



THE DISCOURSE OF WOMEN'S PIETY AND GENDER BIAS CONSTRUCTION ON MUSLIMAH WEBSITES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Keywords:

*digital religion;
discourse of piety;
gender bias*

The presence of the internet as a marker of the emergence of new media cannot be denied, raising the concept of digital religion as an important element in the presentation of religion at the level of the digital world landscape. In Indonesia, the encounter of Muslim women with the internet has presented religious narratives within the scope of the online world, not least in terms of discourse on gender issues. Using the netnographic method and supported by content analysis, this paper attempts to research and analyze two websites, specifically muslimahnews.com and muslimah.or.id. The findings indicate that the two websites, which contain discourses on women's piety and gender bias, demonstrate that gender inequality on the internet is not directly caused by a lack of women participation but rather by a strong interpretation of gender-biased Islamic ideology in the real world, which is reflected in the virtual world. In other words, the existence of gender bias in Muslim women's websites in Indonesia is a matter of using technology. It is also caused by the construction of gender-biased religious ideology, which previously existed in the offline landscape.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:

agama digital;
wacana kesalihan;
bias gender

Hadirnya internet sebagai penanda munculnya media baru yang tidak dapat dinafikan, memunculkan konsepsi mengenai agama digital sebagai elemen penting dalam penyajian keagamaan pada tataran lanskap dunia digital. Di Indonesia, perjumpaan muslimah dengan internet telah menghadirkan narasi keagamaan dalam lingkup dunia online, tidak terkecuali dalam hal mewacanakan persoalan gender. Dengan menggunakan metode netnografi dan didukung melalui analisis isi, tulisan ini berupaya untuk meneliti dan menganalisis dua situs web, yakni muslimahnews.com dan muslimah.or.id. Hasil menunjukkan kedua web tersebut dengan wacana kesalihan perempuan dan bias gender yang ada di dalamnya, membuktikan bahwa ketidakadilan gender yang ada di internet tidak secara langsung diakibatkan karena minimnya keterlibatan perempuan, melainkan lebih kepada kuatnya penafsiran terhadap ideologi keislaman yang bias gender di dunia nyata, yang kemudian direfleksikan ke dalam dunia maya. Dengan ungkapan lain, adanya bias gender dalam website muslimah di Indonesia bukan hanya persoalan penguasaan terhadap teknologi, lebih dari itu disebabkan oleh konstruksi ideologi keagamaan yang bias gender, yang sebelumnya sudah ada pada lanskap offline.

How to cite this (APA 7th Edition):

Rifai, A. (2021). The Discourse Of Women's Piety And Gender Bias Construction On Muslimah Websites In Indonesia. *Al-Balagh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, 6(2), 303–328, <https://doi.org/10.22515/al-balagh.v6i2.3402>

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the internet in the 1980s eventually marked the presence of new media. The existence of these new mediums paved the way for what Campbell (2013) coined the term “digital religion”, the digital world is a critical component of how religion is presented, including Islam

and the dissemination of information about Muslims worldwide today. One of the early venues that evolved into disseminating information was the website. Thus, Tim Berners-Lee's invention of the internet and its subsequent adoption as a global network revolutionized the storing, retrieval, sharing, and broadcast of information, including knowledge about Islam (Musa, 2012).

The use of new media by religious communities is not a recent phenomenon. The existence of religious communities on websites further discusses the intersection between religion and the internet. Campbell (2013) noted that it stems from the importation of religion in the virtual world landscape, which is a world shaped by technological developments. This early study of the relationship between religion and the internet was termed cyber-religion. Where scholars interpret the phrase in a variety of ways. Dawson, for example, uses the phrase particularly to refer to “religious organizations or organisations that exist solely in online,” as Campbell explains. Meanwhile, Brasher defines it broadly as “the existence of religious groups and religious activity in cyberspace.” Later on, the word cyber-religion was modified to become digital religion. According to Campbell & Evolvi (2019), scholars use the term digital religion (digital religion) as a more comprehensive way to describe and investigate the intersection of religion with digital media.

