



**Contesting *syari'ah* in the feed: Gender performativity, haram profit, and moral crisis among Acehese digital celebrities**

**Hanifah Nurdin\*✉, Syukur Kholil\*\*, Farhan Indra\*\*\***

*\*Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia*

*Email: hanifah4004223016@uinsu.ac.id*

*\*\*Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia*

*Email: syukurkholil@uinsu.ac.id*

*\*\*\*Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia*

*Email: farhanindra65@uinsu.ac.id*

**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to examine the controversy surrounding content produced by feminine male Instagram celebrities in Aceh, being perceived to conflict with the region's cultural and religious values. These influencers create content by dressing in women's clothing, using feminine accessories, and adopting female speech patterns. Despite this, their endorsements are widely used by businesses in Aceh, including by a local university. This shows that the feminine brand they have cultivated has successfully attracted an audience, even though the content itself contradicts established cultural and religious values. The content is fully commodified to gain financial profit. The method used in this research was virtual ethnography with four levels of data analysis: media space, media documents, media objects, and experiences. Additional data were obtained through interviews with two cultural figures and two religious leaders to strengthen the findings. The results of the study indicated that the content uploaded by these feminine male celebrities undermines Acehese cultural values and violates Islamic religious values. The content shows a shift in original gender roles from male to female. This phenomenon of feminine male content is considered an identity crisis among Instagram celebrities, who can influence others through the content they produce. From a religious perspective, this content can damage the foundation of life, as seen in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad that prohibits men from dressing and appearing as women. Furthermore, the financial profits obtained are considered haram (unlawful) because the process of earning the money is not permitted by Islam.*

**Keywords:** Gender Performativity; Islamic Law (*Syari'ah*); Digital Media (Instagram); Commodification; Acehese Culture.

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✉ Corresponding author:

Email Address: hanifah4004223016@uinsu.ac.id

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## ABSTRAK

*Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kontroversi seputar konten yang diproduksi oleh selebritis Instagram pria berpenampilan feminin di Aceh yang bertentangan dengan nilai-nilai budaya dan agama. Selebritis Instagram ini memproduksi konten dengan mengenakan pakaian, aksesoris, dan berbicara seperti wanita. Endorsemen mereka telah banyak digunakan oleh bisnis di Aceh serta oleh salah satu universitas, sehingga citra merek konten feminin yang telah dibangun berhasil menarik audiens, namun konten itu sendiri bertentangan dengan nilai-nilai budaya dan agama. Konten tersebut sepenuhnya dikomersialkan untuk memperoleh keuntungan finansial. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah etnografi virtual dengan empat tingkat analisis data, yaitu ruang media, dokumen media, objek media, dan pengalaman. Data tambahan diperoleh melalui wawancara dengan dua tokoh budaya dan agama, masing-masing, untuk memperkuat data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konten yang diunggah oleh selebriti pria feminin merusak nilai-nilai budaya Aceh dan melanggar nilai-nilai agama Islam. Konten tersebut menunjukkan pergeseran peran gender asli dari laki-laki ke perempuan. Fenomena konten laki-laki feminin ini dianggap sebagai krisis identitas di kalangan selebriti Instagram, yang dapat mempengaruhi orang lain melalui konten yang mereka produksi. Dari perspektif agama, konten ini dapat merusak fondasi kehidupan, seperti hadis Nabi Muhammad yang melarang laki-laki berpakaian dan tampil seperti perempuan. Selain itu, keuntungan finansial yang diperoleh dianggap haram karena proses memperoleh uang tidak diperbolehkan oleh Islam.*

**Kata Kunci:** Performativitas Gender; Hukum Islam (Syari'ah); Media Digital (Instagram); Komodifikasi; Budaya Aceh.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Aceh is a region that formally implements Islamic law in the daily lives of its people. At its core, Islamic law seeks to ensure human well-being in both this life and the hereafter, a goal encapsulated in the five main objectives (*al-maqasid al-khamsa*). These include the protection and promotion of religion, life, intellect, progeny, environment, and human dignity (Danial, 2024). These guiding principles form the moral and ethical foundation of Acehnese society, shaping people's attitudes and conduct not only in physical public spaces but also in the digital realm.

