

Lanang Tenan: Becoming Javanese Real Men in Indonesia

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Abstract—This study aims to describe Javanese male conception as the real men in Java. The premise is many unwritten obligation that must be pursued to certify themselves as real men in Java. Twenty eight Javanese male from five region were interviewed. A self constructed semistructured interview guide was used for each individual interview. All of the subjects said that self esteem was the most important things for a man to maintain their social lives, especially when it comes to their family reputation. Upbringing of parents, social, and educational level also determines the value systems of men. Furthermore, the identity of manhood is strongly influenced by expectations from the surrounding environment against a man in their dynamics everyday life. These findings support the notion that role of hegemonic masculinity was also influenced the Javanese male in Indonesia.

Keywords— Men, Masculine, Java, Hegemonic Masculinity.

I. INTRODUCTION

BEING a man is not easy. Many unwritten obligation that must be pursued to certify themselves as real man. In Javanese society, the ideal man (*lanang tenan*) is a man who have *benggol* (money) and *bonggol* (sexual). While women are property of men, aligned with *bondo* (treasure), *griyo* (palace), *turonggo* (vehicle), *kukilo* (birds, pets, sounds), and *pusoko* (weapons, fairy).

Soekarno regarded as the ideal male figure by the Javanese. The man's man (*lelananging jagad*) who was handsome, likes Arjuna in hthe Pandava puppets story, whose always win on every battlefield, and always won the hearts of every goddess. Because mastery of *wanita* (woman) is the symbol of Javanese male virility. Conversely, there is no independence on woman. Submission and dependence of women to men is generosity of Javanese woman portrayals. Soeharto was also presents strengthen the ideals of Javanese men. Soeharto has 32-year reign presents in the new order likes the king of kings, powerful and wealthy.

Meanwhile, hegemonic masculinity is universal phenomenon in the history of human civilization in this world. Traditionally, peoples in the world were organized themselves and arranged society building. Men over women acquire legitimacy of social values, religion, state law, and socialized for generations, from generation to generation.

On the basis of the background of problem, this study aims to identify and describe Javanese men's conception of *lanang tenan* as the real men in Java. This aims of this study should be done through the proof of view of research subjects, researchers, and knowledge of the concept of masculinity that exist for this and the ideas that have spread in the complex social and cultural life of researcher.

A male hierarchy exists among men. This serves as an indicator to determine the degree of an adult man's manhood. These indicators include a man must be able to marry and able to have a child, have a stable income and job, able to act wisely, is emotionally stable, wise and intelligent, is a leadership figure and protecting. Should a man be able to fulfill these indicators it indicates that the man is competent and automatically his degree of manhood is elevated in the eyes of the family and the society. Such descriptions certainly create rigid criteria that must be adopted by men to enable them to fulfill a number of these demands.

The type of masculinity that is most evident in and dominant in the society that follow a patriarchy culture is hegemonic masculinity. The distinct type of this masculinity is the presence of a role of control upon economic resources, for example job vacancy as well as the strong control of men towards women, particularly in the domestic sector in order to establish a masculine identity. Men who were from a higher social economic class has broader facilities to create the highest masculine identity through their works and men who were from lower economic class experience, difficulties in fulfilling a range of attributes and masculine identities [1]. This would certainly influence a man's self esteem if it was viewed from his daily behavior, particularly in their relations in the family.

Accordingly, to understand the dynamics living of men, a discussion on the image of men spread in the society needs to be conducted. This is important considering that it strongly determines the perception of men themselves. A perception of the self will develop later and relate with the process of establishing their self concept. Self refers to the collection of beliefs or faith [2]. A number of examples of beliefs of a man for example "men are not allowed to cry" or "men are the backbone of the family". These two statements function as a belief or faith that is practiced by men and usually take the form of repeated self talk. Of course there are several statements, faith, and beliefs accepted by men during their life course and this would produce a large scheme within the individual that bases their everyday life. In psychological terms, this scheme is known as self concept.

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Self concept refers to an individual's description of him/herself which comprise of perceptions of physical aspects, psychological and social faith as well as aspirations and ideal dreams of a human being. As noted by Rogers [3] he stated that the self concept encompasses self awareness concerning their existence as well as their self functions in their social environment. The self concept gives a thorough meaning towards a person's existence in their life.

The self concept is composed of a number of parts, namely perception towards body image, self ideal, self esteem, roles and social identity. Self concept is not a factor that was brought from birth, but is a factor that is learnt and formed through experiences in life since the phases of growth until maturation in relating with other peoples [4]. The environment, experience and parental nurturing patterns also give a significant influence towards the establishment of self concept. The attitudes and responses of parents and the environment will function as information for the individual to judge who he is.