Digital religion itself is interpreted as a “framework to articulate the evolution of online religious practice related to online and offline contexts simultaneously” (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019). This framework implies ways to explore and question traditional assumptions and understandings of religion when it comes into contact with new cultural and technological contexts. In this connection, Helland (2016) made two classifications, namely “religion-online” and “online-religion.” The first refers to providing information about religion and the primary reference to preexisting religious traditions. The second shows the opportunity

to participate in religion and is the direct reference for online religious activities. In other words, religion online places information technology as a provider of existing religious traditions in digital form or digitalization of religion, so religious organizations or leaders control that information so that users can only accept or reject information passively. But secondly, online religion, information technology, becomes a means of providing interaction space for religious followers to interact with each other. In this way, online religion shows an active, collaborative, and participatory online environment.

In Indonesia, internet users continue to increase. Hootsuite, in early 2021 reported that the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 202.6 million out of a total population of 274.9 million (Kemp, 2021). This data shows that 73.7 percent of Indonesia's population uses the internet. Furthermore, the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII, *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia*) also noted the rate of development of internet use in Indonesia. The APJII survey results show that in 2018 there was an increase of around 30 million users compared to 2017. APJII data shows that in 2018 there were 171.17 million or 64.8% of the Indonesian population using the internet, while in mid-2020, at least Internet users in Indonesia reached 196.71 million (APJII, 2020).

The presence of religious communities in the digital world has attracted many scholars to study it. Campbell (2010), in his work, "When Religion Meets New Media," describes the existence of negotiations from religious community groups when they meet the media. Campbell's writing indicates the importance of examining religious activities in the digital world. Even though the internet creates new spaces, gender inequality in that space continues. Even according to Dixon et al. (2014), one of the most enduring technological inequalities is the issue of the gender gap. Joiner et al. (2012), in their research in 2012, found that the existence of gender gaps on the internet reflects gender differences in society.

Furthermore, Cooper (2006) breaks down the gender gap in the digital world starting from the learning process. Women are at a disadvantage compared to men when learning about computers or studying other materials with the help of computer-aided software. The factor of men owning and using computers or the internet more than women is also suspected to be the cause of the gender gap on the internet.

In the Indonesian context, it can be said that the study of religious interactions on the internet has recently received the attention of scholars. Lim (2005) discussed the important role of the internet as a medium in spreading cultural and religious identity, especially those related to radicalism and anti-American Islamic ideology. Iqbal (2010) examines how religious activities in Indonesia are represented in the online space. Iqbal revealed that the internet had impacted cultural spaces through communal adoption and adaptation, with the Salafi community adopting and adapting the internet to fulfill religious aims. While Iqbal's research might be used to analyze religious activities in Indonesia digitally, he does not address gender issues on the internet.

Meanwhile, Kusuma & Vitasari (2017) tried to see the depiction of gender in the internet space by examining two websites, namely *vemale.com* and *sooperboy.com*. The conclusion shows that online media in Indonesia can present women not only in conventional roles. In other words, for Rina Sari Kesuma and Yuan Vitasari, online media in Indonesia can become agents of gender equality movement. Because according to them, "gender-based sites have the ability and opportunity to play a more empowering role, challenging the pre-existing picture".

Although many scholars have studied gender construction on websites, Ali (2010) reviewed three websites that provide online fatwas on women and gender. Shaheen discovered that websites that provide online *fatwas* enable Muslim women, particularly those from diaspora communities in the West, to ask questions and address concerns about

their lives that they would be unable to address in a ‘face-to-face’ meeting due to its personal and sensitive nature. Although Shaheen’s research discusses gender in the digital world, he fails to see this phenomenon as an aspect of gender construction. It only focuses on how the digital world creates a new space in the socialization of Islamic law. Thus, a study of the gender construction that exists on Muslim women’s websites in Indonesia leaves

Muhana (2014) specifically looks at the perception of Muslim women on the *Muslimah.or.id* website. The results of his research show that the majority of Muslim women consider the content of the *Muslimah.or.id* is good and in line with their understanding so far. However, Muhana does not see how the gender construction is on the website.