The presence of digital technology has provided the people of Aceh with unlimited access to connect with one another through various forms of new media, including Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and similar platforms. These new media channels facilitate communication across religious, cultural, generational, and even national boundaries, enabling individuals to engage in social interaction, personal development, relationship maintenance, network building, and financial pursuits (Rozi, 2023). Access to new media is both widespread and simple, allowing virtually anyone to participate by creating an account using basic information such as an email address, profile photo, phone number, residential details, and a username. Once an account is set up, users can search for friends, family members, influencers, artists, and public figures. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as the most

frequently used in the region, with users spending an average of 3 hours and 23 minutes per day on the app (Kemp, 2024).

The accessibility and user-friendly nature of social media have contributed to shifts in habits and behaviours, with some individuals now viewing these platforms as opportunities to generate income through the content they create. Content produced by Instagram users, uploaded and shared with other users, gains high views and eventually goes viral. The more content that goes viral, the more followers the user gets. As content gains viral traction, users tend to attract more followers, eventually reaching the status of influencers, often referred to as Instagram celebrities (Bening et al., 2023). Social media also plays a significant role in shaping public perception, influencing thought patterns, and internalizing behaviours among users—particularly within Generation Z (Yens et al., 2025). To achieve fame as an Instagram celebrity often requires the courage to produce content that is considered controversial or provocative. In Aceh, several male Instagram influencers have successfully gained attention with controversial content such as @Jullyyandi, @ratuudeki and @tuanloen1 that became the most discussed topic in Instagram groups. Content @Jullyyandi raising social issues in Aceh seperti “*Ani-ani kembali ke Aceh*”, “*Seksa Mertua*”, “*Promosi Homedress*” and so on.

In addition, @Jullyyandi also posted several activities on his feed while he was praying at the mosque, celebrating holidays, and so on. The content produced by celebrity @Jullyyandi often features him wearing women's clothing (crossdressing), makeup, and speaking in a feminine tone and voice. The content produced by the influencer receives mixed reactions from his followers, with both support and opposition. However, according to the researcher's observations, despite opposition from some followers, controversial content continues to be produced by @Jullyyandi and receives high view counts. The presence of feminine male content and influencers is partially shaped by the concept of hyperreality on social media, where men engage in grooming, dressing, and behaving in ways traditionally associated with women (Novianti & Darmawan, 2024). The emergence of feminine male content and influencers is partly shaped by the concept of hyperreality on social media, where male users engage in grooming practices, dress in feminine styles, and adopt behaviors typically associated with women (Novianti & Darmawan, 2024).

From a cultural perspective, the content produced by Instagram celebrity @Jullyyandi challenges conventional gender norms. Where the content does not use male identity but displays female identity. Acehnese society prioritizes values of politeness, family, and gentle personality in public spaces, but the presence of feminine male Instagram influencers presents content that contradicts these cultural norms. Historically, the people of Aceh were recognized for their warrior spirit and strong adherence to politeness and traditional etiquette. However, the rise of social media and the widespread pursuit of online popularity have contributed to the gradual erosion of cultural boundaries within the community's daily life.

From a religious perspective, the content produced by feminine male Instagram influencers contradicts the spirit of implementing Islamic law. This is stated in Qanun No. 11 of 2002, which regulates clothing. Although crossdressing activities by Instagram celebrities are not explicitly regulated within social media platforms, these acts, when recorded and shared, effectively occur in a public domain. Furthermore, in Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explicitly prohibited individuals from imitating the traits, behaviors, appearances, or actions associated with the opposite gender. This is supported as stated in the following hadith:

“*Rasulullah melaknat laki-laki yang menyerupai perempuan dan perempuan menyerupai laki-laki*” (HR. Bukhari). In relation to the behaviour exhibited in content posted by feminine male celebrities, it becomes evident that their gestures, expressions, and language directly contradict the teachings found in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The self-expression shown by these content creators is indeed in pursuit of fame, popularity, and financial gain, while the substance of the content is not taken into consideration. Arif Ramdan Sulaeman also highlights in his article published in *Serambi Indonesia* that, in the pursuit of fame and popularity, social media users often choose to adopt a “mentel” persona, disregarding traditional manners and self-respect (Sulaeman, 2025).