Each individual would certainly have an ideal self that they desire for, including for their body image. The incongruence between the body they have and the body they idealize will result in dissatisfaction towards their own bodies and would then influence their self confidence in socializing. This is strongly associated with body image, referring to how a person views and judges their body. According to Grinder [5] body image is the evaluative result from a series of experiences in the present or that is idealized which originates from the physical development of a person, attention from parents and expectations from the social environment towards a person's physical attributes.

II. METHOD

This study used qualitative approach, because the goal is to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon. For the location of the study, the researcher chose four districts in Yogyakarta, that is Sleman, Bantul, Gunung Kidul, and Kulon Progo. After determining the locations, the next step is to determine the subjects. In each district, seven subjects who have married at least one year were invited to join an individual interview. These criteria are meant to select the subjects who have had the experience of building relationships (married) to the couple. 28 Javanese male from four region were interviewed. A self-constructed semistructured interview guide was used for each individual interview. In the interview guide, questions and prompts used to explore the interviewees perceptions of masculinity, being Javanese men, and the implications of masculinity in the realm of their family. They were invited to use real life examples to further illustrate their views. The average time for an interview was 49 minutes (range is about 33-78 minutes). The interviews were audio-taped with informants prior consent and transcribed in verbatim after the interview.

Data was analyzed by using general qualitative analyses techniques. First level of coding was conducted based on semantically similar words, phrases, and sentences that formed meaningful units in each conclusion at the raw

response level were grouped whereas semantically different data were divided. Further checking and second levels of coding and categorization were conducted, in which similar codes were grouped to reflect higher-order categories of theme. The coding and categorization were finalized with consensus.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Javanese men must be *tatag* (being brave and facing all situations), *tangguh* (sturdy), *tunggon* (capable of surviving all conditions). If there was a boy that cried the parents would say *cah lanang ora pareng nangis* (boys are does not allowed to cry). However this condition seems to be burdensome because men have to be emotionally mature and stable and this is difficult to do. One of the subjects suggested that becoming the head of the family is quite difficult although he did not explicitly say this. He told the story using a flat tone without explaining much in detail, and when telling something he would only tell some specific people. According to the subject, it is not good to have the families problems out there in the society.

Problem solving using the man's way will emerge when the problems relate with land, women, faith, and the good name of the family. These three things are the elements of a man's honor and self esteem. Several terms, specifically in the Javanese culture that describe a man's honor and self esteem for example *sadumuk bathuk senyari bumi ditohi pecahing dada wutahing ludira*, meaning as wide as the forehead and as wide as a handful of land, it would be fought for until death. Other terms include, *ojo dilarani anake*, *ojo digoda bojone*, *ojo dicacat kerise* (do not harm the child, do not abuse the wife, and do not insult the faith) because these things can make a man angry. It seems that the problem of honor is important and sensitive for a man in dealing with his problems.

There was also a gentle attitude that they like to show which is reinforced by perceptions of the physical superiority that they possess. Such findings are consistent with a study from Blyth [6] that individual evaluation towards their physical appearance will influence a number of aspects for example comparison of physical development with other people, reactions of other people towards the individual and comparison towards the ideal culture as well as social comparison. Social comparison refers to the cognitive evaluation made by a person about particular attributes that they own with the attributes of others [7]. Therefore it is proven that the subjects evaluation of women being weaker, influence the way men perceive themselves which produces an unwritten law to protect women. Such conditions cause a high bargaining position of the men towards women.

The subjects in this study perceive that men earn a privileged status in the society because they have greater participation in social activities. For example night curfews largely involve men, social work, and (traditional ceremony attended by father of a particular village).

Men are also positioned as a bridge between the family and the society. All of the families success is also acknowledged

as the success of the man in the society. In line with the status of men in the society, men have greater freedom compared to women.

Men can basically do anything they please (*sak geleme dhewe*) when doing something, they are not required to notify the family. One of the subjects, stated that men have the freedom to make friends and the freedom to choose the form of activities they are interested in, for example drinking alcohol. Men are justified to leave domestic activities when friends ask them to go out. Maintaining relations with other male friends is deemed more important compared to assisting his wife to perform household duties.

“So yes indeed, sometimes I said that men do as they please. I think it is normal. Most men are like that. For example, I am supposed to help my wife at home who has a lot of work and then a friend asks me to go fishing. If I do not hang out with them, it makes me feel uncomfortable, sometimes my kid has a fever or any other problems” (Subject, 03).