The study of gender construction on Muslim websites in Indonesia is significant, considering that Indonesia is the largest Muslim population in the world. With a focus on two Muslim websites in Indonesia, namely *Muslimah News* (muslimahnews.com) and *Muslimah.or.id* (muslimah.or.id), this research describes how the image of women’s piety and gender construction on the internet is narrated. This is important, where on the one hand, some scholars reveal that in fact the basic teachings of Islam support gender equality, but the understanding or interpretation of these basic teachings is gender biased (Barlas, 2002; Mansour, 2014). Meanwhile, on the other hand, as revealed by Anderson (2003) the emergence of the internet in the Muslim world has created a new space capable of presenting new interpreters that are different from the previous ones. his is then capable of serving as a substitute authority.

Furthermore, Goroshko & Zhigalina, (2011) also explained the importance of examining the internalization of the internet in society, which can capture the changes caused by the impact of the increasing popularity of the internet. Additionally, according to a research report from UIN Jakarta’s CSRC (Center for The Study of Religion and Culture),

which examined several cities and districts in Indonesia between 2017 and 2018, it demonstrates the critical role of cyberspace—the world connected by the internet—as a space for studying religion, with the result that what is produced in cyberspace has an impact on real-world life. (Latief, Setiawan, Bamualim, Abubakar, Nabil, & Pranawati, 2018). Therefore, it cannot be denied that this has created new phenomena, one of which is virtual communities or electronic societies (e-societies).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach. So the method used is netnography. Concerning netnography, Kozinets (2009) explained that ethnography on the internet (netnography) is a new qualitative research method by adapting some features of traditional ethnography to study culture and its emerging practices in text-based communication through computer media. In this study, two Indonesian Muslim websites were chosen to be research objects, namely *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id*. The determination of these two websites is based on several things. First, these two websites are managed by Indonesian women (Muslim women). It is essential to see how women describe and interpret themselves when interacting with the internet. Second, *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* are websites that are frequently visited. Based on the analysis of the number of visitors, using the Similarweb tool, muslimahnews.com until January 2021 has an average monthly visit of more than 432 thousand visitors, while *Muslimah.or.id* has more than 658 thousand visitors.

Furthermore, the population of this study is the articles published on the two websites until January 2021. However, the population was not analyzed as a whole, but was taken partly as a sample. The sampling in this study was adjusted to the research focus, namely the image of women's piety and the construction of gender bias. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. With this sampling method, ten articles on the two websites were reviewed.

Furthermore, the researcher used the textual method to read the data obtained through the documentation. This means that the main focus of the analysis is the text contained on the website. In the end, as revealed by Lockyer (2008), the textual method that focuses on the study of texts will adopt a content analysis model.

The analysis of this Muslim site involves several steps. The first step is reading posts on the web that are the object of research in order to get a general perception of the content of women's piety issues and gender construction developed on two websites. The second step is categorizing the data that was read and comparing it to the data on the two websites. Finally, the writings on these two Muslim websites are contextualized within the context of female piety and gender formation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spiritualization Of Internet: A Brief Sketch Of Muslimah News And Muslimah.or.id Websites

Web of muslimahnews.com carries the theme “*inspiratif dan mencerahkan* (inspiring and enlightening)”. The main menu of the website consists of sections “Beranda (Home)”, “Editorial”, “Opini (Opinion)”, “Berita (News)”, “Nafsiyah”, “Fokus (Focus)”, “Analisis (Analysis)”, “Tsaqafah”, “Kisah Inspirasi (Inspirational Stories)”, “Tanya-Jawab (Questions and Answers)”, “Keluarga (Family)”, “Quotes”, and “Fikih (Jurisprudence)”. The articles on the web are in Indonesian language and written by women. The names Najma Saïidah, Umm Nairah Asfa, Asy-Syifa Umm Sidiq are examples of contributors to the website. The use of the name “ummu” is an indication that explains that the *Muslimah News* web contributors are women. Furthermore, every article or article published is closely related to Islamic ideology. Where in seeing a problem, the understanding of Islam is used as a parameter to measure it. The same thing also happened on the muslimah.or.id website. The motto in the *Muslimah*.

