

## Nahdlatul Ulama Middle Class Woman And Civil Society Consolidation In Sidoarjo Regency

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### Abstract

Civil society is important media between state and its people. It carries people aspiration and help state in implementing their policies. Unfortunately, there is a civil society whose status is very weak and low. It is Fatayat civil society as one of sub division of Nahdlatul Ulama Organisation. Its position is very weak caused its members are dominating by women and children. The consolidation is very important for this institution. Because, it has a lot of members. If this civil society is not recognised and consolidated, there will be a possibility for uncontrolled situation of this mass population. In order to legalise the consolidation of Fatayat, there must be a solid report of its role in society. Thus, this study tries to reveal Fatayat's role in society through their programs and activity. The methodology of this study is using descriptive qualitative, the setting take place in Sidoarjo regency, Eastern Java, Indonesia. The subject of the study is Fatayat members, as all of their members are women, on Regency scale of Sidoarjo. the subject is filtered by using purposive sampling technique, and this study is using Interview as its instrument to collect data. The result shows that all roles of Fatayat in cultures, religion, community, social justification, language, education, health service, consumer protection, environment, economy development, minority rights, media, economy justification, and politics sectors are all well implemented. It completes both function as aspiration carrier of society and implementer partner of state.

**Keywords:** Civil society consolidation, Fatayat, Nahdlatul Ulama, Sidoarjo.

### 1. Introduction

The rise of middle class in Indonesia is the interesting thing to study. The conducive government system, better economic growth of community, the community awareness strengthening to the education world and provide the opportunities to get an education for all classes, an increasingly open democratization climate an reduced of patriarchy culture causes access for women to play roles in various area of life is increase. Nowadays, the various access produce new socio-culture phenomenon in Indonesia that is the developing of middle class in terms of their number and participation in society.

Middle class become a part of new society in Indonesia appear since 1980 at the same time the existence of modernization which is the increasing of economic development and education transformation. Hefner (1993, 1997) Kuntowijoyo (1993), Budiman (1994), Ramage (1995) and others concluded that new economic social class has came out phenomenally in Indonesia as a medium class. (Robison, 1993: 60) argues in this medium class covered academician, intellectual, technocrat, politic society, reformer, businessman, lawyer, culture activist, non-governmental organization activist (LSM), figure public, da'wah speaker, artist, economic observer, and other. The developing of medium class reputed as an increasing welfare and process positive of democratic in Indonesia.

The existence of Muslim in Indonesia and in certain case can be seen as social change activator, economic and politic in Indonesia. Most of the Muslim middle class is women. In this decade, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) women activists have become prominent in the various activities of NU and in the grassroots dawah. The greater role of women in Islam (both modernist and traditionalist) is encouraging the many thoughts and issues affecting women (Ricklefs, 2013: 386-387). Pieterella van Doorn-Harder mentioned the women of NU are critical and progressive young as a part of the traditionalist NU (Harder, 2006).

NU as an Islamic community organization is very interesting to be studied and observed. The existence of NU as a muslim community with the traditional culture. NU characteristic culture such as tahlil, jam'iyah, dibaiyah, grave pilgrimage, pilgrimage tour, barzanzi, and so on is something that cannot be separated from this organization. Besides that, in quantity as a religious organization that has the largest members of NU. Thus, Fatayat could not be easy to ignored and their work also useful for nation and state.

Woman in NU organization gain an education automatically and also experienced a lot of class mobilization. The women of NU who were initially in lower stages, and now many have adequate education, good economic level and also have a good job, which can be classified as NU middle class women. Based on the history has been a lot of work in society through NU Fatayat organization. Many of their donations have not been known by society. One of the aim NU Fatayat organizations is for women in Indonesia to improve their quality and the organization is booster and activator.

