

Women's Ministry in the Javanese Christian Church in Feminist Ecclesiology

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Abstract: The oppression of women who are considered trivial, low, and weak occurs in society, especially the church, which should apply God's love in its life. The patriarchal culture that is still inherent in the church order system is an important thing that needs to be highlighted. Oppressed and excluded women should get the same or equal rights as men. This research aims to create novelty and contribute to the academic world. To respond to this, the researcher researched the position of women in church services, especially in the cultural context of the Javanese Christian Church. The understanding and role of feminist ecclesiology needs to be created in the context of ministry, especially in the Javanese Christian Church. The research method used is a qualitative method to support this research. In the context of Indonesia, especially in Javanese culture, patriarchal culture still exists today. Women often get an underestimated place in everything. In various aspects, women often get the last position, especially in the field of service in the Church. This article aims to analyze women's ministry in the Javanese Christian Church from the perspective of feminist ecclesiology.

Keywords: church, ecclesiology, feminism, women ministers, GKJ

INTRODUCTION

The conversation about women is never-ending and will continue to be interesting to discuss until today, related to its relationship to the community, interpersonal, and characteristics. Even today, human life is inseparable from women's involvement and participation in various categories such as family, social, economic, cultural, and religious. However, in reality, women are viewed as beings who do not have an essential position in life and are called weak so that they experience oppression, are in a marginalized position, are considered the cause of a problem, are not independent, and get discrimination in any case. The role of women today is not a foreign thing to talk about, especially in terms of their involvement in many fields. However, in the context of the church, many of them have not empowered women properly due to the masculine patriarchal culture that is still very strong around them (Kalintabu, 2020b, p. 58). Calvin also stated that public positions, such as teaching, were unsuitable for women because they were associated with authority and leadership. By law, women were supposed to be subservient to men and maintain silence (Douglass, 1985, p. 46; Tucker & Liefeld, 1987, p. 176). Men were fully involved in the church without consideration

for women. Various fields are still often dominated and controlled by men, who are seen as in control of everything (Wijaya, 2017, p. 104). They assume that the patriarchal system cannot be separated in all aspects of human life. However, there is another opinion that the patriarchal system is just a construction of society that, over time, can be changed and replaced with a model of equality.

In the context of the Javanese Christian Church, which was born in Javanese society, it is inseparable from the patriarchal system with cultural characteristics. The tribal society in the part of Indonesia that is still thick with patriarchal culture is the Javanese tribe. Many designations or terms are used to call women, including *garwa*, which means signing *nyawa*, or *kanca wingking*, which means friends behind, as a reference to wives. Wives or women are usually seen in terms of three things, namely, *cooking* (related to kitchen affairs), *macak* (dressing up), and *manak* (giving birth) (Rabbaniyah & Salsabila, 2022, p. 116). This shows that the position of women is only in the domestic sphere of the household, and they are not allowed to be involved in outside affairs. In other words, it wants to say that women's position is not equal to men's and have a limited space to be able to play more roles other than these three things. The patriarchal solid culture in Javanese society affects how people act and think. On the other hand, Javanese women have substantial positions in various fields, such as being involved in the cultural order, controlling the continuation of an intact and fulfilled family, and other fields. It can be seen from the participation of women in regional leadership, such as governors, village heads, ministers, and so on. Based on Cakra Wikara Indonesia's research from 2019 to 2020, eight women served in government in provinces, districts, and cities.

The dynamics of church ministry for women are increasingly fought to achieve their rights, one of which is in Javanese culture due to the influence of Western culture. Women are resilient individuals with various strengths that are as important and equal as men (Saragih et al., 2019). Patriarchal ecclesiology is beginning to be considered in the process of ministry. An understanding of feminist ecclesiology is necessary in the context of the church. According to Natalie Watson, feminist ecclesiology is one way for women to voice their presence and existence as part of the church. Ecclesiology should be reconsidered by seeing women and their contributions to life, faith experience, and sexuality as essential aspects (Watson, 2002: 44). The equality of women and men became the main focus. Hence, gender positions and relations began to shift. A positive response to this influence is applied by the Javanese Christian Church, which provides space for women to participate in service and take on the role of one of them, a pastor, to lead his congregation. By looking at this phenomenon, the author wants to analyze the dynamics of women's ministry in the Javanese Christian Church (GKJ) by using feminist ecclesiology analysis as a theoretical framework. Previously, research was conducted by Asnath Niwa Natar, "The Church in Favor of Women (A Feminist Perspective Church Ecclesiology)," which aims to discover various discrimination and marginalization of women in church teachings that are less favorable to women (Natar, 2018). Another study conducted by Hermawati, "Javanese Culture and Gender Equality," aims to find out about gender equality in a patriarchal culture in Java that tends to discriminate against women (Hermawati, 2007). In addition, research by Sidauruk, "The Existence of Women in the Paradigm and Ministry of Jesus," aims to analyze the existence of women in the ministry of Jesus (Sidauruk, 2019). There is research by Rabaniyah and Salsabila, "Patriarchy in Javanese Culture; Building Self-

