

# Exploring the Meaning of Seniority and Its Impact on Santri in the Jabodetabek Area

# Menelusuri Makna Senioritas dan Dampaknya pada Santri di Wilayah Jabodetabek

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#### Abstract

Education is a forum for realizing intelligent lives for the nation's children. Islamic boarding schools are one of the educational institutions that not only provide a formal education system but also a religious education system. However, in the education system, levels cannot be separated, in this case seniority. Seniority is integrated into the education system in Islamic boarding schools, especially among students. Students have responsibility for themselves when studying at Islamic boarding schools, away from parental supervision and living with their friends in a dormitory, this allows for seniority. Seniority is often interpreted as a hierarchy of someone to a higher level or status. However, seniority in the realm of education is not always positive. Therefore, this research aims to determine junior perspectives regarding the seniority phenomenon and its impact. The method in this research is qualitative using a phenomenological approach. Research data obtained through the observation and interview stages with three informants using purposive sampling techniques was then analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This research shows that students experience both physical and verbal violence which has an impact on the students' social attitudes and mental health. This research also found the meaning of seniority from a junior's perspective, namely the feeling of wanting to be respected and appreciated, and is considered essential in a hereditary culture. **Keywords:**seniority, impact, qualitative.

#### Abstrak

Pendidikan merupakan wadah untuk mewujudkan kehidupan cerdas anak bangsa. Pesantren menjadi salah satu lembaga pendidikan yang tidak hanya menyelenggarakan sistem pendidikan formal tetapi juga sistem pendidikan agama. Namun, dalam system pendidikan tentu tidak terlepas dari adanya tingkatan, dalam hal ini adalah senioritas. Senioritas menyatu dengan system pendidikan di pesantren terutama di kalangan santri. Santri mempunyai tanggung jawab terhadap diri sendiri ketika belajar di pesantren, jauh dari pengawasan orang tua dan tinggal bersama temantemannya di asrama hal ini memungkinkan adanya senioritas. Senioritas sering kali diartikan sebagai hierarki pada seseorang untuk tingkat atau status yang lebih tinggi. Namun senioritas dalam ranah pendidikan tidak selalu bersifat positif. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui perspektif junior mengenai fenomena senioritas dan dampaknya. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis. Data penelitian yang diperoleh melalui tahap observasi dan wawancara kepada tiga orang informan dengan teknikpurposive sampling kemudian dianalisis menggunakan interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa santri mengalami kekerasan baik fisik maupun verbal yang berdampak pada sikap sosial dan kesehatan mental santri. Penelitian ini juga menemukan makna senioritas dari sudut pandang junior, yaitu perasaan ingin dihormati dan dihargai, serta dianggap esensial sebagai budaya turun-temurun.

Kata Kunci: senioritas, dampak, kualitatif

### 1. Introduction

The foundation of a nation's progress lies in the education system, education is an important place in shaping the character and attitude of the nation's next generation. Seniority occurs as a form of social symptom. Seniority is a concept that is generally used to describe a higher level or status in a hierarchy or an organization in various aspects or fields (Safitri & Mugiarso, 2022). The phenomenon of seniority is found in Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) which is defined as a state that is higher in terms of rank, experience, and age (Sinaga, 2023). So in short, we can interpret seniority as a phenomenon in which there must be differences in levels and classes.

Talking about seniority is closely related to the world of education. Seniority is part of the dynamics of the world of education as well as a challenge. In several educational institutions, it was revealed that there was an application of the phenomenon of seniority which caused violence, one of which occurred in students. Research conducted by Ananda et al., (2023) at the Al-Fattah Jember Islamic Boarding School shows an indication of seniority in junior students which is the dominant cause of problems in the form of conflict. This phenomenon has also been confirmed by the ustadzah at the boarding school.

