

# Gender-Based Women's History Learning as an Effort to Answer the 21st-Century Challenge

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**Abstract**— Learning the history of women is still set aside in learning at school in Indonesia. Gender issues become a sensitive content for the world of education, especially in Malang, Indonesia. The history curriculum is still dominated by the role of figures or heroes from male groups rather than women's groups. The research method for this article is a literature study. The role of the female figure is still around the companion of male figures or as a wife or second class. Whereas Indonesian history records that female leaders also have a role in fighting for Indonesian independence. Thirteen Indonesian female heroes have great services that can still be felt by the people of Indonesia today. The concept of women's history of learning needs to be given a place to provide a more contextual gender perspective. Gender-based women's history learning is an alternative history learning effort to answer 21st-century challenges in the field of education. A better understanding of women's history provides a more interesting perspective to show added value in gender equality. Women position in history learning needs to explore more to be equal with men position.

**Keywords:** *women's history learning, gender-based, the 21st-century challenge*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women are still second class citizens in Indonesia. Women are only positioned as male companions. This also has an impact on Indonesian history writers. Kuntowijoyo states that the reconstruction of Indonesia's history is androcentric, because history focuses on your role as a male [1]. This picture of the past is certainly not fair because it sees women only as the second sex. Another result, history learning is more about men's activities than women.

Women have the main task as nation educators because they have a big soul. This can be seen from the definition of the word 'woman' which has a noble meaning. Haikal expresses etymologically [2], the word woman comes from the word empu which means 'master'. Or 'the biggest'. In line with this, it is known as the word 'thumb', empu gending 'people who are good at creating songs' and the like. This definition restricts women to be only identical with things that have the

theme of beauty such as works of art, songs, even the body of the woman herself.

Women were not only adept at making songs but were also able to give birth to movements. Kowani states that the development of Indonesian women is closely related to Indonesian nationality and is an inseparable part of nationalism [3]. The development of national organizations in the early 20th century was immediately followed by the growth of women's organizations from a national organization. The concept of nationality or patriotism was born from the hands of women who have a critical attitude and high fighting power.

History has recorded the progress of women in the struggle for Indonesia. Women leaders show that Indonesian women have a visionary critical power if given the opportunity. Haikal stated that the first congress of an organization that was not a rival for men was known as the First Indonesian Women's Congress, which took place on December 22, 1928 in Yogyakarta. In this Congress it was agreed that degree equality could only be achieved if the composition of society was not colonized.

The congress became an important platform for the struggle of Indonesian women. Indonesian women have the same hard work ethic as men, even in some cases they are superior. Kemendikbud stated that without working hard, in the history of Indonesia, it would not be contained in the Republic of Indonesia [4]. History has provided evidence that hard work demands success, even though many hard workers also bounce and fail in their struggle. Women's excellence is important to be taught in history learning to give appreciation and space for Indonesian female hero figures. It is hoped that history learning is not dominated by male figures but also provides a balanced portion for female leaders. The spirit of the struggle of Indonesian women leaders is still related to 21st century skills. This is felt appropriate to answer the challenges of the 21st century because most Indonesian women need to be encouraged to think critically, be able to communicate, be able to cooperate and keep abreast of technology. Women in Indonesia has a gap with the men to work together in the future.

## II. METHOD

This research method uses literature study method. Literature research method or also called literature study is a series of activities related to data collection methods, reading and recording and processing research materials [5]. This research method is in accordance with the preparation of this article because it uses books, journals and articles relating to the learning of gender-based history in answering the challenges of the 21st century.

*The main framework of this research method is a female perspective methodology. Handayani & Sugiarti states that research with female perspectives is different from general research because this research explicitly states its alignment with women [6]. The study only uses reference books that relate the focus of the research theme, namely gender-based history learning. This research remains based on scientific principles by making critical interpretations of reading, interpreting and citing selected reference books. Reading 2 references include books and article about how important women history relate to the 21st-century challenge. The writer also interpreted the data and fact about the main topic of this research then analyzing all the data. After that, all the data has been written down to be this article.*

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Challenges of Learning Women's History

History learning is certainly dominated by important events involving humans in the past. The essence of men and women is humanity which influences the flow of historical events. Daliman states that the history of a nation is essentially the history of humanity [7]. For this reason it is necessary to learn and explore the laws of history that promote our peace and progress in humanity. Historical writing that is generally centered on male characters needs to be studied in a new perspective so that an interesting and complete picture of human history can be obtained.