or.id web is “*Menggapai Kebahagiaan Muslimah Di Atas Jalan Salaful Ummah*” (“Reaching Muslimah Happiness On The Path Of *Salaful Ummah*”). The main menu consists of “*Landasan Fikih*” (*Fikih* Foundation), “*Fikih Muamalah*”, “*Keluarga*” (Family), and “*dan lain-lain*” (Others). This website also uses Indonesian in the articles that are posted. This description shows that both websites contain religious activities of women in Indonesia. This can be seen from the contributor in writing articles on the web, a woman. Even more clearly, the *Muslimah.or.id* website also features team editors who can be identified as women. The supervisor of the *Muslimah.or.id* web is Ika Kartika Sari, coordinator of Apriliana Dwi Puspitaningrum, deputy editor-in-chief of Atma Beauty Muslimawati, editor-in-chief of Saviera Yonita with Titi Komalasari and Syukriyah Rohmani as editors. Meanwhile, the use of Indonesian can be applied as an effort to transmit knowledge in Indonesia. This is also based on data based on the analysis using the *Similarweb.com* tool that on the *Muslimah News* web 91.80% are accessed from Indonesia and the *Muslimah.or.id* web 95.69%.

Furthermore, the emergence of religious activity on the internet, as displayed by the two Muslim women’s (*muslimah*) websites in Indonesia, can be seen as challenging the secularization thesis. According to the secularization thesis, religion is undermined when it comes into conflict with modernization (Kluver & Cheong, 2007). In fact, Bryan Wilson (Turner, 2010) confidently predicted the decline of religion as a result of modernization. Such assumptions also penetrate the relationship between the internet and religion. This means that there is a thesis explaining the incompatibility of religion with the internet. This is inseparable from the opinion that the internet is not culturally neutral, but carries a certain system incompatible with religious beliefs. Bockover (Iqbal, 2010) reveals the incompatibility of the internet with religious beliefs that occur in Chinese cultural traditions. The internet is seen as carrying and promoting a symbol and values about America related to freedom of expression,

material orientation, and equal opportunity for everyone, so this is itself foreign to communitarian Confucian society. In line with this opinion, Armfield and Holbert (Kluver & Cheong, 2007) see the relationship between religiosity and internet use. With the survey method in America, Armfield and Holbert see that the more religious a person is, the less Internet use is. This means that the internet is viewed—or is deliberately made foreign—in the religious community.

Meanwhile, in contrast to the above view — particularly secularization — that the internet's existence is incompatible with the existence of religion, the *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* websites that have emerged are precisely the result of the massive spread of religious doctrine and even Islamic fundamentalism in the internet space. Both websites are manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism. Even the *Muslimahnews.com* website can be seen as the activity of a political Islam group. This can be proven by the narrative of fully enforcing Islamic law by the state, even creating an Islamic state in the form of a caliphate (*khilafah*) (Muslimah News, 2020). So it is not surprising that this website is seen as the Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir movement after being dissolved by the government in 2017 (Fitriyana, 2019). As for *Muslimah.or.id*, it reflects Islamic puritanism. This can be demonstrated through reference sources such as Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Bazz, Shaykh Ibnul Uthaimin, and others who are widely known as Salafi-Wahhabi figures. They are also on the side of revivalism, which is a movement that seeks to call for a return to genuine Islam free of *bid'ah* and *khurafat*.

This means that both webs demonstrate the existence of an Islamic society that promotes and presents Islamic ideals in the internet world, or, to use a term from Asep Muhamad Iqbal, internet spiritualization. This is consistent with the rationale advanced by scholars who oppose the secularization theory. Casanova (2009) points out that the thesis of

secularization that leads to the privatization of religion is something that is not quite right. For Casanova, it is easy for European society to find the religious talk in the public sphere. Furthermore, Turner (2010) believes that when religion frequently shapes cultural identity in the current world, it is frequently challenging to maintain a tidy and straightforward division between the public and private. This sets the stage for creating religious groups on the internet and provides an adequate frame of mind to explain the emergence of religious communities on the internet. In line with this, Eickelmaier & Anderson (2003) emphasized that Muslim interaction with the internet opens up space to redefine the Muslim public outside the face-to-face community and outside state control. Thus, the *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* web sites can be viewed as forms—as Campbell’s study—of adaptation and negotiation of religious communities when meeting the internet. Moreover, the activities of these religious groups are outside the direct control of the state. This may be precisely what the *Muslimah News* website represents.

