interlocutors about the solutions, I get various comments. First, there is the group that lets the time change, or the quiet group. They overcome obstacles, rejection, and other refusals from certain persons in *pesantren* by remaining silent

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<sup>107</sup> Burhanuddin, *Ulama perempuan Indonesia*, 125.

<sup>108</sup> Srimulyani, “Women and *Pesantren* Education,” 108.

<sup>109</sup> Nyai Nining, *The Female Ulama from PP Uluwiyah*.

<sup>110</sup> Nyai Muthmainnah, *The Female Ulama from PP Al Falah*, June 2023.

and continuing to work, resulting in a positive outcome for the *pesantren*. For instance, Nyai Al-Balgis remained silent at the beginning, and at the moment she reached her doctoral degree, people recognized her. People will gradually accept their perspective argument and their decision to be engaged in public if they succeed and provide wonderful results for *pesantren*. Second, the voice group implies that they will effectively communicate with the rejection group and attempt to make them understand their opinions.

They are Nyai al-Balgis, Nyai Nining, and Nyai Maghfurotun for the first group. They chose to do a "good silent movement" in the hope that the rejection group would eventually comprehend and embrace them. Meanwhile, the Nyai Azizah, Nyai Muthmainnah, and Nyai Muyassaroh clans are the second. In some ways, they prefer to communicate with the rejected people. For example, Nyai Azizah and Nyai Muthmainnah aim to welcome people and teach them about the advantages of their actions to *pesantren* and societies, as well as ask them to participate in the good revolution. On the other side, Nyai Muyassaroh takes a different approach, turning to literature to create Hilda, a novel on gender issues in *pesantren*. She also demonstrates strong husband-wife interactions; despite criticism from society, she and her husband continue to do so to demonstrate the positive benefits from her perspective. This is evident from her comment below.

*"How can I bring women's issues into the pesantren in a way that doesn't offend anyone and is acceptable to everyone? For example, I wrote the Hilda, so the Hilda actually talks about gender, right, and sexual violence, but because I wrapped it in literature when there are activities in pesantren such as reviewing novels, it doesn't look like talking about gender, it looks like dissecting novels, yes, but it's actually talking about gender, and perhaps I should avoid using the word gender in terms of women's empowerment."*<sup>111</sup> (menurut pak aga ini ga relevan contohnya)

*"So here is me and my husband doing housework together, and we've decided on who will take care of the children, wash the clothes, clean up, and, incidentally, who washes the clothes more frequently in the machine, right, unless if there's something dirty. We'll check it first, it's typically me and my husband alternately, and then when drying the clothes, it's generally the husband since I have a shower first and then feed the kids, so the husband is the one drying the clothing. So I don't always want to giggle like that on the inside, right? Perhaps it's because they're unfamiliar with seeing males performing household duties, but we are. But, even though I understand the concept of*

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<sup>111</sup> Nyai Muyassaroh, The Female Ulama from PP Bilqolam.

*equality, I am occasionally humiliated as a woman, and I tell my husband, "Let me do the drying." But he said it's acceptable since you also do other things, so it's hilarious that we as women actually utilize it instead of being reminded by my husband, however, (it is good because) My son followed it. He grew accustomed to performing domestic work by himself.*<sup>112</sup>

#### **4.4 Gender Agency Analysis to the Progressive Female Ulama**

Agency theory in this study is an approach used for feminist analysis (not feminist theory but the study of feminists). From a feminist analysis, women's agency is understood as a subject with moral and political autonomy. The agency is understood to be able to show itself in patriarchal traditions or other obstacles, both collectively and individually. Therefore, this research is free from assumptions about subordination and rejection of the domination of men over women. This paper wants to reveal women's agency in the *pesantren* education environment. How do they create an advantage/achievement from a weakness they experience, they can even move in an arena that men previously dominated.<sup>113</sup>

According to Naila Kabeer, women's agency is marked by the presence of the following three things. First, resources, specifically human resources, economic resources, and social resources. Second, agency, or being a positive pioneer or agent in a community or the surrounding environment. Third, achievements or achievements from the agency's results, for example producing achievements for the *pesantren* itself, convincing the community, and finally shifting society's patriarchal views.<sup>114</sup>

This section will describe the categories of sources for this research. What are the forms of their agency? As we know, the interlocutors in this study are progressive female ulama who are active in public organizations and teach in *pesantren* or private religious institutions. From these standards, it can be assumed

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<sup>112</sup> Nyai Muyassarrah.

<sup>113</sup> Ria Susanti, "Agency Perempuan pada Pondok *Pesantren* di Kalimantan Selatan" 20, no. 1 (2021): 19.

<sup>114</sup> Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements," 435–65.

they have an agency. Therefore, this section will describe the evidence from their agency.

#### **4.4.1 Resources**

The resources owned by progressive female ulama here can be said to be all. They have human resources, social resources, and economic resources. Human resources can be seen from their educational background, some up to a doctorate. There are economic resources which, from work, are not dependent on husbands but have their source of income. They get social resources from the organizations they follow.