The emergence of social media and the growth of feminine male celebrities in content produced and disseminated through one account to another has added to the ethical crisis in social media. The Acehnese people, historically recognized for their respectful language and strong sense of self-respect, now appears to be increasingly driven by the pursuit of popularity and financial profit, potentially serving as negative role models for their audience. The presence of feminine male celebrities who attempt to showcase Acehnese culture through anomalous content can be seen as disruptive to social order by promoting a modern gender dynamic.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Previous Studies

Research conducted by Simaibang & Bajari (2029) entitled *Representation of Male Feminists by the New Men's Alliance on Social Media: A Virtual Ethnographic Study of Male Feminists by the New Men's Alliance on Twitter (@lakilakibaru)*, reveals that male feminists on Twitter are depicted as men who exhibit sensitivity, gentleness, fearfulness, affection, and meticulous grooming (Bajari, 2019). In addition, Selly Astari Octaviani and Ratna Noviani in their research said that the androgynous identity performability carried out by celebrities is not only limited to self-expression but also commodification (Octaviani, 2021). Furthermore, M. Hafis Fazry (2023) explains that the phenomenon of feminine men engaging in crossdressing is often related to economic factors, as it is part of their professional role, with individuals reverting to traditional male attire outside of work. Conversely, Angger Kurniawan Ramadhan (2024) argues that the openness displayed by feminine men serves to educate and persuade the broader community about their existence, fostering acceptance of gender diversity, particularly within the fashion industry.

Based on the previous studies discussed above, it has been observed that feminine male content creators—regardless of the terminology used to describe them—actively express their identities despite societal perceptions. They establish communities, produce content aimed at both financial gain and social acceptance. However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies in its focus on the tension between two opposing forces: cultural norms and religious values. Specifically, this research centres on the people of Aceh, a region known for its strict adherence to Islamic Sharia in everyday life. In contrast to these religious principles, the behaviours and content produced by feminine male celebrities in Aceh often contradict the established Islamic legal framework, highlighting a significant cultural and religious conflict within the community. The qanun regulating clothing, specifically Qanun No. 11 of 2002, also applies to public spaces (Ismail, 2024). However, this regulation has yet to serve as a clear guideline for some influencers when creating their content. Therefore, this article calls on the Aceh

government, particularly the House of Representatives, to increase their attention and awareness regarding social media content. This is crucial because social media usage currently spreads information much faster than traditional forms of media.

## 2.2. Content

Content refers to the structured information presented on website pages or disseminated through various media platforms (Basarah & Romaria, 2020). Content can also be defined as a mode of presenting information, which may take various forms such as entertainment or news. It is delivered in original formats and can include videos, text, or audio that are uploaded through media platforms and made easily accessible to audiences. Content on social media can have both positive and negative impacts; therefore, there is a need to prioritize the production of educational content over harmful or negative material (Harnadi, 2017). Many users perceive uploading photos or videos on Instagram as a form of private sharing; however, this is a misconception. Instagram and the content shared on it function as public property and transform the communication space from private to public (Sudibyo, 2023).

## 2.3. Instagram Celebrities

Instagram celebrities (hereafter referred to as celebrities) are public figures who gain recognition through the Instagram platform by producing content in diverse fields such as fashion, technology, science, culinary arts, cosmetics, and more (Nono, Dewi, & Seputra, 2021). With the rise of celebrities, entrepreneurs offering services or products increasingly utilize their influence for promotional purposes. Business owners often collaborate with celebrities who have large followings and significant influence to endorse and promote their products (Pratiwi, Erdiansyah, & Robyardi, 2022). Celebgrams are distinguished by various attributes, including their lifestyle, luxury, expertise, physical appearance, respect, and relatability to their audience (Shimp, 2014). In the context of this study, three male celebrities who present themselves with feminine traits—utilizing makeup, clothing, footwear, mannerisms, and speech—are examined.

