



## Gender Dynamics and Digital Literacy in Pesantren Creative Writing

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### ABSTRACT

Pesantren, or Islamic boarding schools, have traditionally developed with a unique educational model. However, the advancement of digital technology has impacted education within pesantren, creating opportunities for santri (male students) and santriwati (female students) to engage in creative writing. Their writing progress is evident on the *duniasantri.co* platform, despite a gender disparity in the number of contributors. This study examines the contestation between santri and santriwati in creative writing using a qualitative method and digital ethnography approach. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital are employed to analyze data obtained from digital footprints and in-depth interviews. The findings reveal significant contestation in digital literacy, where the symbolic capital of pesantren leaders enables santriwati to compete on an equal footing, making their writing productivity more competitive.

### ABSTRAK

Pesantren berkembang dengan pola pendidikan tradisional yang unik. Namun, kemajuan teknologi digital telah mempengaruhi pendidikan di pesantren, membuka peluang bagi santri dan santriwati dalam produksi penulisan kreatif. Perkembangan tulisan mereka terlihat di platform *duniasantri.co*, meskipun ada ketimpangan gender dalam jumlah penulis. Penelitian ini mengkaji kontestasi antara santri dan santriwati dalam penulisan kreatif menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan etnografi digital. Konsep habitus, arena, dan kapital dari Bourdieu digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang diperoleh dari jejak digital dan wawancara mendalam. Hasilnya menunjukkan kontestasi yang signifikan dalam literasi digital, di mana modal simbolik pemimpin pesantren memungkinkan santriwati untuk berkontestasi secara setara, menjadikan produktivitas penulisan mereka lebih kompetitif.

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## Introduction

Students and madrasah children born in the 2000s belong to the Net generation, who have lived and grown up in a digital media environment (Isom, n.d). Significant changes influenced by advances in computer technology, the internet, and other digital media have marked the lives of this generation (Tapscott, 1997).

Efforts must be made to meet the needs of students to balance their way of thinking, develop their talents and interests, and facilitate their growth in the digital media environment. These efforts are to minimize the presence of disinformation in the digital world, especially those related to religious sentiment. It is undeniable that many cases of hostility in the name of religion due to disinformation in the digital world have become one a cultural phenomenon in society (Ubaidillah & Hartanto, 2020). Based on this awareness, it is hoped that students can adapt to developing technological advancements, enabling them to filter and balance the information circulating.

The ever-growing progress of information and communication technology transcends the boundaries of space and time, providing facilities for anyone to be well-connected anywhere and anytime (Friedman, 2005). Technological progress is directly related to many aspects of life, including the development of science. One such connection is between religious education and today's digital communication technology, positioning *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) as crucial in enhancing students' critical attitudes in the digital era 4.0 (Abidin, 2020; Anshori & Shaleh, 2020; Mustas, 2021). Pesantrens play a vital role as agents for channeling and filtering information and communication in the digital world. Therefore, digital literacy is an essential aspect that must be implemented in pesantren to foster students' interests and talents (Suharso & Sarbini, 2018). Digital literacy makes *Pesantren* more adaptive, encouraging students to think critically, imaginatively and creatively in understanding technological developments, thus enabling them to utilize these advancements effectively (Fadli & Dwiningrum, 2021).

One of the technological products currently available on various digital platforms is magazines or newspapers. *Duniasantri.co* is a digital platform that claims to be the only news website accommodating the writings of Islamic students, pesantren alumni, and individuals related to pesantren. Curators specifically screen writings in various forms, such as short stories, opinions, news, and humor related to the world of pesantren. One of the sections that contributors are particularly interested in is short stories. From August 2019 to January 2022, 267 short stories were published after a curation process. These short stories were written by 54 residents of *duniasantri.co* from several pesantren, with 42 men and 12 women contributing. This means that 78% of the short stories were written by male students (*santri*) and only 22% by female students (*santriwati*) (Haryanti et al., 2023).

A study regarding inequality contrast conducted by Nor Ismah shows the dominance of female writers in the new generation of pesantren literature (Ismah, 2012). The writers in Ismah's research, such as Abidah El-Khalaqy, were female students who had graduated from pesantren and received higher education. Additionally, the privileges gained through social status as a *Ning* (*kiai's* daughter) provided these writers with access to explore and express themselves. Her investigation into female writers within pesantren unveils a markedly distinct trajectory from this study, which centers on the experiences of ordinary *santri* and *santriwati* devoid of elevated social stature, thereby illuminating the nuanced realms of exploration and expression.