Men are also perceived as figures that refuse to give in or lose. This is reflected in the Javanese idiom where Javanese men are referred to as “*lanang*” which means “*senajan ala tetep menang*” (although men are wrong, they are still win). Based on such examples, men are known to be superior and always wants to win for themselves.

A number of findings demonstrate that the image of a man in the eyes of the patriarchic society are as protecting figures, backbone of the family, main figures who sees an earning that must be persistent and strong. This position has a social and psychological precondition that must be owned by men before they bear the main position in the family and the society.

Therefore when a man fails and feels incapable or does not fulfilled those preconditions, he will be trapped in psychological distress of which will attack his self esteem. Meanwhile, women are safer from the role of men as delegates between the family and the social environment is considerable burdensome, because all the actions of the husband will be evaluated by the social environment and the negative and positive behaviors of the man will influence the way society views the family. This is in addition to the absence of a room to discuss feelings and anxieties that are felt without having to feel ashamed or without threatening the man's self esteem.

This condition is not much different from the results of studies revolving around domestic violence conducted by Lee in Philippines. The results of the study demonstrate that several men in Philippines position themselves as the main backbone in the family that has full authority towards the other members in the family. The male subjects that were studied, have the perception that the responsibility of a man, in addition to fulfilling the financial needs of the family, must also be responsible towards deciding the gender roles performed by the wife in the domestic domain [8]. This demonstrates that the form of the traditional masculine system places men as a superior person and also demonstrates that men enjoy privileges which originate from cultural values. This conditions resembles two contradicting

conditions which is not fully recognized by men themselves, in one aspect he expects to become a superior person in the family and the social environment so that he feels privileges from this position, however on other aspects there are several men that are incapable to fulfilled those manhood preconditions as expected by the social environment. Therefore it is not surprising that the initiatives to eliminate violence towards women experience some drawbacks because men feel they have lost their privileges which were granted by the patriarchy culture.

In several areas of Indonesia, nurturing by distinguishing gender, in terms of different nurturing patterns towards boys and girls, are often found. Based on the study of Tilker, a research from New York, from a small age, the girl is conditioned to avoid acting aggressively because of the norms of the society (cultural factors). From birth, a girl was psychologically regarded as more able to control their emotions, meaning that the more they are pressured by their parents they would become more obedient or they would only cry or isolate themselves in their room. Conversely, for boys it is normal for them to act aggressively.

A number of the subjects' explanations above indicate that the perception towards the physical strength of men are sometimes carried over to when a man grows to an adult and has his own family and child. Settling matters using physical means when other alternatives are unsuccessful is evident in this study. This is related with self esteem and the honor as a man, particularly related with winning and losing to his wife in settling conflicts although not necessarily leading to violence. This indicates the inheritance of masculinity values through the father-child relations which confirms that they have physical strength. These explanations are in line with Lamb [9] that nurturing patterns are often practiced by the father towards his male child who tends to be focused on adjusting to social norms in the society and in this context the norm of masculinity. Furthermore, this also demonstrates that the initial self concept that is formed on boys through father and child interaction is more focused on physical strength although this is done together with moral values.

IV. CONCLUSION

As a consequence of physiological structures, men are culturally constructed to be labeled as masculine, and as a result are educated and grown to be individuals with a masculine self concept. Values of masculinity emphasizing the fulfillment of characteristics, roles and social functions as a “leader” for women and children, have placed men as superior to women in the society. Several socio-cultural factors (patterns of nurturing in the family and religious interpretation) have been identified as a factor that becomes the main pillar for forming the masculine self concept. A description of the values of masculinity that is superior (for example being rational, strong, brave, the protector of the family, and interpretation of religious texts) have been identified as a factor that becomes a main pillar for the formation of this masculine self concept. A description of the values of masculinity that are superior (for example rational,

tough, brave, protector of the family) compared to feminine vales, have led to an internal conflict among men, namely a conflict of the ideal self and the actual self.

All of the subjects said that self-esteem was the most important things for a man to maintain their social lives, especially when it comes to their families reputation. Upbringing of parents, social, and educational level also determines the value systems of men. Furthermore, the identity of manhood is strongly influenced by expectations from the surrounding environment against a man in their dynamics everyday life. The social environment, particularly Javanese, places men above women because men have larger participation in social activities. Men are also referred to as an insider when related with the family and social environment. Men are placed as the bridge between family and society.

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