The Discourse Of Women’s Piety: Promotion Of Religious Identity On The Internet

At this point the narratives that exist in both websites—*Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id*—are explored in describing women’s piety. The author focuses on two things, namely the meaning of Islamic symbols and anti-Western narratives. The first is about the importance of Islamic symbols. *Muslimah News* website and *Muslimah.or.id* associate women’s piety with Islamic symbols, for example, the use of a large headscarf (*jilbab*) and veil (*cadar*). This is stated in a post on the *Muslimah News* website titled “*propaganda antijilbab, upaya mendistorsi ajaran Islam (anti-hijab propaganda, an effort to distort Islamic values)*.” It is stated that “...*Padahal sudah jelas bahwa busana yang harus dikenakan perempuan muslimah ketika keluar dari rumah adalah khimar dan jilbab* (even though it is clear that the clothes that Muslim

women should wear when leaving the house are *kbimar* and hijab) (Tresna, 2020). In line with this, the *Muslimah.or.id* website also explains that:

“Segeralah pastikan jilbab besar lengkap dengan cadarnya ada di lemari pakaian engkau dan bagi yang sudah memakainya berilah hadiah kepada saudarimu. Beri hadiah ia berupa jilbab dan cadarnya. Siapa tahu suatu saat ia melihatnya dan ada dilemari pakaiannya, ia berkeinginan untuk memakainya. Karena dengan saling memberi hadiah kalian akan saling mencintai.”

(“Immediately make sure the *jilbab* complete with *cadar* (veil) is in your wardrobe and for those who are already wearing it, give gifts to your sister. Give her a gift in the form of a headscarf and veil. Who knows one day he saw it and there was his wardrobe, he wanted to wear it. Because by giving gifts you will love each other.”) (*muslimah.or.id*, n.d.).

Furthermore, on the *Muslimah.or.id* website it is also explicitly stated:

“Menutup wajah bagi wanita adalah ajaran para ulama semua madzhab. Bukan budaya Arab dan bukan ajaran radikal.”

(“covering the face for women is the teaching of the scholars of all schools of thought. Not Arabic culture and not radical teachings.”) (Purnama, n.d.)

This post can be interpreted as interpreting the Islamic symbol. These Islamic symbols—the use of oversized headscarves (*jilbab besar*) and veils (*cadar*)—eventually crystallized into the form of *syar’i* clothing. The use of narrative is closely related to discourse. Laclau and Mouffe (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) emphasize three important aspects in viewing discourse: *the nodal point*, *the field of discursivity*, and *closure*. *The nodal point* is a particular sign where other signs are arranged, and other signs derive meaning from their relationship to the node. In terms of *syar’i* clothing, it can be understood that *syar’i* is the nodal point. This means that the word clothing contains its own meaning when connected to the knot point, namely *syar’i*. This indicates a series of networks in discourse production.

Furthermore, this nodal point will also exclude any other meaning that the sign may have. This is then known as the discursive field or the field of *discursivity*. So that the discursive field can be understood as an attempt to stop the shift of signs in relation to one another and thereby create a unified system of meaning. This is also the case on both the *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* websites. The narrowing of the definition of *syar'i* clothing into oversized headscarves and veils has overlooked other meanings that might be manifested in these *syar'i* clothes.

Moreover, this discussion departs from the differences between Muslim scholars in seeing the limits of *aurat* (Shihab, 2018). So that the discourse will close other meanings that nodal points can contain, this is what is known as *closure*. This means that discourse determines closure, temporary cessation of fluctuations in the meaning of signs. This can be seen from the meaning of *syar'i* clothing, which is only in oversized headscarves (*jilbab besar*) and veils (*cadar*), so that apart from these clothes, it is impossible to be called *syar'i* clothes.