Covered from Voi.id, September (2022) revealed that there was a case of violence against a santri at Pondok Pesantren Gontor who died purely because of seniority, not the fault of the pesantren. The santri care team, which found allegations of abuse that caused fatalities, immediately gave strict sanctions to the perpetrators in the form of dropping out of the Gontor Islamic Boarding School. In line with the data obtained by BBC News Indonesia (2022) which states that there are allegations of mistreatment of students that have led to loss of life, this will certainly open the veil of the existence of systemic violent practices in pesantren. Research conducted by Aini (2021) shows that physical and non-physical victims of bullying or seniority have an impact on changes in santri behaviour. The research respondent with the initials TF felt that he was always guilty, not considered and lost confidence, which made TF a quiet figure. Respondent AY felt that he always harboured resentment, was increasingly insecure, and felt his life was useless, this made AY withdraw from his social environment. Research conducted by Ahwadzi et al., (2024) also found that at the Assalam Modern Islamic Boarding School there is seniority behaviour that is verbal and nonverbal. Seniority occurs in the Assalam Modern Islamic Boarding School environment because it is caused by the togetherness of students who interact to create a situation where bullying is considered a common joke and seniors are considered more powerful.

From some factual data on seniority cases that occur, it certainly has a negative impact and does not rule out the possibility that it will always have a negative impact on its juniors. The reason is, that the impact of seniority in the educational environment in causing inequality in learning opportunities and creating an uncomfortable atmosphere also has the potential to hinder the development of students (Sektiningtyas et al., 2024). Researchers chose the phenomenology approach because it is in line with the purpose of the study, namely to find out seniority and its impact on students. Therefore, this research will present data on the meaning of seniority from the victim's perspective and its impact. The findings in this study will have benefits both theoretically and practically as a form of dynamism of science.

#### 2. Literature Review

Seniority is a general term recognized by many people, referring to an activity that occurs in various community domains that have groups or hierarchies (Sinaga, 2023). The influence of seniority can be felt by the subject or object of a group, including both positive and negative impacts. Seniority behaviour that often involves violence is caused by a lack of social control from the family, school, and community environment (Lohy & Pribadi, 2021). Seniority, which should have a positive role, especially in the attitude of discipline in students, has the opposite effect. Seniority is often used in negative ways, such as being arbitrary and making juniors submit to the point of causing several acts of violence and even causing casualties (Ananda et al., 2023). Seniority refers to a state or level that is higher in terms of age, and this phenomenon has become a culture that develops among individuals who believe that there is a group between seniors and juniors in an environment, creating certain differences (Nasution & Adi, 2023).

# 3. Research Methods

# 3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were three female students, the criteria for informants were experiencing senior violence in Islamic boarding schools both verbal and physical with a span of the last 3-4 years, and the age of the informants ranged from 18-21 years and were in the JABODETABEK area. Taking sources or informants is done with a *purposive sampling* technique. *Purposive sampling* is a sampling technique that has its main characteristic, namely based on the criteria that the researcher determines and is owned by the informant (Campbell et al., 2020). This is in line with the researcher's aim of extracting the meaning of the seniority phenomenon. Table 1 below is data on research informants totalling three female students who received seniority treatment and are in the JABODETABEK area.

No	Initials	Classification		
		Age	Domicile	Experiencing the phenomenon of seniority
1.	HMH	19	Jakarta	2020
2.	MF	20	Bogor	2021
3.	ANF	19	Tangerang	2021

Table. 1. Informant Characteristics

# 3.2 Design

The method that researchers use is qualitative by using a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach is an approach that has a research direction on the views or perspectives or interpretations related to what and how informants as individuals who experience directly a certain phenomenon or event interpret or provide views on their experiences (Sitepu & N. Hutapea, 2022). The phenomenological approach was chosen by the researcher because it is in line with the research objectives of exploring the meaning of the phenomenon of seniority and its impact from the perspective of junior santri. The data analysis technique in this study is *interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)*, an approach that is committed to understanding a person's life experience (Deviantony, 2020). The IPA analysis technique was chosen because it has the advantage of focusing on understanding in detail of a person's life experience.