If we trace all the interlocutors, from the part of human resources, some have the education to doctorates, such as *Nyai* al-Balgis and *Nyai* Nining, and some are masters, *Nyai* Azizah, *Nyai* Muyassaroh. Apart from that, some only receive education in *Pesantren*, namely *Nyai* Maghfurotun. All of these female scholars have qualified human resources. Meanwhile, when viewed from economic resources, all of them are already independent and have their livelihood, aside from teaching at their *pesantren*. There are *Nyai* Azizah and *Nyai* Maghfurotun, who are civil servants, and there is *Nyai* Muyassaroh, who is the author of one of the famous novels entitled *Hilda*, a fiction story about sexual violence in *pesantren*. And some other *Nyai* can be considered economically independent, even though some still get from their husbands, the fact that they teach at their *pesantren* and get results from it can strengthen economic independence. Meanwhile, they have social independence and a large *pesantren* base and actively participate in public events.

#### **4.4.2 Agency**

Regarding positive agencies or pioneers in their communities, this can be seen from two sides: the *pesantren* community and its organizational community. In an organization, they become positive agents if they actively participate in activities and achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Still, the privilege of being a scholar certainly positively impacts the organization. Meanwhile, in the domestic community or *pesantren*, the private community can become an agent if it positively impacts the students and is in line with the vision and mission of the

*pesantren*. If the *pesantren* approves of its activities in public, of course, that will be tremendously positive for the students. However, if the *pesantren* does not support the active role of women leaders in the public, these figures cannot be seen as agents because they are not in accordance with the values of the *pesantren*. However, in reality, an issue must have pros and cons, likewise, in this case. Although not considered a positive agent by some parties, others consider it positive. There is complexity here. For instance, a statement from Nyai Nining,

*“The various obstacles that we face when dealing with different characters of people are different, but how can we serve the young, the middle-aged, and the old must be smart, and we must appreciate and respect different characters when we can become Principals, BAN Assessors PAUD East Java, Chancellor, during our leadership period we never missed some Kopertais Award events the institution I lead always gets an Appreciation Award from Kopertais region 4 Surabaya East Java starting from 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021 getting an Award from Kopertais region 4 Surabaya Java East.”*<sup>115</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Achievements**

Regarding the achievements made by progressive female ulama here, one general achievement has been produced, namely being an agent or role model for their congregation and other women. For instance, I did some interviews with the student of Nyai Azizah Hajar. She makes Nyai Azizah a role model, as she said below.

*“The motivation from Mrs Azizah was the most memorable thing.” I used to be a scout when I was in senior high school. At the time, when she was still a teacher there and then advised us, the relationship between men and women was quite free. She once reminded me that all scouts are the same, but this is a pesantren setting, and not everyone can be like that. The Scouts at this school are not the same as those at other schools. I learned that the school in the pesantren atmosphere was similar to others, yet we still had our own uniqueness. Therefore, it is not contrary to Shari'a Law.”*<sup>116</sup>

*“...I, myself, am the most impressed (when she said). Women should not depend too much on men. Because we don't know how old they are, and we also don't know how old they are. Because maybe that was his experience too. We must remain independent without women. A woman doesn't have to shut herself up at home, but if there's anything helpful, please. That's the most effective. If there are many other lectures, but those are the most memorable, especially about women.”*<sup>117</sup>

In this chapter, we see the research findings, including some variables that changed and others that remained unchanged in the progressive female ulama's

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<sup>115</sup> Nyai Nining, The Female Ulama from PP Uluwiyah.

<sup>116</sup> Nyai Azizah, The Female Ulama from PP Nurul Quran.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Nyai Azizah's student

domestic and public lives. Culture, family history, and religious beliefs are all changing variables. At the same time, education and social status remain unchanged. The realities of life influence several aspects here. Various aspects here are adjusted for Eka Sri Mulyani's study, such as competencies, applicable skills, experiences, and partner support. After discovering the components, this chapter analyses the agency of that ulama and how they become female agents in their environment and investigates what the factors of that agency are.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The discussion regarding female ulama in *pesantren*/religious institutions has significance for *pesantren* actors such as instructors, students, and employees. A study of women in *Pesantren* is still needed since it relates to their potential and growth. This thesis is part of the research demonstrating the field's issues and solutions. Progressive female ulama here are Muslim women who think progressively in responding to social and women's issues because of their religious knowledge. The dynamics of progressive ulama in Indonesia started from the colonial and post-colonial eras until nowadays shows that the progressive perspective developed from the colonial, reformation, and contemporary eras.

Prominent figures in Progressive Islamic studies globally are considered Progressive Muslims. The first was Omid Safi and the other scholars such as Farid Esack, Kecia Ali, Ebrahim Moosa, Amina Wadud and the other authors of the book *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*. Then A. Duderija with his opinion regarding the Muslim Progressive Method and the imperactive of Progressive Muslims. Besides that, Abdullah Saeed offered Progressive Ijtihad. The figures' ideas became the foundation for further progressive thought, including scholars in Indonesia. Indonesia has several studies on progressive Muslim figures such as Dawam Rahardjo and Budhy-Munawar Rachman.