The inequality between *santri* and *santriwati*, as shown in the data from *duniasantri.co*, is a compelling reason to examine how they produce and publish their writings. Gender inequality in this process prompts an investigation into how the educational environment in pesantren shapes the character of *santri* and *santriwati*,

particularly in terms of literacy activities. Therefore, in-depth research on the contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in pesantren regarding the creative writing process in the digital world is necessary. This research aims to explore the contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* and the factors influencing their creative writing process in the era of digital literacy.

This research aims to contribute to the development of *pesantren* by presenting the reality of *pesantren* in the field of literacy. This article examines how digital literacy opens up opportunities for contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in the creative writing process, influenced by the arena, habitus and symbolic capital in *pesantren*.

## Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to examine the contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in the creative writing process during the digital era. The research design utilizes qualitative methods with digital ethnographic approach, focusing on digital media as the primary data corpus, specifically the *duniasantri.co* website. This study has been ongoing since 2020, with periodic in-depth analyses continuing until 2023.

The *duniasantri.co* website serves as the main data reference for analyzing the writings of *santri* published from August 2019 to January 2022. This platform is selected because it claims to be the only news website that accommodates the writings of Islamic students, pesantren alumni, and individuals associated with pesantren. Consequently, data on authors who published on *duniasantri.co* are used as benchmarks for analyzing the writings of *santri* and *santriwati* on digital platforms. The study includes 12 *santriwati* writers from various Islamic boarding school backgrounds. Data collection involved in-depth interviews via Google Forms and direct interviews with several *santriwati* who were able and willing to participate. Among the 12 *santriwati*, only 7 responded and agreed to be interviewed, with limited internet access posing a challenge for those still residing in pesantren. To enhance the analysis of *santriwati* writers and digital literacy, a literature review of relevant studies was also conducted.

A digital ethnographic approach was employed to obtain significant results. Digital ethnography involves in-depth research using ethnographic methods in the digital realm. Ethnography aims to understand individuals or groups (Spradley, 1997). Given that the main data source is the *duniasantri.co* website, it is essential to carefully observe people's behavior in socio-cultural practices within the digital world (Hine, 2012). This behavior relates to how *santri* and *santriwati* produce and publish their writings. Several ethnographic steps were undertaken through direct and digital observations. The first step involved proactive identification, where the researcher identified writings on the *duniasantri.co* website. Initial hypotheses were then formulated, revealing a sharp disparity in published writings between *santri* and *santriwati*.

The next stage involved requesting access to the research object, which is the *santriwati* works. This enabled the collection of data on Islamic boarding school writers and students featured on *duniasantri.co*. After obtaining access, the researcher classified the data according to research objectives and needs, grouping data on authors and their writings. Before further analysis, the researcher thoroughly explored the authors' data from various sources to gain initial knowledge about the research object. The subsequent stage involved making contact. After initial observations and data tracing, the researcher made direct contact to conduct interviews and validate the data obtained. In-depth interviews with research subjects constituted the final stage. During this stage, the researcher analyzed the initial and follow-up hypotheses and validated the previously obtained data. This comprehensive data exploration is crucial for in-depth analysis.

All data were analyzed using Bourdieu's contestation theory (Bourdieu, 2017). The analysis of the habitus and capital possessed by students within the pesantren environment influences the production and publication outcomes in the creative writing process. This analysis elucidates the factors influencing the contestation between santri and santriwati in the production and publication process, particularly in the digital world.

## Results

Some works of *santriwatis* who wrote on *duniasantri.co* were obtained, such as written by Eva Maulidiah who was a *santriwati* at the *pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Suci Manyar Gresik* for twelve years, from 1998 to 2010. During her time as a *santriwati*, Eva had a writing hobby, especially writing on works of fiction. Eva was also active as a magazine editor during her time as a *santriwati* at Al-Fikrah magazine. The *santriwati in pesantren Mambaus Sholihin* are often given writing training. There is a small group of students who have an interest in writing, even most of the talents and interests of *santriwati* who are developing rapidly in *pesantren* are in the field of Islamic arts such as marawis, qosidah, hadroh (Endaryono et al., 2020).