# 3.3 Procedure

The initial stage in this research is to ask for willingness from informants. The researcher compiled an *informed consent*, which is a statement of the informant's willingness. At the next stage, the researcher provides an explanation in the form of the purpose and objectives of the research to the informant including the length of time of the research. In the next stage, after the prospective informant receives an explanation of the research to be carried out, the prospective informant has the freedom to decide whether to participate in this study or not. If the prospective informant states that he is willing to participate, then the researcherasks the prospective informant to fill out an *informed consent* as a form of availability to participate in the research. Furthermore, the researcher asked the informant for approval to record the interview procession to facilitate the course of research when making transcripts. At the next stage, the researcher determined the day schedule with the informant because the interview was conducted *offline*.

### 3.4 Instrument

The instruments used in this research are observation and interviews. Observation is an activity that involves direct observation of an object in the environment, both when it is ongoing and when it includes various activities of an object study that uses sensing and provides data related to behaviour or situation (Utomo & Kurniati, 2020). The type of observation that researchers use in this study is overt and covert observation. According to Gustiani & Puspitasari, (2021), frank observation is an observation in which the researcher expresses frankly the purpose and purpose of conducting observations and interviews with sources or informantsso that the entire research process is known. Researchers also use covert observation, covert observation is carried out by researchers when some data must be kept confidential and used as additional data reinforcement. Therefore, researchers are not upfront about the observations made. Observation in this study includes several aspects, namely gestures, facial expressions or facial expressions and intonation. Observation is carried out to make it easier for researchers to find out changes in conditions displayed by informants.

Interviews are activities that involve direct interaction and provide data related to thoughts or perceptions and views on the informant's experience (Astuti & Wijaya, 2021). An interview is also defined as a direct conversation or interactional communication process, where one party extracts information from the interlocutor to obtain information. The type of interview used in this research is semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews are interviews conducted by preparing interview guidelines in the form of a list of questions to be asked to informants (Hansen, 2020). However, the order of asking questions is flexible because it depends on the direction of the conversation. The researcher compiled an interview guideline for the interview in advance as a reference for the direction of the research. Researchers also asked several additional open-ended questions to informants as a form of exploration, emphasis and to see the level of consistency in informants' answers.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Researchers use a type of data analysis technique, namely *interpretative phenomenological analysis*. The data that has been obtained is then analyzed through several stages, namely: (a) repeated reading of transcripts, (b) initial noting in the form of exploratory comments, and (c) formulating emergent themes. Then when the researcher has finished making exploratory comments, the researcher continues by drawing out several emergent themes. Emergent themes are the coding of a statement. Emergent themes here can be in the form of words/phrases. The next stage is (d) looking for the same relationship between themes, (e) then moving on to the next case, the last stage is (f) looking for the same patterns between cases. If the researcher has analyzed

all informants, then the researcher continues to look for patterns that connect the experiences of all informants and determine the superordinate theme. In the last stage, the researcher determines the main theme (Deviantony, 2020).

# 3.6 Triangulasi

Data triangulation is a technique of testing data from various existing sources to test the truth. As explained by (Adhimah, 2020) triangulation is a technique of comparing data from information that has been submitted by informants and from the results of undercover observations that researchers have recorded. Researchers chose method triangulation to test the truth, method triangulation is done by comparing data information in different ways, in this case, the way qualitative research takes data is to use interview, observation and survey methods. Researchers also use different informants to check the truth of information by asking the closest friends and family.

Data validity can be tested in various ways, this research uses a credibility test. *Credibility* (degree of trust) is a criterion to fulfil the truth value of the data and information that has been collected. This means that the results of the study can be trusted by both the reader and the informant (Susanto et al., 2023). Furthermore, credibility is carried out through triangulation during research by asking back questions that have been asked during interviews.

The aim is to test the consistency of the answers conveyed by the informants. Next, the researcher conducted a *member-check*, namely checking the data where the researcher gave the transcript of the interview results to the informant to equalize perceptions, and asked again whether there was information that wanted to be changed or added, then agreed on the transcript. After being mutually agreed upon, the researcher then asked for the participant's signature so that the data obtained was more authentic.

# 4. Results and Discussion

# 4.1 Research Results

After analyzing the data, the researcher obtained two main themes, namely forms of violence and its impact on *self-efficacy*. These two main themes are a summary of the superordinate themes described in Table 2 below.