Silencing Behavior in Female Sexual Victims on Campus," which aims to see the influence of patriarchal culture on the freedom of speech of women as sexual victims on campus (Rabbaniyah & Salsabila, 2022). This research produces an understanding of ecclesiology from a feminist perspective. The church is described as an open community for everyone, regardless of gender or social level. Awareness of gender equality needs to be a particular concern to provide a new understanding of the practice of church life and to be inclusive of all congregations without exception.

The author sees the need for research on feminist ecclesiology that focuses on specific cultures, such as women's ministry in the Javanese Christian Church. This is different from the research that has been done before. There has been no research on feminist ecclesiology studies on women's ministry in the Javanese Christian Church. It aims to describe and analyze the study of the feminist ecclesiology of the Javanese Christian Church in the dynamics of the church's growth journey.

METHOD

The author's research method is a qualitative literature study. Literature study is a qualitative research method that makes books, articles, and other literature the primary source of research. The purpose of the qualitative research method is to understand certain phenomena studied by subjects in research, such as motivation, action, perception, behavior, and study. The author describes the research data in sentences, words, and language by looking at specific contexts using scientific methods (Moleong, 2012, p. 6). First, the research will be conducted by collecting and analyzing previous studies relevant to feminist ecclesiology, gender equality, and the role of women in the church. Second, the author examines the relevance between feminist ecclesiology, gender equality, and the dynamics of women's ministry in the Javanese Christian Church. The author will be greatly assisted by feminist approaches and critiques in parsing and analyzing problematic research. It is essential to see the extent of women's involvement in ministry and including ecclesiastical policy-making in the Javanese cultural context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women in Javanese Culture

The position of women in society is different in every culture. In the context of Javanese culture, women are considered weak, can only do housework, and depend on men. This view still exists today but is not as prominent as it used to be. In the Javanese language, the term for women, "wanita," means "*wani ditata*," which means daring to be organized or arranged (Suriani Irma, 2017, pp. 65-66). This concept shows the dominance of masculine power, which positions women as marginalized (Jati, 2015). It has a negative connotation associated with a negative image or view of them. Women do not seem to have an important role in people's lives.

Javanese culture shows many terms that put women in a lower position than men. Some of these terms are embedded in the community to the point of being "tolerated." One of these terms is "*swarga nunut neraka katut*". This means that a man (husband) determines a woman

(wife) regarding heaven and hell. Whatever a woman does, be it attitude, behavior, or any action, when talking about heaven or hell, it is the right or obligation of a man to determine. Here, it is clear that a man does not allow women to determine decisions or rights over themselves (Hermawati, 2007, p. 20).

Culture has created women's roles, images, and statuses in every life. Women have an image as human beings who are seen as meek, lowly, always obeying men, and have a position that cannot be more than the position or position of men. In the family context, women are seen as submissive wives, supporters of their husbands, and mothers who can do everything in the household. Meanwhile, men are the ones who know everything, more than women, and have rational thinking. The position of men are obliged to be responsible for the family and protect and nurture the family (Hermawati, 2007). Therefore, the position of men in the household is called the head of the family.

Feminist Hermeneutics of Women's Leadership in the Church

Female servants rarely have a place in church leadership. However, in the younger generation, women are beginning to be given a place to be leaders in the church. An increasing number of women have been ordained as church leaders. Women have begun to fight for equality by paying more attention to various fields, namely, social, political, cultural, and economic (Natar, 2013). Thus, "biblical feminism" began to emerge to eradicate the traditional view of women's leadership in the church, just as Jesus Christ formed a new humanity by uniting women and men. As the Redeemer and the liberating Word, Jesus called the Christian community to continue his service mission (Fiorenza, 1997, pp. 167-177). Some figures, such as Virginia Mollenkot, Letha Scanzoni, and Nancy Hardesty, claim that this movement seeks to demonstrate the equality between men and women found in Genesis 1:27. (Lundy, 1992, p. 57). This emphasizes that the Bible needs to be seen as a form of equality between men and women so that there is no distinction between the two. As stated by Gangel, feminism comes as a form of protest against the Christian tradition regarding women's relationship with divinity. Feminist theologians see that women can also have the same image as God, not just men. (Gangel, 1983, p. 59).. The Bible also discusses several roles of women that show that God empowers everyone to proclaim the gospel, such as Euodia, Sinthike, Phoebe, and Priscilla (Sidauruk, 2019). In the Indonesian context, women have begun gaining church leadership positions. However, there continues to be opposition or pros and cons to such leadership.