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Kartini's presence in fighting for the emancipation of Indonesian women did not last long because Kartini died at a young age of 25. Despite the emergence of other women figures who fought for gender equality in Indonesia, the position of

women was still below men. Tong states that even though de jure gender discrimination is more of a memory now, de facto gender discrimination still exists [8]. Discrimination is quite evident in the history of learning in schools, where the role of female leaders does not receive an adequate portion of the History curriculum.

Education for women not only focuses on the intellectual but also emphasizes women's ability to face the challenges of the 21st century. Therefore, the history of women's learning needs to be supplemented with an understanding of gender equality. Suhartono states that women, besides getting lessons to advance intelligence, must also learn behavior and decency [9]. Because women get education in schools and family environments it is only natural that women get a holy call in education.

This understanding of gender equality is useful to complement the understanding of students, especially women, to emulate the struggle of Indonesian female heroine such as Kartini. Suhartono the broad impact of Kartini's ideals on society is the existence of evidence of women's progress in education [9]. RA. Kartini is the first daughter to get a teacher's certificate, Ms. Kandau passed the doctor's exam, and there are many more examples that can be addressed. Other female figures such as H. R. Rasuna Said and Siti Walidah were known as activists of organizations that fought for Indonesian independence as well as rights for women during the Dutch colonial period.

Learning history of women in Indonesia still has obstacles, especially intellectual understanding that is still sensitive to gender issues. Towaf states clear external challenges are advances in science and technology, association and competition between nations while the challenges from within are the readiness of the Indonesian people to participate in advancing science and technology and the ability to get along even compete with other nations [10]. Gender equality in the history learning curriculum is also included in the development of science and technology. That is, if it does not follow the development of gender issues in the learning of women's history, then it can be said that the development of science and technology in Indonesia is still stagnant.

Gender equality in education is also a stigma for women because the obligations of men and women in the family are different in Indonesia. Husbands are free to decide and do anything, but Indonesian women, especially Java, must always submit to their husbands. Fakhri stated in Java, there used to be an assumption that women did not need to go to high school, because women would eventually go to the kitchen too [11]. Even the government once had a regulation that if a husband would go to study (away from family), the husband could make his own decisions without having permission to the wife.

If this continues to be allowed, then the development of science and technology in Indonesia is still like hundreds of years ago or in the Dutch colonial period and even experienced

a setback. Hellwig revealed that because colonial power can be identified with white men, women occupy lower places [12]. Women are considered the lowest human caste. The position of women as deliberately eliminated from history even though women have a big role in giving birth and educating the next generation.

This situation continued until the Dutch occupation of Indonesia ended and then continued by Japan. The struggle of women leaders in sacrificing for Indonesia only gets a small portion. In contrast to the awards given to Indonesian heroes from men. Towaf reveals that nationally Indonesian women constitute more than half of Indonesia's population, have a weakness in carrying out the expected role due to the conditions and situation [10].

The first president of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno, also shared the same opinion regarding the obstacles of Indonesian women in developing themselves. Sukarno states even the functions of the women we discussed earlier, namely the function of being a mother; accepting the seed of the child, containing children, giving birth to children, grieving children, caring for children, ---towards these natural functions, the male world still lacks women's respect [13]. Women need to have the same opportunity and appreciation for the natural function and contribution of women to the state in a just and objective manner.

Countries need to facilitate this by opening equal opportunities for women and men. This opportunity need not be worried about as a new rival by men in developing but this opportunity can be considered as a new opportunity for men and women to collaborate in building the nation. Faridi stated that the principle of equality if addressed wisely would open opportunities for women to become male partners in various sectors of life.

Opportunities for women need to get support from the community and the government. Utami stated that such maximum efforts to empower women show the political will of the government that is appreciative of the development of gender mainstreaming in national political struggles [14]. Learning the history of women contained in a balanced portion of the curriculum is one form of government support in the world of education. A simple example in the study of women's history is to include a portion of material about the services of female hero figures learning history.

This support is not to compare which is superior between the services of women and men in Indonesian history. The most important main goal in women's history learning is to show values that are in line with the 21st century learning challenges. Daliman reveals the attitudes and values contained in the history's womb should be and must be inherited and socialized to the younger generation as successors national struggle [7]. Individually history is seen as a good tool in fostering loyalty and responsibility of citizens. Learning the history of women

presents the values of the struggle of women shows that women and men have the same task in advancing the Indonesian nation.