In writing production, Eva collects reading sources only through the library at the *pesantren* because she does not have access to search for reading sources digitally because at the *pesantren* there is no adequate internet access for the *santriwati*. Eva's favorite reading source is Horison magazine. That year, the Islamic boarding school subscribed to Horison magazine.

As editor of an internal magazine, Eva has easy access to publish the works produced while she was at *pesantren*. The works of fiction produced are usually inspired by everyday life while being a *santriwati*. This happens because usually the *pesantren* environment influences writers in forming characters (Falah & Yuliana, 2022). Apart from that, Eva often gets inspiration for writing through the books she enjoyed while she was a student in *pesantren*. Reading is one form of entertainment that can be accessed by students in *pesantren*. This reading intensity will more or less influence the way students think and write down the ideas that are in their minds.

Marisa Rahmashifa was a student at the Darussalam Gontor Putri for six years, from 2011 to 2017. During her time as a *santriwati*, Marisa had a writing hobby. Marisa is often get writing training which held by *pesantren* by presenting competent writers such as Asma Nadia and Habiburrahman El-Shirazy. Marisa was inspired by the works of Asma Nadia and Habiburrahman El-Shirazy which often contain the values of religious education with the background of life in *pesantren* (Fatmawati, 2022; Haryanti et al., 2022). Both of them are members of the Lingkar Pena Forum, the majority of whose members are women (Arnez & Eva F. Nisa, 2016). Asma Nadia is the latest popular Islamic literature writer who brings the Islamic concept of Rahmatan Lil Alamin into her work (Udaya & Rahmat, 2021). Likewise, Habbiburahman made writing novels a part of preaching and worship, thereby highlighting Islamic ethics and morals (Muniroch, 2023). Through the books that Marisa read, this encouraged Marisa to produce writing. In producing writing, Marisa has access to search for reading sources through the library in the *pesantren*. Marisa had difficulty publishing the works she produced while she was a student, so Marisa chose to publish the works she produced after becoming an alumni. According to Marisa, the *Duniasantri.co* website which collects students' writings is a strategic step that can be taken to encourage students to be more productive in producing writing. Marisa encourage fellow *santriwati* to be productive in writing.

Zahra Wardah was a student at the *pesantren Yanabiul Ulumi War Rohmah* for two years, from 2007 to 2009. During her time as a *santriwati*, Zahra have some hobbies in writing and producing works. Zahra does not have sufficient learning and internet access

to get writing training. Zahra also admits that she doesn't have many friends with the same hobbies. Even though this hobby really supports Zahra to produce other works. Zahra believes that reading a lot can be a source of inspiration for Zahra in writing. Zahra hopes that the resulting writings will provide benefits to readers.

Yeni S Purwati was a student at the *pesantren Al Ainy Kertosono* for three years from 2015 to 2018. Yeni has had a hobby of writing since high school when Yeni became a *santriwati*. This hobby was supported because at school Yeni is majoring in Languages. Yeni often wrote while she was in *pesantren* because she admitted that she had a lot of inspiration when she was at *pesantren*.

In producing writing, Yeni collects reading sources via the internet because the *pesantren* where Yeni lives has excellent internet access. Some activities provide an access to the outside world. Yeni has easy access to publish the works produced during her time as a student in *pesantren* through school magazines and competitions held on Facebook. Apart from that, Yeni has also won as a contributor. Even though, not many of Yeni's friends like writing, Yeni's friends always appreciate the works that Yeni produces. Another form of appreciation given by other students was by borrowing Yeni's work to read in their respective rooms during their free time at the *pesantren*.

One of the way Yeni gathers inspiration is at school. Yeni has looser access to search for ideas and express ideas in written form. Yeni is very grateful for the blessings she had when she was a *santriwati* because she was able to adapt to various human characters. This will have an impact on Yeni's way of thinking to become a person who is more open in accepting the differences that exist in society. Yeni realizes that *santriwati* have the same opportunities as other students in producing works. *Santriwati* have great potential that can be optimized so that they can spread benefits more widely to many people.

According on data from several *santriwati* from the results of this research, it is necessary to discuss several things related to space as an arena, habitus, and symbolic power in *pesantren* which influence digital literacy and create contestation between *santri* and *santriwati*. Various factors shaping the contestation within the creative writing endeavors of *santriwati* within Islamic boarding schools serve as a blueprint for understanding the potential impact of advancements in digital literacy on educational policies within these institutions.