Biblical restructuring is urgently needed to balance the rigid legalism that exposes the dominance of male leadership (Conn, 1984, pp. 104-124). In the New Testament, there is much talk of Christ as the head of the church. Paul's writing in Ephesians 5:22-24 provides the basis for submission to headship; the wife is to submit to the husband because the husband is the head of the wife, who is also Christ as the head of the church. This shows that wives must submit to their husbands in any matter. Similarly, the book of 1 Corinthians 11: 1-16 states that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, while to Christ is God. Biblical feminism assumes that headship (κεφαλή) is derived from God's authority, and hence, the underlying feature of her ministry is not oppressive authoritativeness (Williams, 1977, p. 112).

From a feminist perspective, the church is described as the community of Christ for His presence through the Spirit, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:46. It can be seen that Jesus struggled to bring equality between His people (Sianturi, 2020, p. 132). Biblical feminism sees the potential in women and their rights without eliminating their duties and responsibilities. The Bible contains a vital teaching that explains the identity of women who are equal to men, namely that women, like men, are created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) (Kartika, 2000). The role of women is to care for the quality of family life without reducing the social role of fathers or men's rights as fathers. By interpreting the Bible critically, people can understand the meaning conveyed in the Bible regarding justice and equality. Churches need to realize the importance of contextual biblical interpretation so that it can be developed according to the needs and context of each church to continue to proclaim the Kingdom of God in the world as it should be.

Masculine Ecclesiology Leadership

In church life, patriarchal culture has dominated power in any field. For centuries, this culture still influenced all aspects of the church, starting from development, decision-making, and so on, which are thick with power. The church becomes focused on power, rituals, and human-centeredness, especially those with the highest positions, such as pastors. The individualism of the church is increasingly visible and excludes women and children who are considered weak. They did not have the opportunity to voice their rights. The position and position of women are increasingly marginalized and isolated, so they are increasingly poor, discriminated against, and oppressed. This situation and condition of the church clearly illustrate that the church continues to maintain inequality and injustice (Natar, 2018). Therefore, it is clear that women are considered to hold unimportant positions and only bring new difficulties to the church.

Women continue to be marginalized and do not even get a trust or position in the ministry of the church. Gender injustice against women in society, in this case, the ministry, in particular, continues to be faced with various challenges and problems (Sibarani, 2021). Women's leadership continues to be questioned even though some are gradually gaining pastor positions. However, they continue to be constrained in providing voting rights in making all existing decisions. Women are considered unclean and cause people to fall into sin (Nasution, 1997, pp. 28-29). In this case, the role of women seems to have a place, but in reality, it is only seen on the outside. Women seem to have a voice but are not heard and listened to.

Feminist Ecclesiology

Feminist thinkers present an ecclesiology approach based on the realization that women's voices remain absent in the church and women have been anthropologically and theologically considered inferior to men for centuries. Feminist ecclesiology operates on a number of fronts, examining how influences such as classical patriarchal anthropology, Christology, and the limitations of the Second Vatican Council contribute to the marginalization and marginalization of women in subordinate roles in the life of the Church (Geere, 2019, pp. 9-10). Thinking about women's ecclesiology continues to be fought for by considering all the challenges and

consequences. Church ecclesiology that emphasizes equality and justice in gender relations can be an important reference for carrying out the duties and callings of the church in the world. This view of ecclesiology will at least influence how structures and relationships within the church are shaped (Kalintabu, 2020a).

In reality, churches still pay less attention to women, so they must adjust and find new, more contextualized ways of church. Old cultures and beliefs that continue to shackle women must be transformed to create gender equality (Christ & Plaskow, 1979, p. 7).. The existing cultural diversity needs to be considered by feminist ecclesiology to achieve equality for women, especially in their service in the church. It does not stop there; injustice, oppression, and poverty are important things to fight for women to get their rightful rights. Every church member participates holistically in the sense of mutual acceptance, mutual giving, no distinction, separation, and subordination (LaCugna, 1991, p. 402). It becomes essential that the church's primary goal is to overcome injustice and create equality in the church so that every believer can serve God fully. The church began to realize and respond to all the challenges of the times that continue to exist. The church pays attention to how to answer all the needs of the people contextually. Developments continue to occur as a form of passing on the good news to the world so that everyone, especially women, can feel it (Geere, 2019).