## 2.4. Culture and Religion

Culture refers to the set of habits and practices that are deeply embedded in the daily lives of a society. Its development is influenced by several factors, including religious beliefs, levels of education, and the social environment. Acehese culture, in particular, encompasses the collective mindset and customary behaviors of its people, which include a strong adherence to religious teachings, refraining from effeminate behavior, using polite and respectful language, demonstrating strength and helpfulness, and maintaining clear distinctions between male and female gender roles. In addition, various practices and behaviors have become integral to Acehese culture, such as the tradition of hand-kissing as a sign of respect for *teungku* (Islamic scholars) at *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools), communal feasting and *tahlilan* during death commemorations, the observance of *Rabu habeh*, *peutron aneuk* (child-return rituals), and other culturally rooted customs (Usman, 2021). Furthermore, he also stressed that “*Kehadiran media sosial telah menggeser budaya Aceh*”. The presence of social media has significantly shifted Acehese culture, marking a profound transformation in how traditional values and long-established norms are understood, expressed, and practiced.

Digital platforms have introduced new modes of communication and self-representation that often challenge or reshape the cultural and religious foundations that have historically guided social behaviour in Aceh. This shift reflects not only a change in media usage but also a deeper cultural reorientation influenced by the rapid flow of global content and modern individualistic values, which can sometimes stand in contrast to the collective and religiously rooted traditions of Acehnese society. In the past, men were generally perceived as firm, authoritative figures; however, in today's digital era, many are frequently seen going live on TikTok and sharing content on social media while wearing women's clothing. In Aceh, much of the existing culture reflects the embodiment of normative religious values that are deeply ingrained in everyday life. These cultural expressions serve not only to maintain a constant connection between the community and religious principles—even in worldly matters—but also to protect society from drifting toward secular ideologies (Marzuki, 2014). The presence of feminine male content that does not care about Acehnese customs and traditions seems to harass culture. Acehnese men who are known to be responsible, have strong character, and uphold Islamic values in customs, are actually opposed by the new image displayed on social media.

Indeed, advancements in communication technology have undeniably broadened the horizons of people's lives, offering new opportunities for connection, creativity, and economic gain. However, when these technologies are used without regard for ethical considerations—particularly in the pursuit of financial profit—such usage becomes problematic. Content creation that prioritizes virality and income over cultural sensitivity and moral responsibility reflects a misuse of digital platforms. Moreover, the widespread availability and influence of popular culture, which can be accessed freely through social media, have significantly transformed the ways in which individuals think, behave, and express themselves (Bastian, 2019). This shift challenges traditional norms and raises questions about the balance between innovation and the preservation of cultural and ethical values. The phenomenon of female male celebrities in Aceh has triggered a critical response from cultural and religious perspectives because it is considered contrary to traditional masculinity norms and Islamic sharia principles that are upheld in this area. From a cultural standpoint, the content produced by feminine male influencers is seen as blurring the lines of gender identity and undermining traditional values that uphold the role of men as a central symbol of family honor and dignity (Istiqomah & Widiyanto, 2020).

From a religious point of view, the content produced has been strictly forbidden by the Prophet (saw) in the hadith of Bukhari, which reads:

لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ — صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ — الْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ بِالنِّسَاءِ، وَالْمُتَشَبِّهَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ بِالرِّجَالِ

It means: *"The Messenger of Allah cursed men who resemble women and women who resemble men."* (HR. Bukhari) (An-Nawawi 2018).

This hadith is taken from the book *Riyadhus Shalihin*, in the chapter on clothing (An-Nawawi, 2018). Imam An-Nawawi explained that the prohibition in question resembling the opposite sex is in the form of clothing, movements and the way of speaking (Nurmansyah, 2019). This shows that Islam emphasizes the importance of gender identity according to the nature that Allah has ordained. In the context of this research, the presence of celebrities and

the content produced by them can present a new meaning to the culture and application of *shari'a* in Aceh.

### 2.5. The Theory of Gender Performativity

This theory was introduced by Judith Butler in 1990, who argued that "gender is not something one is, it is something one does—an act, a performance, a set of repeated acts" (Butler, 1990). The phenomenon of male Instagram celebrities with feminine appearances in Aceh presents an interesting space for critical discussion, especially when viewed through Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler asserts that gender is not an innate or natural identity, but rather a construct that emerges from repeated social practices and performances. In this view, masculinity and femininity are not biologically determined traits, but are continuously shaped, expressed, and reinforced through daily acts of performativity. These gender expressions are learned, culturally influenced, and maintained through societal expectations and repeated behaviours over time.