The second aspect that is the focus of this section is on the contra-Western narrative. In narrating women's piety, the two webs connect it with contra-Western (culture). The emancipation of women is seen as a Western value that will destroy the honor of Muslim women. This is as in the *Muslimah News* website:

“Jadi tak salah jika dikatakan bahwa kolonialisme telah memanfaatkan isu feminisme untuk memperpanjang penjajahana mereka di negeri-negeri kaum muslim. semua wacana dan inisatif bentuk regulasi yang katanya pro perempuan, tidak ada relevansinya dengan jaminan kebahagiaan ataupun dampak positif lainnya dalam kehidupan perempuan.”

(So it is not wrong to say that colonialism has taken advantage of the issue of feminism to prolong their colonization in Muslim countries. All discourses and initiatives in the form of regulations that are said to be pro women, have no relevance to guaranteeing happiness or other positive impacts on women's

lives.)” (Juanmartin, 2020)

The same thing was also expressed on the *Muslimah.or.id* website:

“...tak sedikit kaum muslimah yang terjerat noda gaya hidup dan pemikiran barat yang kapitalis dan liberalis, membela orang-orang kafir agar dikatakan trendi dan tidak ketinggalan zaman. Mereka terpikat janji-janji manis para musuh-musuh Allah yang pada hakikatnya ingin menghancurkan wanita Islam.”

(“...not a few Muslim women who are entangled in the stains of western lifestyle and capitalist and liberal thinking, defend infidels to be said to be trendy and not out of date. They are captivated by the sweet promises of the enemies of Allah who essentially want to destroy Muslim women.”) (Nashifa, n.d.)

“Musuh-musuh Islam sangat paham bahwa peran wanita muslimah sangat penting dalam membangun masyarakat Islam. Oleh karena itu mereka selalu berusaha menyerang Islam melalui kaum wanitanya. Salah satu upaya tersebut adalah dengan menghancurkan wanita muslimah melalui emansipasi.”

(“the enemies of Islam understand that the role of Muslim women is crucial in building an Islamic society. Therefore they always try to attack Islam through their women. One such effort is to destroy Muslim women through emancipation.”) (Muslimah.or.id, n.d.).

These narratives can be understood as an attempt to construct a self-definition of Muslim women and spread conspiracies if the West is to destroy Islam. This is in line with Lim’s research (2005) results when looking at the use of the internet by Laskar Jihad groups in Indonesia. In relation to this, Nasrullah (2011) explained that basically, the communication or interaction on the internet that occurs using the medium of text would directly affect how a person communicates their identity in virtual life and each text becomes a kind of representation of each in self-performance.

Thus, the contra-Western narrative can be understood as an attempt to describe the identity of Muslim women in the internet space.

These two aspects—the meaning of Islamic symbols and contra-Western narratives—can ultimately be understood as promoting Islamic identity in the internet space. Moreover, the *Muslimah News* website with the discourse of a wide hijab and veil as *syar'i* clothing and anti-Western narrative is also strengthened by the political understanding of Islamism that carries an Islamic state in the form of a caliphate, strengthening the promotion of religious identity on the internet. The same thing also happened on the *Muslimah.or.id* website. Even though it does not carry an Islamic state, its interpretation of Islamic symbols and anti-western narratives and strengthened by references to Salafi-Wahabi figures is able to reinforce the religious identity carried by the *Muslimah.or.id* website as a fundamentalist Islamic group. In addition, discourse or discourse, which at its peak leads to a temporary halt to fluctuations in the meaning of signs (closure) in this context, is the essence of Islamic symbols—the use of *syar'i* by itself will also bring up religious identity. This is also reflected in the two websites above. Whereas when interpreting *syar'i* clothing only on oversized headscarves and veils, without being denied, this is also a reflection of religious identity, especially Islamic fundamentalism. Where Islam is viewed through the lens of a dogmatic interpretation of the Al-Qur'an and Hadith; as a result, it fosters opposition to modernity's achievements, such as liberation, because they are interpreted as a Western takeover of the Islamic world. In this regard, the following part will discuss how gender prejudice persists on the two websites.

Gender Bias On Muslimah Websites In Indonesia

As explained in the previous section, the *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* websites are developed by Muslim women in Indonesia.