The term *ecclesia* in the church originated in the New Testament as a reference to the spiritual and political community in realizing free citizenship (Stegemann, 1994, p. 9). In the context of congregations that are still thick with patriarchal culture, women are not allowed to make decisions in matters related to religion. Men are the ones who have the power, and women only follow the decisions that have been made. Based on this, feminist ecclesiology comes as a form of struggle in which women should have the right to make decisions, have claims regarding religious power, and love each other. The goal of feminist ecclesiology is not to get rid of men's rights but to create equality and eliminate oppression against women who are considered weak.

Elisabeth S. Fiorenza has thoughts about feminist ecclesiology, which places women as the church and will continue to be the church. This is a form of women's struggle against the authority of men and the church, as well as the oppression and unfair treatment they have experienced (Fiorenza, 1993, p. 240). Fiorenza sees feminist ecclesiology as a solution to comfort women in the church. Through this ecclesiology, women begin to have a place to express their thoughts and opinions freely, not limited, and there is no barrier or distinction between men and women. According to Calvin, the church is the mother of all believers, who conceives, cares for, protects, and guides all its people (Calvin, 1980, p. 185). The church should be a place or space for all people, genders, and backgrounds to reflect Jesus' equal discipleship. Women in the family reflect their ecclesial role (Harisantoso, 2023a, 2023b, pp. 92-95). Equality that believes in Jesus' discipleship is present to encourage, enable, and create justice instead of oppressing or discriminating. In discipleship that prioritizes equality, there will be spiritual well-being, need, and liberation for all humanity (Fiorenza, 1993). Therefore, the position of women is not as a complement when needed but as partners who help each other and nurture equality.

The church should be open, present an atmosphere of friendship, and welcome good relations between people. Openness means providing space for those who are marginalized,

oppressed, and experiencing injustice. Women should be given space to develop themselves and increase their knowledge and education through organized meetings (Narawati, 2020). This is a characteristic of feminist ecclesiology, which emphasizes human relationships to achieve justice and tear down oppression (Russell, 1995, p. 18). The awareness of discrimination and oppression in the church needs to be removed. The church should have a liberating nature and be open to all people without being limited by certain groups, races, and cultures. Therefore, the church, which is the body of Christ, needs to help all people, especially women who are excluded, sidelined, and oppressed. Based on the discussion above, feminist ecclesiology offers something new. The church is open to various social, cultural, ethnic, class, gender, and religious backgrounds. There is a need for gender awareness that provides people with understanding and applies it in church life. The church should be inclusive and open to opportunities for everyone; the presence of the church is to serve everyone.

Building GKJ Feminist Ecclesiology

Based on the PPA document of the GKJ synod, the Javanese Christian Church was born in the early 20th century. The GKJ lives in the context of a pluralistic society that includes Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and other faiths. This certainly shows a variety of cultures that go hand in hand. With the uniqueness of the GKJ, which has ethnic nuances and contributes to cultural diversity in Indonesia, the GKJ continues to bear fruit and survive to preserve its cultural heritage. The involvement of culture or ethnicity that continues to be preserved by the GKJ synod certainly has positive and negative impacts on the service process of the GKJ synod in the world. The arts and traditions embraced by the GKJ synod should adjust to the development of the existing times. The Javanese tribe is famous for its patriarchal culture, which, without realizing it, continues to exist in the process of congregational service. Based on this brief background, the GKJ wants to show that the teachings and cultural heritage must be contextualized along with the times. Therefore, the GKJ continues to strive for transformation as a church of God that has a responsibility in its involvement in God's saving mission in the world to witness.

The GKJ is a Calvinist church that believes that the ecclesiology of the church should be based on the Bible and involve all members of the congregation to be dynamic and serve in it. The GKJ Synod has three ministerial positions: Elder, Deacon, and Pastor. This servant concept has an important influence on the GKJ as a means to grow and develop according to its ecclesiology. The presbyteral leadership of the GKJ synod shows that every congregation representative has an equal voice in serving to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Based on this, the GKJ synod carries out the task of the church's call to serve, fellowship, and witness by involving all people without exception.