Rinaldo states NU Fatayat is forum for women's political discourse and activism (Rinaldo, Vol. 86, 2008). Rinaldo argues within running the organization of NU Fatayat reflects on the historical approach to Islamic texts or long efforts to women empowerment (Rinaldo, Vol 2, 2008). Based on the Arnez, Fatayat organization has undergone a transformation from traditional toward an organization that pays attention to issues of gender equality and justice and carry women's empowerment (Arnez, 2010: 59-88).

This research tries to find out how NU middle class women in local levels of Fatayat organization which is Sidoarjo takes a role in civil society consolidation within society. Thus, the research question is What is the role of middle-class women of NU in civil society consolidation in Sidoarjo regency?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Kuntowijoyo, 1991:133 classify the Muslim middle class based on the Javanese society typology that is the Muslim middle class when viewed from their social status belongs to priyayi class, but when viewed from the social class they are middle class.

In Indonesia, Daniel S. Lev stated that the middle class has non-material capital such as social capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, organizational assets, and so on. Lev argues that Indonesia's middle class power base is not in the area of the state capitalist corporations because they have no authority to control ownership and production tools (Young, et al., 1993).

According to Bourdieu, 1992: 101 class concept is not determined by capital or economic capital but it is determined by habitus, domain, and taste Habitus and the domain of Bourdieu's concept cannot be separated from the concept of capital or capital. Bourdieu's concept of capital is divided into four types, namely economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Capital or Bourdieu's view is not only in the form of material (economic) but also tangible immaterial such as social network, cultural and symbolic. Even though Someone do not have material capital (economy) but if have strong social network, good position in society, good education, good social recognition from society can be categorized as a certain class and can be converted by agent or actor.

Social capital can be defined as a collection of resources both actual and potential that are connected with the ownership of networks or relations, which has been institutionalized in understanding and mutual recognition. Cultural capital is the values that can be exchanged which is the accumulation of cultural form that develops in the social world, such as cultural codes, knowledge possessed, diplomas, writing skills, manner innateness, manners and etc. While symbolic capital according to Bourdieu has broad meaning namely the form of status or recognition of tangible in the form of objective or institution such as degree kiai, scholarship, luxury car, magnificent office and so on (Haryatmoko, 2003: 12).

The class in Bourdieu's view is that a number of agents who has equal position are in condition and conditioned people so that they share the same behaviors and tastes. Heryanto states that the concept of the Indonesian middle class as an entity is composed by various classes from various diverse production arrangements in society (Heryanto, 1993: xiii). Generally, the middle class is considered to have a critical role as a symbol of change in society.

(Alagappa, 2004) argues that civil society in Asia, with the growth of their large numbers in some countries has become a substantial and important force within a State. According to Alagappa, the existence of civil society has succeeded in developing the role of civil society organizations' activities to support, demand or

prevent political change in developing the reform agenda and social strengthening, assisting countries in providing services, and formulating and implementing their own programs.

According to Alagappa Civil society groups in Asia have a wide range of functions including culture, religion, community development, social welfare, sports and entertainment, language and education, medicine and public health, labor, business, consumer protection, agriculture, environment, social reform, minority and human rights, media, economic justice, politics, foreign affairs and security. Civil society organizations, although there are substantial and temporal variations in some countries, according to Alagappa are at the forefront of encouraging the transition to democracy. They are become a force that can strengthen the government or become a force against the government. It can be a counterweight force within a State.

Based on Alagappa, the civil society organization plays a leading role in disseminating and deepening democracy in some countries experiencing a democratic transition and a relatively long-standing state of democracy. These roles range from voicing the interests of marginalized communities, promoting democratic education and socialization, extending the reach of key issues of democratic governance, participation in government at both national and local levels, restructuring and oversight of State institutions, encouraging transparency and stronger accountability of government and political leaders, encouraging and promoting transitional justice, overseeing elections, educating development, new political leaders, and supporting democratic forces to prevent opposition to democracy.

Meanwhile, according to Nakamura, the root of the existence of civil society in Indonesia has existed since the colonial era that emerged in various organizations and associations that are voluntary (Nakamura, 2001: 13). Civil society organizations often have communal, religious or ideological foundations and visions of particular organizations. NU and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia with extensive membership are examples of civil society organizations.