However, even though the contributors are women, gender bias is found. The author examines this with two things that indicate a gender bias: the domestication and subordination of women. In the concept of domestication, the role of women requires that women only take part in domestic spaces. This is different from men considered capable and worthy of controlling public spaces. For example on the *Muslimah.or.id* web it is clearly stated that:

“Seorang wanita akan merasa sempurna jika telah menjadi istri. Seorang istri akan merasa sempurna jika ia telah menjadi seorang ibu dan seorang ibu akan merasa lebih bahagia jika ia dapat melayani suaminya, merawat, mendidik serta melihat tumbuh kembang anaknya sendiri. Semua itu bisa dilakukan jika wanita itu menjadi ibu rumah tangga”.

(“a woman will feel perfect if she has become a wife. A wife will feel perfect if she has become a mother, and a mother will feel happier if she can serve her husband, care for, educate and see the growth and development of her own child. All that can be done if the woman becomes a housewife.”)
(Rofiana, n.d.)

The same thing is also found on the *Muslimah News* website in an article entitled “*Ketergantungan Ekonomi Kepada Suami, Peran Domestik dan Keibuan Dipandang Menyia-nyiakan Bakat Perempuan?*” (“Economic Dependence on Husbands, Domestic Roles and Motherhood are Seen as Wasting Women’s Talents?”). It is stated that “Islam gives a substantial and important value to the role of wife and mother” (Nawaz, 2018). The sample texts in these two websites make domestic the primary role of women. The goodness of a woman is to play a role in the household space, namely at home. This is as the data below shows:

“Menetap dan tinggalnya wanita di rumah merupakan perkara yang disyariatkan oleh Allah Ta’ala. Allah Ta’ala berfirman, “Dan hendaklah kamu tetap di rumahmu,” (QS. Al-Abzab:33). Syaikh Abdurrahman bin Nashir As-Sa’di rahimabullah menjelaskan

bahwa makna dari ayat tersebut adalah menetaplah kalian di rumah kalian sebab hal itu lebih selamat dan lebih memelihara diri kalian. Tinggalnya wanita di rumah berarti dia melaksanakan urusan rumah tangganya, memenuhi hak-hak suami, mendidik anak-anaknya, dan menambah amal kebaikan. Sedangkan wanita yang sering keluar rumah, akan membuatnya lalai dari kewajiban.”

(“Settling and staying women at home is a matter prescribed by Allah Ta’ālā. Allah Ta’ālā says, “And stay in your homes,” (Surah Al-Ahzab: 33). Shaykh Abdurrahman bin Nasir As-Sa’di rahimahullāh explained that the meaning of the verse is that you stay in your homes because it is safer and more caring for you. Educate their children, and increase their good deeds. Meanwhile, women who often leave the house will make them neglect their obligations”) (Rofiana, n.d.)

However, these two websites also open opportunities for women to play a role in the public space, such as working. However, the primary role in the domestic sector cannot be abandoned. This means that although the two websites open up opportunities for women to play a role in the public sector, this is a double burden for women. Of course, this view is not friendly towards gender equality.

The existence of gender views that reflect inequality can be traced from the misunderstanding of gender differences. Mahtab et al. (2016) describe this at length. According to them, gender inequality refers to individuals’ unequal treatment or perception based on their gender. One form of manifestation of gender inequality is manifested in the form of division of labor. Mansour Fakih assesses that gender inequality in determining workload is based on the assumption of the nature that exists in women, such as nurturing and diligent nature. So, in such an assumption, the role of women in the family (as wives) is part of domestic affairs, namely household affairs (Fakih, 2013).

The description above explains how gender construction is in the two websites. Women’s piety is identified as a woman who has a role in

the domestic space. In this regard, it is very appropriate for the theory of domestic cults (Cult of Domesticity) initiated by Barbara Welter. In this theory, the primary value or idea of femininity forms the image of a true woman who is expected to have four main virtues: piety, chastity, domesticity, and obedience. “True Womanhood,” the standard by which a woman judges herself or is judged by her husband, neighbors, and society, is one of four characteristics of a true woman (Welter, 1966).