Various challenges in carrying out the task of the church's call in the context of the GKJ are not easy to face. Various dynamics that occur, especially the patriarchal culture, have a considerable impact on the service process of the GKJ synod. Evaluations continue to be held, the task of proclamation has not been carried out properly, and the burden together synodally is still constrained by various considerations. The synod continues to improve and build itself as a community of believers who are called to live according to the call of service (Dahono, 2011, pp. 16-17). The call of service referred to here is that service is a community that continues to

imitate Jesus without eliminating cultural identity as something unique to the GKJ synod. Therefore, the GKJ synod continues to sail through the times. This means that the synod continues to develop and grow with the times without losing its cultural heritage.

The evaluation results carried out by the GKJ synod in the context of patriarchal culture are starting to open up and present feminist ecclesiology in the service process. The GKJ synod began to involve women in every service field, such as elders, deacons, pastors, and even other aspects of church services, such as worship officers, singers, and musicians. It can be seen that for some time, the GKJ synod carried out the ordination of quite a lot of female pastors. The ordination marks the increasing number of female pastors who contribute to the ranks of service in the GKJ synod. This proves that women also have an important role in the ministry, as seen through their involvement as pastors.

Some of the evidence above provides space for the presence of feminist ecclesiology to be more open. Feminist ecclesiology firmly rejects the discrimination of women in the church. The contribution of women in positions is not aimed at appreciating the hierarchy. It is an attempt to slowly get rid of the wrong understanding of leadership patterns that have been centered on men (Janice, 2016). Women's ekklesia is an understanding that shows that the church will become real when it involves women in its ministry process. This is in line with the PPA of the GKJ synod, which involves every group taking part in carrying out the task of the church's call. The Church Order and Management of the GKJ synod Chapter 2 Article 6 states that every church citizen, without exception, has the right and responsibility in the task of church vocation. Calling of the church. The church places women in every aspect of service and development of the GKJ synod in its development process. Therefore, the position of women is no longer the lowest place or considered weak, but they have an equal position in all fields of service in the GKJ synod.

The involvement of women in the service process is also seen in the GKJ synod program, namely the development process and future planning. The GKJ synod provides a program to establish the role of education for the cadres of GKJ synod servants (Sugiri et al., 1988, p. 190). The role of education for cadres is a form of preparation in all fields of ecclesiastical service. The synod provides educational scholarships for prospective church servants who will later serve God to continue the task of calling a servant. The scholarship is intended for men and provides opportunities for women. Therefore, the GKJ synod does not provide a higher space for men but provides equal space for men and women. This is where the church's vocation task is seen, and the GKJ synod provides space for every group without exception.

The categorial service program can be seen from women's participation in every activity carried out by the church. Women prepare the GKJ synod's routine activities, namely *Riyaya Undhuh-undhuh* (Puspitasari & Istyanto, 2020, p. 3). The activity involves the entire congregation to participate actively. This celebration is interpreted as building a sense of belonging, appreciation, and togetherness for everyone, including women. It can be seen that the preparation process for this celebration requires easy preparation so that each group of people has their respective duties and responsibilities. Not only that, this celebration also builds a sustainable attitude towards Javanese culture, which continues to exist as time develops.

From some of the GKJ synod programs above, feminist ecclesiology appears in every vocation task of the GKJ synod. Oppression, discrimination, and rejection of women over time

began to be overcome. The GKJ synod continues to grow and develop according to the existing context. Through the GKJ synod, there is clear evidence that women should be valued and respected, not just as complements. The GKJ synod proves that the *sacred* Javanese culture can be overcome by continuing to adhere to the church's mission to involve all groups in the service process. The struggle of women to get their rights is increasingly finding light and success in the fight for equality for the oppressed.

CONCLUSION

The presence of feminist ecclesiology shows the struggle of women to gain rights and obligations toward the dynamics of serving in God's saving mission. A low, humiliated, and excluded view of women is the basis for this feminist ecclesiology. Efforts made to gain equality from the patriarchal church system require processes and dynamics that are not easy to pass. Women, also part of the church (body), should be allowed to join the ecclesiastical government system. Therefore, it is essential to apply feminist ecclesiology in church life in the world.

The patriarchal system is also inherent in the culture of every region around the world. Javanese culture is one culture that is famous for its patriarchal system. This can be seen from various references that seem to put women in a weak and low position. In the context of the Javanese Christian Church, the patriarchal system is slowly getting rid of considering the development of the times, which makes the congregation thinking more open. Feminist ecclesiology in the ecclesiastical service system of the Javanese Christian Church can be seen in various programs involving the entire congregation. This continues to be developed so that the unfavorable view of the position of women in the church gradually disappears. The attitude of mutual respect and respect for fellow congregants continues to be built to continue to realize equality in carrying out God's saving mission in the world.

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