### *B. Urgency of Gender-Based Women's History Learning*

Forms of gender inequality in various fields encourage the importance of learning gender-based women's history. Fakhri argues that marginalization or the process of economic impoverishment, subordination or assumptions are not important in political decisions, stereotyping formation or through negative harassment, violence, longer and more burden of work, and ideological socialization gender role value [11]. Gender-charged education in women's history can be used as an alternative to overcome this problem. Teaching women's history helps reduce misunderstandings on gender issues.

The long journey of human history cannot be separated from the involvement of women. Sendratari & Maryati state the history of women (women) is a reconstruction of the past about the role and status of women in various historical events [15]. In the discussion of women's history, the position of women as actors who participate in determining the course of historical events in the past will be revealed. To date, only thirteen female figures have been appointed as national heroes from a total of 173 Indonesian national heroes. The female hero figures included RA Kartini, Cut Nyak Dien, Cut Meutia, Dewi Sartika, HR Rasuna Said, Fatmawati, Siti Walidah, Christina Martha Tiahahu, Nyi Ageng Serang, Maria Walanda Maramis, Siti Hartinah, Oppu Daeng Risaju and Admiral Keumalahayati .

In addition, the study of women's history has also been implicitly included in the foundation of the Indonesian state. One way to realize this national commitment is to provide equal space for women's history in the history learning curriculum in elementary schools to universities. Towaf states that the national commitment to enhance the role of women formulated by the People's Consultative Assembly is based on the basic ideology of Pancasila, the constitutional basis of the 1945 Constitution and the operational basis of the GBHN [10]. The most basic legal basis for efforts to increase the role of women (P2W) is contained in Chapter X Article 27 of the 1945 Constitution.

Directly the law recognizes that Indonesian women are able to make special contributions to the country. Towaf states that since the beginning of the New Order it was realized how women were a huge potential for the Indonesian people who were rising to build [10]. Women become an integral part of the development process itself. Gender-based history learning is one of the alternatives to strengthen the country's development in facing the challenges of the 21st century.

One of the advantages as well as the great challenges of the 21st Century that overshadow humanity is the development of technology. Tilaar said first, humanity is faced with danger to their lives [16]. In addition, technological progress can become

a boomerang against its existence. Limited natural resources because population growth limits the planet's carrying capacity. Therefore, it takes real collaboration between men and women in controlling and even preventing these dangers. Of course collaboration between the two parties will not be realized properly if one party is still concerned about gender issues.

### *C. Characteristics of Gender-Based Women's History Learning*

The definition of gender should not be a barrier for men and women to work together in equal positions. Fakihi reveals the concept of gender which is inherent in men and women who are socially and culturally constructed. Each region or country does have a different view of gender [11]. Along with the development of science and technology, the gender perspective becomes a mediator for women and men in solving different social and cultural construction problems.

This social and cultural construction problem tends to corner women. Umar stated that a review of gender burdens which were considered unfair was a difficult task for humanity [17]. Identification of gender burden is more than just an introduction to the genitals, but concerns the fundamental values that have been entrenched in society. This gender perspective does not only look at the physical status of human sex but also appreciates human contributions fairly.

Humans as inventors of gender labels need to review gender with a scientific perspective, no longer based on cultural construction to the environment. Usman argues that gender is made and composed by humans through social processes, is made by the community which is influenced by social institutions, customs, traditions, geographical factors, demographics, and the environment [18]. Humans as historical agents need to apply gender more wisely by not making it a barrier in developing.

History is a witness that socially, humans cannot be alone. Humans, both men and women, always need one another to carry on life. Umar stated that the basis of liberal feminism is that all humans, men and women, are created balanced and harmonious and there should be no oppression between one another [17]. Liberal feminism is inspired by the principles of enlightenment that men and women both have specificities. Gender perspective becomes a strengthening of the bond between men and women in believing that both have the same rights.

Actually gender-based history learning has also been carried out by an Islamic education institution in Indonesia. Marhumah states that gender strengthening is textually carried out by maintaining the tradition that has been institutionalized in pesantren for years [19]. This method utilizes the texts of the book which contains the provisions of the prophet and the predecessors of the pesantren. This shows that socially and

culturally, Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia views women and men as equal.