Additionally, this gender prejudice viewpoint implies gender subordination. Where there is a gender distinction described as weak or strong in the concept of gender subordination, this determines their position. In this context, women are frequently represented as a weak gender that requires men to act as powerful gender figures. The same may be found on the websites of *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id*, where women are deemed to be in direct need of men as children, wives, or mothers. To elevate women to the level of males in terms of gender nomination. For instance, the *Muslimah.or.id* website portrays a woman’s (wife’s) satisfaction as assisting her husband (Rofiana, n.d.). Meanwhile, there is a narrative of kindness on the *Muslimah News* web when women are dependent on their husbands, especially on economic issues (Nawaz, 2018).

Indeed, this discourse cannot be divorced from the reality of gender inequality in the real world. This is consistent with the argument made by Joiner et al. (2012). They argue that the existence of a gender divide on the internet replicates societal gender divisions. Olviana (2017) examines the gender bias in HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia) Muslim women in Surabaya. In her conclusion, she shows that feminism, which is a movement to free gender bias, is opposed by the Muslim community in HTI. This is based on the assumption that feminism is a tool to destroy the glory of women. Furthermore, according to Ulfah (2012), in the HTI community, there is a contra-feminism movement. This data shows that gender bias has

occurred in the real world in this community, so that this is what later also manifested in cyberspace, namely on the *Muslimah News* website.

Meanwhile, the Salafi-Wahabi, part of the puritan movement in Islam, also tend to cultivate gender bias. Munawir (2017) also noted that the puritan group's episteme of thought, which is based on literal interpretations of Islamic scriptures (Al-Qur'an and Hadith), has also led to the creation of notions hostile to gender equality. This viewpoint is also expressed on the website *Muslimah.or.id*. This means that, while both websites demonstrate the importance of women in the digital world, the religious doctrine that is followed maintains gender bias through the women's community's denial of gender equality.

Gender differentiation on this website opens further discussions about gender. Gender theory can be classified into two things (Umar, 2001). First, the idea of nature. This theory leads to the assumption that the differences in the roles of men and women are natural (nature). Biological anatomy that is different from that of women is a significant factor in determining the social roles of both sexes. Men play the leading role in society because they are considered more potential, stronger, and more productive. The reproductive organs are considered to limit women's movement, such as pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, while men do not have these reproductive functions. This difference then separates functions and responsibilities between men and women. Men play a role in the public sector, while women play a role in the domestic industry.

Second, the theory of nurture. In the claim of this theory, the differences in gender relations between men and women are not determined by biological factors but by the construction of society. In other words, the social role which has so far been considered standard and understood as a religious doctrine according to nature's adherents is actually not God's will, nor is it a biological determination but a product of social construction. With these two views, the two websites can be

understood based on the meaning of gender based on nature. This means that women are created with roles that have been determined by religion, namely in the form of domestic and complementary roles for men.

Furthermore, the existence of gender bias in this website cannot be separated from the gender bias entrenched in society's social construction. Thus, it is not appropriate if the existence of gender bias on the internet manifests the minimal involvement of women in it. This is in line with the research results of Joiner, et al. (2012) who found that the existence of a gender gap on the internet reflects gender differences in society. In other words, the gender bias narrative on the website extends the strength of patriarchal reasoning in the real world. Moreover, both the *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id* websites in the framework of digital religion are more focused on "religion-online" rather than "online-religion". This can not be separated from the two websites that do not allow readers to participate directly either as commentators or contributors. This means that both websites do not provide a means for active, collaborative, and participatory religious activities.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The strengthening of the internet in Indonesia has not made religion abandoned by its adherents, especially in this context, Islam. Two websites, namely *Muslimah News* and *Muslimah.or.id*, which are Indonesian Muslim women's websites, actually present Islamic values in the internet space. Additionally, the two websites devoted to women's piety and gender bias demonstrate that gender injustice on the internet is not directly caused by a lack of female involvement, but rather by a strong interpretation of gender-biased Islamic ideology in the real world, which is then imported into cyberspace, even by women themselves.

Suggestion

This study has shown a gender bias on Muslim websites in Indonesia. However, this study does not further examine the religious ideology that develops on the website. These points can be suggestions for further research.

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