No		Superordinate Theme		
	Main Theme	1	2	
1.	Interpretation of Seniority	A desire for power and respect	Hereditary culture	
2.	Forms of Violence	Physical Violence	Verbal Abuse	
3.	Impact on <i>Self-</i> <i>Efficacy</i>	Social decline	Thought distortion	

#### Table. 2. Classification of themes

# 4.1.1. A Desire for Power and Respect

As a junior santri, MF is also a member of several extracurricular activities and organizations, so she often interacts with her seniors. MF feels resentment towards her seniors and gives meaning that seniority is a form of wanting power and respect.

"So I do it arbitrarily to younger siblings, so because maybe he has more power. He has authority and then his seniors feel more okay".

"The initial goal was to make the children more disciplined. So they will respect their older brother."

ANF also expressed the same thing that seniority is a sense of wanting to be respected by juniors, especially when seniors have positions in an organization or extracurricular.

"Mostly seniority because he wants to be honoured."

"Because they want to be honoured but the wrong way."

Similarly, HMH gives the meaning of seniority that seniors want their juniors to submit and obey.

"So the meaning of seniority, in my opinion, is more that it must be respected. The seniors must be respected like you have to respect your elders. You have to be more submissive, you know."

"I'll just be more submissive to them in the future. I already did what I was told."

#### 4.1.2. Hereditary Culture

As a junior santri, HMH recognizes that seniority occurs because of a hereditary culture. According to him, seniority will not happen if no one starts it.

"Then if it's hereditary, yes. I think so. Because there's no way it would have happened if no one had escorted it."

This is similar to MF's explanation that seniority is a hereditary culture.

"So in my hut, it's actually like a culture. Like from generation to generation. So for example, this class indirectly, the next class will also do it consciously."

"So the seniority is actually like a culture in the boarding school."

"Yes, it is true that generations have formed a chain."

# 4.1.3. Physical Violence

MF is a junior santri who has violated the rules, explaining that there is an inequality between the punishment of the boarding school rules and the punishment of his seniors. He felt physically abused.

"In law, the seniors are actually more arbitrary when it comes to punishment."

"For example, physically, what I have experienced is the most ee sit-ups and running around the school building. Then they don't like it so it's like the punishment isexaggerated. Even though the punishment shouldn't be in the written rules, it's not in the written rules but they just make it up."

In another case with HMH, although he did not receive physical violence, he once saw a roommate locked by his senior in the bathroom.

"But still insinuated, until finally there was a friend of mine at that time untilhe was not verbal anymore until he found out that sis was locked in the bathroom."

#### 4.1.4. Verbal Abuse

MF once passed an older sibling and forgot to say excuse me, as a result, she received verbal violence in the form of anger in a high tone.

"The tone is high, and then they get angry. Even though they didn't do much wrong, they were angry like really angry people."

### "How could he yell like that?"

"For example, to discipline children, it doesn't always have to be with seniority, it doesn't always have to be scolded and given unreasonable punishments."

HMH also had the same experience as MF, he also received verbal violence in the form of insinuations from his seniors.

"It was insinuated like ee tomorrow-tomorrow keep your politeness, don't do this, do this, do this. Then there is a friend of his, yes we are sitting next to him, then there is a friend of his doubting like us, like pretentious again in front of him."

"It's just that when we meet, we haven't made peace. There will continue to be insinuations."

On the other hand, AMF also received verbal violence in the form of sarcasm when he was outside the boarding school, more precisely in the canteen.

"In front, there is usually a cafeteria, where the seniors hang out. So I was in front of the class. At that time I was in a hurry to take my sandals. Even though I already said something like afwan ukhti or sorry. But her brother didn't answer me yet, and I had already left the place. So I was insinuated until I was already walking, I was still being insinuated.

# 4.1.5. Decreased Sociability

MF revealed that he felt the impact of seniority, which made him down and afraid to socialize.

"For example, the impact of seniority on self-confidence has decreased because after being scolded, we are already down. Then we don't feel confident, we're afraid to go anywhere."

HMH also admitted that hefelt a change in being difficult to socialize.

"So it's more difficult to socialize."

"Afraid to socialize again, afraid that I will be bullied again."

On the other hand, ANF revealed that he became a more withdrawn person.