## Discussion

### 'Space' for *Santriwati* Writers

"Space" in this article refers to experiences, thoughts and actions related to digital literacy for *santriwati*. The gap experienced by women and men in terms of gaining access to the digital world does not only occur in *pesantren*. Based on data reported by the 2018 GSMA Intelligence Consumer Survey it is stated that there is a digital gap which indicates an inequality in the use of digital media by men and women (Rahayu & Al, 2021). This proves that in terms of access to experiences, thoughts and actions related to digital literacy experienced by women, it is still not in accordance with the main goal of digital literacy.

Opportunities to gain access to digital literacy are also experienced in *pesantren*. As an arena, *pesantren* are a battleground for access to the digital world influencing all socio-cultural processes within it. One of them is the teaching and learning process which is very closely related to the daily lives of students which are dominated by the typical *pesantren* culture. Even though they have the opportunity, compared to *santri*, *santriwati* have more limited access in any way. Dormitory locations with different restrictions and supervision mean *santriwati* have fewer opportunities to explore the digital world. As experienced by Eva and Zahra, who were *pesantren* students in 1998-2010, they did not

have the slightest internet access because of the prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the Islamic boarding school. In fact, according to Ismah, the internet can provide opportunities for female students to improve their writing skills, expand connections and reach a wider audience (Ismah, 2023). In contrast to Marisa and Yeni who became *pesantren* students in 2011-2017, they got access even though it was very limited. The four of them come from different *pesantren*. However, it can be seen that in the period less than 2010 the internet was a rare and taboo thing for *santriwati*. This is different from what was experienced by *santriwati* in 2010 and above who were able to experience exploring the digital world even though it was very limited. This data was taken from interviews with four *santriwati* writers who successfully published their work on *duniasantri.co* in December 2022.

These data show that *pesantren* are developing in accordance with the needs and developments of the times. Sooner or later awareness of the presence of information technology is not a weakness in the world of education in *pesantren*, but an advantage that becomes a strength for a sustainable teaching and learning process (Arif, 2013). Therefore, *pesantren* are moving to fix the weaknesses and worst possibilities that will be created by the presence of information technology.

Digital literacy is designed to meet teaching and learning needs which increasingly require unlimited space through the presence of information technology. Several Islamic boarding schools have encouraged their students to understand the digital world, such as PP Nurul Islam Jember and PP Tebuireng Jombang. This shows the seriousness of Islamic boarding schools in adapting to the digital world, even though the implementation of digital literacy in Islamic educational institutions still has many limitations (Lisyawati et al., 2023). Apart from access to the digital world in Islamic boarding schools, students are also expected to be able to produce and disseminate information cognitively, constructively and innovatively (Belshaw, 2012). The process of producing and disseminating information for female students in Islamic boarding schools cannot be easily implemented. For female students, producing writing is a limited opportunity within a certain scope. Eva got access to write because she was actively involved in the Islamic boarding school magazine *al-Fikrah* organization. Therefore, Eva has access to intensive learning related to writing.

This is different from what was experienced by Zahra and Marissa who did not have the access and opportunity to obtain the ease of producing writing as experienced by Eva. Zahra, who received her *pesantren* education at Yanabiul Ulumi war Rohmah Kudus, did not have access to writing production training. A similar experience was also experienced by Marisa who received her education at the Darussalam Gontor Putri modern Islamic boarding school campus 2. Marisa had access to attend a writing seminar which presented famous writers such as Asma Nadia, Habiburrahman El-Shirazy, but the seminar did not provide the special and intense training that experienced by Eva.

Yeni, who received her education at the *pesantren* Al Ainy Kertosono, had a different experience. Yeni has looser access than the other three female student writers. This is because in the *pesantren* he lives in, activities and programs at the school dominate more than at the *pesantren*. Based on this data, *pesantren* policies have an important contribution to access to the digital world. Some *pesantren* policies that are pro towards the world of digital literacy, but few of them are also against.

Advances in information technology that provide convenience in many ways have two blades that show positive and negative impacts. The existence of prohibited sites and the rise of online games which have a negative impact are a threat to the world of education. Therefore, several *pesantren* use security patterns in internet access such as filtering to filter out negative content (Setiawan, 2012). This openness of facilities does not apply to all *pesantren*. The lack of qualified human resources in this regard is one of

the reasons for limiting internet access for students. *Pesantren* with open access are usually owned by modern *pesantren*. As the aim of modern *pesantren* is an effort to produce individuals who have *pesantren* values and the Islamic religion but also have the ability to modern sciences outside *pesantren* in accordance with current developments (Nihwan & Paisun, 2019).

