CONTESTING DISCOURSES ON SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL 
SUBJECTIVITY AMONG SINGLE YOUNG WOMEN IN 
PESANTREN (MUSLIM BOARDING SCHOOL), 
WEST JAVA, INDONESIA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF 
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF 
MASTER OF ARTS (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCES) 
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES 
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY 
2005

ISBN 974-04-5900-5 
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CONTESTING DISCOURSES ON SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL SUBJECTIVITIES AMONG SINGLE YOUNG WOMEN IN PESANTREN (MUSLIM BOARDING SCHOOL) IN TASIKMALAYA, WEST JAVA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This research describes single young women’s sexuality in modern pesantren (Muslim boarding school) from their own perspective. This study documents a process of social change in which traditional Islamic prescription on sexuality is being transformed by modern experience of single young women. Beginning from an approach that considers sexuality as beyond biological action, this thesis starts by describing the personal and theoretical context within which the study was designed and conducted. Data was collected by means of a feminist ethnographic study in which full participation in the day to day living of single young women in a boarding school was experienced to get first-hand experience and a social cultural context on sexuality. The material collected was analyzed in two principles ways--- narrative and discourse analysis—in which postmodern feminism is used to bring up multi vocalities, multi subjectivities and multi realities on single young women’s sexuality.

Findings highlighted the dynamics of interaction between dominant Islamic discourse and other discourses, which are taking a place not only at the level of ideas but also in personal experience and practice. Personal experience and practice is hybrid, fluid, and fragmented as is signified by changes and trends. This study illustrates strongly single young women’s agency in giving meaning to their experiences concerning their body, relationship, sexual orientation, fantasy, desire, the veil etc. They are creating a space to make autonomous decisions about their bodies and sexuality in the sense of negotiating or resisting religious morality, modernity and feminism and this is reflected in this study.

The opportunity to discuss sexuality has offered the single young women in this study an opportunity to develop a sense of entitlement and young men to question dominant masculine images, and form equal meaningful relationships. Therefore, issues of gender, class, human rights should be integrated to sexual reproductive health programs in schools and pesantren curricula. Further research on specific issues like homosexuality, transgender topics, sexual fantasy and desire under the umbrella of human rights, Islam and social political culture needs to be addressed to develop a greater body of knowledge on sexuality among students in pesantren.

KEY WORDS: DISCOURSE /SEXUALITY/ SUBJECTIVITY/ MODERNITY/ ISLAM/ PESANTREN/ FEMINISM