Civil society is essentially an attempt to popularize the interests of individuals and the State in a public space that can ensure the fulfillment of individual interests and order of public life (Nakamura, 2001: 6). The embodiment of civil society in life can be realized in very diverse public spaces such as economy, politics, culture, education, knowledge, and so on. The realization of civil society in society can be an association or organization that emerges voluntarily, independently, rationally and good participative both in discourse and praxis on all matters relating to social issues.

In relation to the State, civil society has three main functions (Nakamura, 2001: 9), namely the first, civil society is the protector of society from the hegemonic state, authoritarian and repressive attitude. Secondly, civil society can become partner or partner of state in implementing public interest. And third, civil society can play its function to complement and accommodate the needs of society.

### **3. Research Method**

In this research used qualitative research. This research is focused in Sidoarjo, East Java. The reason the researchers took the location of research in Sidoarjo is because in this region Fatayat organization is active in society and is considered to have been able to do much for the community. In the Sidoarjo region Fatayat NU has contributed a lot to the community through the roles they do.

While the subject of this research is Muslim middle-class women of NU based on certain criteria as determined by the researcher is middle-class women of NU who have role in society. The subject of this research is women activist NU who educated and have strategic position in organization Fatayat NU in this case are the general chairmen, as well as women who are also active in social institutions.

The determination of this informant is based on the criteria of the Bourdieu concept that is meant by middle-class women of NU are those who have the capitals such as social capital, cultural capital and cultural capital and symbolic capital. Social capital is a network of relationships as a resource to determine social position. Women who become informants of this research have a wide network of relationships because they are leaders or administrators of women's organizations NU, namely Fatayat and Muslimat. Cultural capital is in the form of diploma, knowledge, cultural code, way of speaking, writing ability, manner of carriage, how to socialize role in determining social position.

The women who became informants in this study had a minimum of undergraduate education (S1), have the ability to communicate, the broad association as the largest religious organization board. While symbolic capital, among others, are the symbols of power such as position, title, high social status, valuables and so on. The women of NU have a good positions, titles and high social status.

The subjects of the research were chosen by purposive sampling where the informant was determined by the researcher based on certain criteria with unlimited informants. In qualitative research, the strength is the way that comes from inductive cases, focusing on a particular situation with an emphasis on meaning interpreted on the basis of informant phrases, not on the number of people who are the subject of the research.

Data obtained through in-depth interviews about thoughts, perceptions or views based on actions or behavior of informants. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher seeks not only to look at what is happening on the surface, but also what is behind the informant's consciousness. Researchers use tape recorder tools for interviews in order to get well documented results. The researcher also uses other document materials to complete the required data.

In order to get interviews and information the researchers came to many of places that became informant activities such as informants' residence, workplace informant, boarding school where the informant became Bu Nyai, and the office of Muslimat NU in Sidoarjo.

#### **4. Finding And Discussion**

This research found that NU in Sidoarjo as a religious organization has encouraged its female members to take part and play a role in society through the Fatayat organization. The existence of the organization's NU can represent the NU as the parent organization and even the government in answering the problems faced by women. Organization Fatayat of NU is not only limited to discuss and answer various problems faced by women but also trying to anticipate various problems faced their members and empowered their members.

Fatayat is sub organisation of Nahdhatul Ulama which covers all female members of it. Fatayat gives great contribution among society through their roles. Their roles are mainly into law, politic, and advocating; health sector, education, enlightenment, daawah, and art & culture.

Concerning with law, advocating, and politic sector, the role of Nahdhatul Ulama' middles class women is very important. They are volunteering on law and politic education for societies such as socializing President Election constitution, regional head election, family abuse and trafficking. They become advisor for women abuse victim, advocating workshop, interactive dialogue, and declaring testimony for early trafficking prevention. In politic sector, the members are criticising the policy and orders of government which its content is losing women equation and empowerment (Hayatmoko, 2003). Fatayat gains help and support by uniting with several institution contributing on women issues. The purposes of this movement is to strengthen law supremacy, to grant exclusive right for women, and to make sure the fulfilment of fundamental needs of women toward society.