The rapid development of the times has encouraged the renewal of curriculum and teaching methods in *pesantren*. Some of *pesantren salaf* have developed themselves into semi-modern *pesantren* (Hayati, 2019). This means that the Salaf education culture which is dominated by sorogan and bandongan, is gradually adapting to other learning methods and increasing access to other knowledge. This also applies to increasing access to the digital world. Even though it is limited by various *pesantren* policies, access to the digital world is now starting to open. The presence of students who are closer to the community makes it easier for them to access the internet outside the *pesantren*. Meanwhile, *santriwati* who have limited movement and exploration space must accept the fact that the access they are given is not the same.

Policy makers in *pesantren* dominate all decisions that give rise to regulations. All policies have a direct impact on the students' learning process. The variety patterns of *pesantren* are according to typologies based on the education system, completeness of facilities, and also the presence of students in *pesantren* which have their own characteristics (Fahham, 2020). The unique pattern of *pesantren* education by separating santri and *santriwati* in various aspects is the most common characteristic. The strong teaching of Islamic religious values makes segregation between santri and female students a main thing in the learning process. This creates an inequality in ease of access between santri and *santriwati*.

### **Educational Habitus in Pesantren**

*Pesantren* lives and grows from time to time so that they experience renewal in their development. One of them is the emergence of a literacy culture which is interpreted as routine reading and writing activities which are part of the lifestyle of modern humans (Suharso & Sarbini, 2018). This development gave birth to a typology that describes the patterns and characteristics of *pesantren*. Broadly, *pesantren* have three forms that is Salaf, Khalaf (modern) Islamic boarding schools, and convergence between the two (Hayati, 2019). *Pesantren Salaf* is an Islamic boarding schools with a learning system that teaches classical ulama books using the sorogan, bandungan, memorization and deliberation methods. *Pesantren Khalaf* is a boarding school with a modern style that teaches Islamic religious knowledge and general knowledge simultaneously. The education system at this Islamic boarding school tends to be systematic with clear and modern standards. The convergence of these two models is an integrated *pesantren* that tries to adapt learning patterns between Salaf and Khalaf Islamic boarding schools. Yellow book (*kitab kuning*) learning is carried out using classical methods, but on the other hand there are schools that also prioritize religious learning and general knowledge (Jamaludin, 2021).

*Pesantren* with teaching and learning life patterns have their own uniqueness because they differ from educational patterns in general. Apart from a system that has a distinctive pattern, *pesantren* also have a system for mapping students based on gender. This can be seen in the physical segregation system between santri and *santriwati* in the form of space and opportunities that are deliberately created to maintain Islamic religious values. Apart from different complexes and locations, the structure and access provided to santri and *santriwati* will also be different (Riady & Wardi, 2021). These characteristics are formed by the social and cultural values of *pesantren* which have been constructed by strong Islamic religious values.

These *pesantren* values create a habitus that is closely related to culture which builds the habits of all individual components in the world of education in *pesantren*. As is known, habitus is created unconsciously because it is continuously carried out repeatedly by the socio-cultural construction around it. This applies to social norms, values, ideology, social class and several things that form barriers between individuals in that social unit (Swartz, 1997). This normalizes all forms of socio-cultural values in *pesantren*. As is normal, there are barriers between santri and santriwati, the boundaries are very different for santriwati compared to santri, and there are social classes formed within Islamic boarding schools which are influenced by heirs (*nasab*).

Education at *pesantren* is different from formal education in the form of public schools or special schools for girls. *Pesantren* simultaneously run two institutions at once that education for men (*santri*) and education for women (*santriwati*) separately. This model certainly has its own impact in terms of achieving learning outcomes for men and women in Islamic boarding schools (Muafiah, 2013). The differences in regulations and treatment between *santri* and *santriwati*) which have an impact on learning outcomes are influenced by habits which are influenced by *pesantren* values.