In Indonesia, the progressive Muslim women's movement began with the mainstream women's movement. In Indonesia, the women's movement began in 1913 with the establishment of the Kartini School. It was followed by several government initiatives that focused on empowering women. The first progressive Muslim movement, Aisyiyah, was formed in 1917. This movement is dedicated to empowering women as moms and providing schools for their children. The Aisyiyah movement increased in size until 1930. It held a congress with 5,000 people and decisively rejected polygamy. The foundation of the women's

movement from *Sarikat Wanita Siti Fatimah* and *Nahdlatol Fataat* followed in the 1920s. Until the Japanese colonial period, this Progressive Muslim women's movement grew.

All women's organizations founded during the Dutch colonial period were disbanded during the Japanese colonial period, and the *Fujinkai* organization was re-established. However, this period had minimal improvement due to the concentration on struggles against Japanese colonisation. This continued until the time of commanded democracy. There was no development of a progressive Muslim women's movement in this period until the liberal democracy era since the women's movement that emerged was under the control of the government. The organization was founded exclusively during the New Order regime. Starting with the congress of *Muktamar Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama*.

The progressive Muslim women's movement began in the Dutch colonial period, the Japanese colonial period, the Liberal Democracy period and the Guided Democracy period. If we sort it according to year and purpose, the progressive Muslim movement in the first decade, 1990-1998, was filled with various religious organizations. Among them are the Institute for the Study of Islamic Philosophy (LSAF), the *Pesantren* and Community Development Association, the Paramadina Foundation and the Fatayat NU Welfare Foundation. During this period, movements focused on the nature of women, human creation, women's leadership, polygamy and the right to determine a life partner. In the following period, from 1998-2010, the Muslim women's movement focused on efforts to be recognised and supported by the government. Among the organizations at this time were the *Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama* Central Executive, *Rahima*, *Fahmina Institute*, and the Islam and Women's Institute for Islamic and Social Studies (LKIS).

Several young ulama are still concerned about raising awareness among the Indonesian Muslim community to free women from subordination, discrimination, marginalisation and violence. They include Shinta Nuriah, K.H. Muhyiddin

Abdussomad, Nasaruddin Umar, Badriyah Fayyumi, Siti Musdah Mulia, Farha Ciciek, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kadir, Marzuki Wahid, Abdul Moqsith Ghazali.

There are an increasing number of progressive female ulama nowadays. This is due to the fact that numerous women's groups were created during the earlier era. So, in this era, the progressive female ulama is a female ulama who has individually and organizationally progressive ideas and adheres to the progressive female ulama movement mentioned before.

Specifically in this thesis, there are six people who become leaders (*Nyai*) in their *pesantren* and women activists in the public. From here, they have two identities, as *Nyai* and organizational activists. The figures that I chose as the main informants in this study were six people. *Nyai* Azizah Hajar, *Nyai* Fauziah al-Balgis, *Nyai* Muyassaroh, *Nyai* Siti Muthmainnah, *Nyai* Nining Khurotul Aini, and *Nyai* Maghfurotun. I chose these six *Nyai* sources because they met the criteria of being *Nyai* (*pesantren* leaders) who actively support women's issues in public.

Initially, I would interview progressive female ulama other than those from NU circles. However, after tracing, most ulama outside NU do not have domestic private organizations, and even teaching in institutions is shared (organization). Therefore, it takes work to negotiate the progressive perspective in domestic and public. Therefore, this study focuses on interviewing *Nyai* from *Nahdlatul Ulama*.

I attempt to see how they negotiate in the domestic (*pesantren*), which is primarily male-dominated. To what extent do progressive female ulama in Indonesia negotiate their progressive views within the predominantly patriarchal setting domestically and publicly, and how do they maintain their progressive view in domestic settings, such as in *Pesantren*, where male ulama are predominantly hegemonic.

After conducting research, it was discovered that some female ulama can maintain their progressive thinking (unchanging) while others cannot (changing). The factors for the unchanging are education, social support, family background, and real-life experiences, while the factors for change are culture, family

background, and religious dogmas. Meanwhile, there were internal and external challenges in the negotiation process. They dealt with challenges in two ways: silently continuing to work so that the environment around them could recognize them, and making a movement to invite the people directly or indirectly through the literature works. Additionally, the current thesis investigates the gender agency of these female religious leaders. This thesis is based on Naila's theory, which argues that women have agency if they have resources (human, economic, and social), agency, and achievements. These three characteristics are present in each figure examined here and support Naila's agency theory.

Moreover, this study adds to Eka Sri Mulyani's findings on Nyai in Jombang, which suggested that female *pesantren* had power and no longer considered weak. The *Nyai* that Eka examined in Jombang demonstrated that they are engaged in the public and domestic spheres due to their essential capabilities, skills, experience, and support from their partners. They influence the next generation.

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