In social and economy sector, Fatayat helps people in two ways. First, they help people to improve quality of a product which is already run by society especially for women. Second, Fatayat inspires some area which does not possess any products yet. They give free workshop and socialization to improve quality live of women. Objectivity of Fatayat group is in line with Alagappa statement. He states that the existence of civil society is to support and help government in service of the nation. Civil society also possess their program that need to be implemented. Another way to improve economy status of women is by gathering fundrising or foundation to support entrepreneurship of women. They help women to obtain economy facilities provided by government or private sector (Mitsuo, 2001), establishing network for a new business is also important to help women in building their economic sector.

When dealing with health and environment sector, they educate people on the importance of mother and child health. They create free medical check for society, commencing seminar, vaccination, and establishing reproduction health service centre for women. They build free clinic service that provide medicine with lower price and consultation of mother and child. Fatayat takes care of environment sector, they are focusing their activity in climate change issue. They start from smallest group in society which is family. They declare importance of planting trees, they rally people to convert wasteland into mini park by planting flowers, flowers,

and small trees. Not only planting trees, they also educate people to convert dry garbage into some artificial decoration.

In education field, *hypno teaching* is one of successful media that has led women to educate their students in unique way. For students with vision loss, fatayat uses *Aksara* technique to improve learning capability of those special children. Fatayat teaches this technique into women teachers as they are major and the most concerned teacher who dedicate their live in teaching student with disability. Fatayat mainly concern their contribution in early age education area such as kindergarten and early education for toddlers known as PAUD in Indonesia (Monika, 2010). They try to standardise these school to be national standard of Indonesia by resurrecting new curriculum of standard education and free training for Fatayat teachers.

Enlightenment and Daawah become major point in this religious civil society. Fatayat tries to consolidate Islam knowledge through *Ahlu sunnah waljamaah* way. They establish a small group discussion among women to gather certain issue relating to *muslimah* ( female term for islamic follower). They continue their campaign by using social media and printed media. They become direct model (*Daawah bil Hal*) in society providing good habit example among young teenager.

There are several events held by Fatayat to celebrate arts and culture festivals. Some of them are *dibaiyah, manaqib, barzanji, yasinan, tahlil, and ziarah*. The events represent identity of Ndahatul Ulama whose way follow Sunni method. Those events are religious activity that represents islam worshipping from reading holy Qur'an to visiting tombs of famous Imam. These events are held in order every months and year.

Muslim middle class should give high-impact contribution in consolidating civil society in Sidoarjo. One of civil society function is to be partner of nation in implementing orders of government. This institution should be able to coer and answer the aspiration from society. Those functions is the representation of all contribution, programs, and event held by Fatayat as Nadhatul Ulama sub-organisation.

The implementation of civil society in society is an association or organization that appears voluntarily, independently, rationally and participatively both in the discourse and praxis concerning all matters relating to social issues. Fayayat Sidoarjo as a civil society organization at regency level, Alagappa has successfully developed the role in implementing the social consolidation agenda, assisting the State in providing services for formulating and implementing their own programs. Fatayat organizations program such as giving political and legal awareness to the community, raising health and environmental awareness, improving economic prosperity, and empowering the economy are the efforts of civil society organizations to become partners or partners in implementing the public interest (Rinaldo, 2008). It can also contribute its function to complement and accommodate the aspiration of society.

Concerning with its part of social institution of state, these middle class of NU organisation takes important role as implementer of state order. They are focusing their role in helping women their children quality live. Fatayat is part of child and women empowerment and child protection unit. Women campaign movement in Sidoarjo is very strong and independent; they feel being summoned by several abuse of minority such as women and children. By contributing on this organisation, they hope there will be a strong independent equality for women to overcome the violation of their right. Another forum which Fatayat has been contributed is Communication Forum of Five Religions in Indonesia. Fatayat, as their member is mostly women, they become a very effective mediator when dealing with issues of different religion policies. From village to nation scale, Fatayat spreads fundamental education of Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) (Haryatmoko, 2003). As Indonesia is country of thousand customs and cultures, the consolidation of civil society is well oragnised because there is no huge issue that will tear society apart caused by religion diversity.