The existence of a very thick habitus and the *pesantren* arena being closed from the outside world makes it increasingly difficult for *santriwati* to interact with life outside the *pesantren*. This affects the culture of work production between *santri* and *santriwati*. Even though currently many *pesantren* have begun to push aside the limits of *santriwati* to work in line with the *santri*, it cannot be denied that the limitations of *santriwati* are real in the world of *pesantren*. The four *santriwati* writers who grew up in *pesantren* have the same passion for writing, but not all of the four *santriwati* writers had a supportive environment for writing.

### **Digital Literacy in *Pesantren***

Digital Literacy is not only about the ability to read through advances in digital technology. But more than that, digital literacy should include the ability to read, understand and reproduce literacy in a cognitive, productive and informative form. Digital literacy cannot be interpreted narrowly in terms of the relationship between reading and writing. More than that, digital literacy contains the complexity of the process of obtaining information through reading, creatively reproducing the reading results, and then disseminating information related to the reading (Hague & Payton, 2010). Therefore, digital literacy must be interpreted as the complexity of the teaching and learning process through digital media.

Literacy activities in *pesantren* are not something new. *Pesantren* are one of the factors in the spread of Islam through the teaching of classical books which are presented orally and in writing to be studied together by students and *Kiai* (Arisandi, 2022). This has become a tradition for students in *pesantren*. Not a few *santri* are also able to continue their education to a higher level because they have good literacy skills (Hayadin, 2019). *Pesantren* with typical traditional teaching and learning methods make reading and writing activities and understanding books as one of the basics learning such as *bandongan* and *sorogan* (Dhofier, 1982; Shaleh, 2020). However, as time goes by, *pesantren* also adapt to the times. So it is not only teaching and learning methods that are developing, but also the teaching and learning curriculum.

The teaching and learning curriculum in *pesantren* began to develop since the Minister of Religion Regulation No. 3/1950 which instructed providing general lessons in madrasas or *pesantren* and vice versa, providing religious learning in public and private schools. This policy was created by KH. A. Wahid Hasyim, who is the son of the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, KH. Hasyim Asyari. KH. A. Wahid Hasyim also fought for general lessons at the *pesantren* Tebuireng Jombang. In 1961, KH. A. Wahid Hasyim adopted a modern



education system into the madrasa curriculum in Tebuireng (Madjid, 1997). Based on these regulations, religious and modern education is a lesson that must be applied in *pesantren* even though the teaching portion is different from the learning in schools in general.

The adaptation process carried out by *pesantren* shows that there is a new system that must continue to develop along with the times. A developing learning system demands developed human resources as well. This means that all policy makers and institutional apparatus in *pesantren* must be ready with developments in information technology to answer the challenges of the times. In addition to providing access to a learning space that is integrated with the internet, *pesantren* also need to provide space for *santri* and *santriwati* to grow their minds to process creatively so as to produce competitive products based on Islamic boarding school values.

Based on the digital literacy skills index initiated by Belshaw (2012), the elements that must be fulfilled are; (1) cultural. In this stage, users are expected to have initial knowledge regarding various contexts of digital use., (2) cognitive. The cognitive element seeks the ability to assess content in the digital world., (3) constructive. This stage is an effort to visualize personally in each individual's mind and construct an understanding related to the content or information obtained., (4) communicative. In this stage, each individual understands communication patterns in the digital world and understands how networking and communication in the digital world works. (5) self-confidence and responsibility. (6) creative, (7) critical in responding to content, and (8) making digital literacy as a life skill.

These elements are the basis for developing digital literacy. Meanwhile, getting through the process from the first element to the last is not an easy thing. Intense assistance and supervision is one solution in preventing negative things that occur in the process of developing digital literacy in Islamic boarding schools. This needs to be done to prepare human resources to provide assistance, supervision and training to obtain maximum digital literacy development results (Karomani et al., 2021). Mentoring, supervision and training using the right system will produce *santri* and female students who are able to develop amidst changing times.

The writings that have been published on *Duniasantri.co* are proof that *santri* and *santriwati* have been able to produce reproductions of creative writing in the form of literary texts, opinions and other writings. This proves that the existence of digital literacy in *pesantren* really helps the development of Islamic boarding schools themselves. The honed creativity of students will lead to many achievements. Through the limitless digital world, creativity and achievements will spread so that the name of the institution can be made proud. Therefore, the importance of digital literacy in *pesantren* is to support the exploration of *santri* and *santriwati* in producing their work. Even though these benefits are accompanied by commensurate risks, *pesantren* continuously and sustainably seek evaluations regarding the use of information technology.