Gender perspective can be introduced in learning in schools, one of the lessons that can accommodate this knowledge is history. Gender-based history learning emphasizes that 21st century skills are important for students. Trilling & Boner explained as it turns out, using knowledge as it is being learned — applying skills like critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity to the content knowledge — increased motivation and improving learning outcomes. The application of 21st century skills will not work well if the gender problem is still a barrier.

Male and female students are important to understand women's history as part of national and even world history. For example, students will wonder if learning material only addresses the role of male characters. Female students will feel inferior because women have not made any contribution in the past. This is certainly the opposite of a gender perspective, especially liberal feminism. Umar argued that this group was among the most moderate among feminist groups [17]. This group justifies women working with men. They want women to be integrated in all roles, including working outside the home. Thus there is no more dominant gender group.

Learning history of women in education in Indonesia is certainly different from the history of women in other countries. Learning history of women must emphasize the noble culture and character of the Indonesian people. Historical facts about women's education in Tamansiswa must also be included in the study of women's history in Indonesia. In contrast to European women in the early 20th century who demanded all the similarities of rights with men ranging from the way they dressed and the type of work. Women's Education in Tamansiswa emphasizes on the interagency system, namely placing women in an important position in educating children to be skilled and resilient but virtuous [20]. The selection of this material makes learning the history of women in Indonesia unique because it stands on two legs of the west and east which are gender-charged but still aware of attitude and female nature. Because basically, not all the results of Western intellectual thought can be applied in Indonesia.

### *D. Efforts to Respond to 21st Century Challenges*

Indonesian women need to be encouraged to have 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity in content knowledge. This kind of skill is important to be owned by 21st century women in dealing with current problems such as fraud and human trafficking that often befall women. Fakihi explains in terms of overcoming the problem of women's marginalization in various projects to increase women's income, it is necessary to involve women in community development programs, as well as various activities that enable women to be involved and exercise power in the public sector [11]. Women's active involvement in the political

and social fields with 21st century skills is expected to be able to contribute better to the country.

Another 21st century challenge is the flow of globalization that is difficult to stem. Indonesian women who study Apex History are expected to emulate Indonesian female hero figures who continue to defend the nation's culture during the struggle. Suryochondro states that the nature of these organizations is mostly social and cultural, namely that they fight for new values in family and community life, and they want to maintain the expression of indigenous culture against aspects of Western culture that are not appropriate [21]. This means that Indonesian women must be able to prevent bad things in globalization that can threaten the morality of the nation.

Efforts to respond to the increasingly diverse challenges of the 21st century can be done in a strategic way. Fakhri states that in the coming decades, two main strategies are proposed, namely [11]: first, integrating gender into all policies and programs of various educational organizations and institutions and, second, advocacy strategies. Gender integration in the world of education can be done by providing women's historical material that is relevant to current gender issues.

History as a lesson about the journey of humanity is the most appropriate social science in managing women's historical material that is right for learning in school. Ronning (1996: 143) states that women's empowerment is another aspect of gender that can be provided by the humanities by placing women's history firmly on the curriculum map, thus providing a role model for change and leadership [23]. Women's history can be included in the study of history while keeping in mind the existing curriculum and learning needs, without reducing the contents of other historical material competencies that are also important. Women's history can be seen as fostering students' care and critical attitude in viewing humans as a whole. Learning the history of a gender perspective can provide students with broader and scientific understanding to strengthen their sense of humanity in the face of 21st century challenges.

Professor of History from UGM, Kuntowijoyo, supports this statement Indonesia can learn in managing society from countries that have entered the postindustrial sector marked by increasing the guarantee of social security and the disappearance of the proletariat [1]. History as a future education is the right means to answer the challenges of the times. Learning history of women is the right starting point in preparing skilled and competent Indonesian people to be able to survive in handling of the 21st century challenges.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Learning gender-based women's history is an effort to include material about women's struggles in the history lesson curriculum in schools. Learning history of women is considered necessary to equate relevant understanding to view women and men as equal human beings. The selection of data and fact about

gender understanding suppose learning the history of women in Indonesia be unique. Women in Indonesia stands on two legs of the west and east which are gender-charged but still aware of attitude and female nature. This understanding is considered able to foster 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity in content knowledge. A better understanding of women's history provides a more interesting perspective to prepare Indonesian people who are more critical and creative in facing the challenges of the times.

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