According to Muthiah, Asian Civil Society is very unique, it concerns on very wide range such as cultures, religion, community, social justification, language, education, health service, consumer protection, environment, economy development, minority rights, media, economy justification, and politics sectors. All of those sectors have been well established by Fatayat Nadhatul Ulama in regency level of Sidoarjo.

The ability of civil society depends on the human resource of its members. Government, in this case, is not the only elements that society should contribute in it. But, civil society is another element which mediates between state and its people. This role is very important as civil society carries the aspiration of its people. The efficiency of communication between state and its people is determined by how civil society will handle the

messages. Innate gift of civil society is that it will always take society while taking a vte for a certain policy. Fatayat society has been completed all of these roles as part of their duty in service of the state.

The existence of organizations such as Fatayat is a manifestation of civil society consolidating in Indonesia. The position of these religious organizations becomes important for the implementation of the development program. They become government partners and integral part of their role. Thus, it could empower women by supporting Muslimat and Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama.

In the current era of globalization, the Nahdlatul Ulama organization is required to contribute to universal values such as human rights, community empowerment, democratization, social justice, which seeks to provide awareness to the people of their rights. Nahdlatul Ulama middle class women continue to strive for these values to be perceived benefits directly by the community.

The role of middle-class women Nahdlatul Ulama in society, especially in the lower layer in the field of law, politics, education, health, social, health, environment, art and culture arises because of the awareness of the problems faced by society, the rights that should be obtained by the community. There is an awareness of these women that they as deputies have duties and responsibilities to protect the rights of the people.

Finally, the success of implementation of civil society role of Fatayat shows that these middle class women must not be easily ignored. Although the members are mostly women and children as minority group in society, they develop in every sector whether it is state or private sectors. Through all programs stated above, Fatayat has committed their dedication as one of civil society that need to be consolidated. Thus, fatayat member has become one of Agent of Change for women equality and independency in local or national scale. The result of every programs depict civil society consolidation of Indonesia.

## 5. Conclusion

After researching Fatayat roles in every sector, the conclusion states that Fatayat has completed their important role among societies. As sub organisation of Nadhatul Ulama, Fatayat as women association of its wings, become majo partner and supporter of the state for its regulation and policies. Fatayat helps the state to implement their constitution, thus, the aspiration of society is well organised.

As an organization whose members are all women, Fatayat has the responsibility to provide awareness and empower people especially women. The middle class women of Nahdlatul Ulama organization have shown their great role in the strengthening of national civil society at generally and locally in particular. Religious organizations in society can help communities overcome problems in their own environment through education, empowerment and self-reliance programs and other practical training. Civic organizations can maximize their role in society and minimize their dependence on the State.

Through the roles of middle-class women Nahdlatul Ulama shows that empowerment and enlightenment efforts are done by them from within their own organization (organizers of the Fatayat Sidoarjo organization), they have a high level of education and knowledge and extensive, inter-religious, cross-cultural experience, and cross-class. The roles of middle-class women of Nahdlatul Ulama emerged from a critical awareness of the continuity of individual rights that departed from the principle of the essence of human freedom. The action carried out by middle-class women of Nahdlatul Ulama was conducted to answer their own internal needs in this case is the needs of the organization Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama as well as for the interests of society and state.

The existence of civil society organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and its autonomous bodies such as Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama should be developed into an inclusive and more open organization. Organizational nature that has been relatively open, inclusive, moderate and emphasizes the civility of its members must be maintained and continuously developed. in this case should not intervene, restrict the movement of the organization and it must support the existence of the organization given the size of their role in complementing the role of government in society.

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