### **Santriwati Writers and 'Limited Space'**

Islamic boarding schools and information technology advances encourage the progress of *santri* and *santriwati* in processing information and creating a good digital literacy climate. Digital literacy, as previously discussed, requires students to be able to access, process and produce information cognitively, creatively and communicatively. *Santri* and *santriwati* writers whose works have been published on *duniasantri.co* in the short story column show that there is inequality. This inequality occurs because of the low level of women's digital literacy traditions caused by lack of education, opportunities, and the patriarchal system (Long et al., 2023; Suwana & Lily, 2017). *Santriwati* as marginalized groups in the *pesantren* arena cannot actively and productively be part of

the presence of digital literacy. This is influenced by the habitus inherent in *pesantren* culture. This habitus occurs through a structured process of instilling values, does not take place instantly, and is passed down between generations unconsciously (Rusdiarti, 2004).

*Pesantren* as an educational unit which has cultural characteristics that are different from other institutions has its own way of positioning men and women as students. In Islamic boarding schools, there is still a stigma that women should be housewives, so they are prohibited from working outside the home, and they are given limited access to go outside the home (Abdullah, 2021). This creates distinctive behavior in representing certain social classes and makes it natural as a typical interaction. This uniqueness is constructed naturally so that there are no questions or objections to question its truth (Rusdiarti, 2004). Therefore, *santriwati* in *pesantren* are placed in the position of guardians of morals and morals with all the restrictions that have been regulated (Muzayyanah, 2013).

Historically, it cannot be denied that *pesantren* just only accepted men as students. Previously, *pesantren* only contained men led by *kiai* and *gus* (sons of *kiai*) (Iswanto, 2020). As time went by, around 1910, *pesantren* began to accept women as students. Not only that, now many Islamic boarding schools are starting to be led by women with good leadership qualities (Nurhilaliati, 2019). Since then, an innovation has emerged to establish *pesantren* specifically for female students known as *santriwati* (Hasyim, 2010). The first female *pesantren* to accommodate a women's school was *pesantren* Denanyar (Rangkuti, 2019). This forerunner to education is actually a very significant step towards the progress of women in receiving education.

The progress of this step also goes hand in hand with the challenges of modern progress which wants to erase the barriers between men and women. Meanwhile, *pesantren* with a patriarchal culture that has been built for a long time depart from this spirit. The involvement of *santriwati* in non-domestic affairs is still a rare thing in *pesantren*, especially in the involvement of *santriwati* in advances in information technology. Limited access to space, not much time and opportunities mean that *santriwati* have to be confined within the limits of the space they have. Apart from that, the material taught in *pesantren* through reference to the classical yellow books (*kitab kuning*) is the rules of jurisprudence which are normative in nature and have a tendency towards patriarchal values. This is because past *ulama* had a tendency to position women as marginally subordinate compared to men (Towaf, 2008).

Digital literacy, which enables individual competence to solve various problems, is developed with awareness of the social, economic, political and economic structures that enable individuals to access all information. Therefore, digital literacy is not just reading data. But more than that, digital literacy is created to read the world (Degei et al., 2019). The limited role and position of female students in accessing digital literacy allows for enormous contestation.

*Santriwati* with limited space are required to find various ways to get the right to access the digital world. Some *santriwati* can channel their desires and abilities to reproduce information in the form of creative writing after leaving *pesantren*. Information and life experiences while at the *pesantren* become an inspiration for writing. Various problems of life in *pesantren* are one of the main headlines discussed in their writing. Several female writers such as Rida Fitria, Pijer Sri Laswiji, Maia Rosyida, Azri Dzakiyah, Jazimah al-Muhyi, Khilma Anis, and Camilla Chisnidari took the background and problems surrounding *pesantren* because they are very close to it (Ismah, 2011). Some of them wrote and published their writings after graduating from *pesantren*.

Limitations while at *pesantren* can sometimes be overcome by the social status of the *santriwati*. A *Ning* who is the daughter or descendant of a *Kiai* has capital that other common *santriwati* do not have. Their social capital and courage in producing writing

makes them more progressive than common *santriwati* in general. Capital is a powerful weapon in arena combat (Bourdieu, 2017). The symbolic capital possessed by the Nings (who will later become Nyai) means they have more opportunities to explore and creatively reproduce the digital world. Therefore, Ning's presence in the digital world is a strong form of symbolic capital in the world of capital and the commodification of religion (Aslamiah, 2021).