"So it's like I'm too lazy to join activities and what else."

"So I shut myself in and became moody."

# 4.1.6. Thought Distortion

ANF felt that he was disturbed by his thoughts because of the *overthinking* he felt during the teaching and learning activities.

"Yes, it's disturbing, like it's hard to accept lessons maybe because we think about something else, so we can't focus on the lessons."

HMH also revealed the cause of difficulty socializing because there is always a distortion in his mind in the form of overthinking.

"For the verbal one, it makes it difficult for people to get close to him. To socialize, then if for example, the verbal one was socializing, it becomes negative thinking."

"Ooo, for example, when talking to friends or people, I'm sure that after talking, especially if it's with an audience that is usually more than us. right, if we're with people after talking, that's it. But now I like to think what the heck."

MF also acknowledged that this seniority had an impact on her.

"The impact of seniority on self-confidence has decreased because after being scolded, we are already down. Then we don't feel confident, we're afraid to go anywhere.

### 4.2 Discussion

This study aims to determine the meaning or perspective of seniority and its impact on santri. The results of this study indicate that there are violent behaviors both physical and verbal and have an impact on informants who are also victims. The results obtained by this researcher are in line with research conducted by Ananda et al., (2023) which concluded that the perpetrators of *bullying* are senior students in pesantren where these seniors have high tempers and a low sense of empathy. In addition, the actions taken by the caregivers and administrators of the pesantren are trying to understand the situation of the pesantren and giving the mandate to the administrators to pay more attention to the students. Furthermore, the research results of Retnowuni & Yani (2022) in an Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, resulted in four points that reflect the essence of seniority from the perpetrator's side, namely: mental weakening, torture, desire for control, and search for personal satisfaction. These findings indicate that seniority from the perspective of the perpetrator can have a negative impact on the victim (junior).

Retnowuni and Yani's (2022) research is in line with the findings of Safitri & Mugiarso's (2022) research, which shows that the essence of seniority from the victim's point of view, where victims feel controlled, give higher respect to seniors, and experience oppression from their seniors. In the context of the impact of seniority, this research shows its influence on the victim's self-confidence. This finding is also in line with Aini's research (2021), which concluded that victims of *bullying experience* physical and non-physical violence, causing changes in santri behaviour, such as guilt, feeling disrespected, losing confidence, and even becoming a quiet figure. On the other hand, victims increasingly lose self-confidence, feel that their lives have no meaning, and even tend to withdraw from their social environment. Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, this research has the potential to be expanded to provide wider benefits.

Based on the participation of informants in this study, there is an opportunity for further research involving more informants, especially in Java. It is intended that the results of the study can be generalized in a broader context. In addition, this study has not included external factors in social support, so there is potential to be continued. The limitations of the study, such as the focus on specific regions and the lack of exploration of the impact of seniority on social and societal aspects, provide room for further research. Therefore, the recommendation for future research is to involve the perspectives of senior santri and teachers, as well as expand the geographical scope of the research.

#### 5. Conclusion

The results of this study provide an overview of the meaning of seniority by junior santri at Pesantren X in the Tangerang, Bogor and Jakarta Regions. The findings in this study show that seniority is interpreted as a desire for power and respect from juniors. On the other hand, this seniority is recognized as an integral part of the hereditary culture in the pesantren environment. Seniority can occur verbally or physically, this certainly illustrates an understanding that there are social dynamics in the pesantren environment. The impact of this seniority, especially on *self-efficacy*, is a decrease in socializing and overthinking. The efforts that can be made by students are to do some positive activities that can increase the social spirit and try to regulate emotions to feel calmer. Another step that can be taken by junior students is to develop an attitude of patience

because behind the order of regulations both from seniors and teachers, there must be wisdom and positive values.

This research has limitations, namely that it only focuses on several junior santri at Pesantren X in the Tangerang, Bogor and Jakarta regions, so it opens up opportunities for other researchers to conduct the same research qualitatively to obtain varied meanings of seniority from various regions. This study did not explore the aspect of the impact of seniority on social and social attitudes so it opens up opportunities for this research to be continued by other researchers.

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