The symbolic capital power that is the strength of the Ning and Nyai so that they can empower *santriwati* is one of the important things for reconstructing the habitus inherent in *santriwati* life. Ning, with her experience and passion for writing, has a strong desire to make *santriwati* empowered in the world of literacy. This happens in writing training held in many *pesantren*. Apart from that, the *pesantren* curriculum which allows extracurricular writing also motivates *santriwati* to write and produce works. Some of them carry out intense writing training, one of which is held at the *pesantren* Tebuireng in Jombang and Nurul Islam in Jember. Writing training is carried out intensively so as to produce quality writings by santri and *santriwati*. Some of them even won a student writing competition held by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This data was taken from an interview with Ibnu Wijaksono, an Indonesian language teacher who trains extracurricular writing at *pesantren* Nurul Islam in Jember. This strengthens data regarding the involvement of *pesantren* in increasing the competence of santri and *santriwati* through existing competitions. One of them are part of the national research madrasa competition/Madrasah Young Researchers Super Camp to instill interest in writing and research (Arifin et al., 2022; Hidayati, 2019; Saimroh & Basid, 2021),

The writing community in several Islamic boarding schools is balanced by a reading community which is increasingly roses. In contrast to the experience of *santriwati* writers on Duniasantri.co who received *pesantren* education before 2015. Currently, technological advances and symbolic capital owned by several parties make digital literacy very close to *santriwati*. Even though they cannot be in direct contact with the virtual world 24 hours a week, *santriwati* are free to choose and determine the community they like and get involved in learning what they want. This happened at the Tebuireng Jombang, which gave flexibility to the students to choose specializations outside of school lessons and *pesantren* activities. Among the several specialization options is the reading and writing community which is much loved by *santriwati*. This data was taken from an interview with Rara Munawwarah, a reading and writing community guide at the *pesantren* Tebuireng. Rara is also an editor at Tebuireng online.

Habitus reconstruction, writing training for *santriwati*, as well as many agendas for writing activities are among the weapons to empower *santri* and *santriwati*, to gain equal access to the world of digital literacy. Even though *santriwati* are limited in terms of space to move physically, this does not mean that *santriwati* cannot explore themselves to develop to fulfill the elements in the digital literacy process. Therefore, contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in the creative writing process in the digital world is not impossible today. The easier access makes the competition stronger. Furthermore, *pesantren* policies relating to regulations on access to education for both *santri* and *santriwati* must actively foster a culture of contestation within the digital realm of creative writing. Such measures are instrumental in bridging the disparity in opportunities and access experienced by *santri* and *santriwati*.

## Conclusion

The contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in the creative writing process within *pesantren* is influenced by several factors. Gender inequality, stemming from the *habitus* of *pesantrens* that differentiate educational facilities between *santri* and

*santriwati*, can be mitigated through the evolution of *habitus*, driven by the changing perspectives of *pesantren* leaders. Consequently, symbolic capital and the reconstruction of *habitus* in *pesantren* are pivotal factors underlying the emergence of contestation in the creative writing process of *santri* and *santriwati* in the digital era. The ongoing reconstruction of *habitus* and symbolic capital in *pesantren* has intensified the contestation between *santri* and *santriwati* in creative writing. This dynamic opens significant opportunities for the flow of information facilitated by digital literacy processes. The *santriwati* writers at *duniasantri.co* exemplify this contestation. Despite substantial disparities, these writers remain optimistic about the learning process, which is increasingly integrating with the digital world.

The integration of the digital world in the context of *pesantren* holds great potential as a means for accessing and reproducing information cognitively, productively, informatively, and creatively, ultimately strengthening the *pesantren* education system and addressing the challenges of the modern era. This study implies that *pesantren* have the opportunity to transform their *habitus* and symbolic capital in a more inclusive and adaptive manner, which can reduce gender inequality and enhance the participation of female students in creative processes. Therefore, *pesantren* need to continuously evaluate and adapt to technological advancements by developing policies that support the creativity of both male and female students and by creating a more equitable environment. Further research is necessary to explore the long-term impact of digital technology integration on the development of *habitus* and symbolic capital in *pesantren*.

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