## 3. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using the virtual ethnography method. A qualitative approach is applied to explore and interpret the meaning, characteristics, and essence of human experiences within social, cultural, and personal contexts (Sari et al., 2022). Virtual ethnography, as a methodological tool, allows researchers to examine social and cultural phenomena that occur in digital or online environments. To analyze data collected through this method, the study adopts the analytical framework proposed by Nasrullah (2016), which is structured around four key concepts: media space, media documents, media objects, and experiences. These components guide the exploration of how online content is produced, shared, and interpreted within virtual communities.

**Table 1.**

Virtual Ethnographic Data Analysis.

| Level                           | Object  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Media space                     | The structure of the media device and its appearance are related to the application procedure of a technical nature         |
| Media documents (media archive) | Content and aspects of the meaning of texts as cultural artifacts   |
| Media objects                   | Interactions that occur on social media and communication that occur between community members through comments, and forums |
| Experiential Stories            | Motifs, effects, benefits or realities that are connected offline or online   |

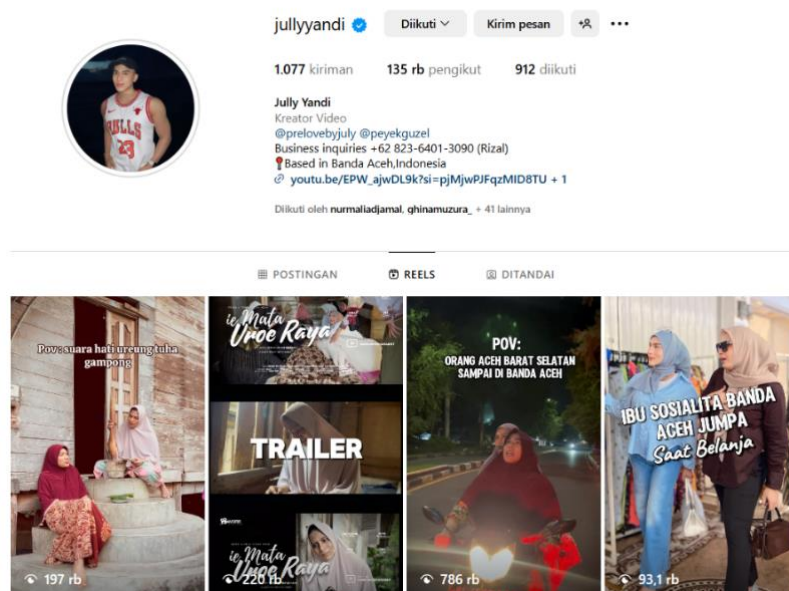
(Nasrullah, 2017)

The researcher conducted an analysis of content produced by two feminine male celebrities from the Instagram account @Jullyyandi using virtual ethnographic data analysis techniques. To enrich and validate the content analysis, the researcher also conducted interviews with two cultural and religious figures, thereby enhancing the depth of data at the

experience level. The cultural informants were selected from among academic experts and members of the Aceh Customary Council, who possess comprehensive knowledge of Acehnese customs and cultural practices. Meanwhile, religious informants were chosen from academics and representatives of the Ulema Consultative Assembly, who are well-versed in Islamic religious teachings and able to provide insight into the relevant religious contexts.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram content produced by Acehnese feminine male Instagram celebrities, particularly on the @Jullyyandi account, displays clear anomalies in terms of gender expression and cultural alignment. The @Jullyyandi account has amassed approximately 135,000 followers and contains 1,077 posts, indicating a sustained presence on the platform since 2015. This suggests that the account owner has been actively engaged as a content creator for nearly a decade. He is recognized as one of the prominent feminine male Instagram celebrities (celebgrams) in Aceh, known for generating and disseminating controversial content, which is frequently featured on his Instagram feed.



Picture 1. Jullyyandi's Instagram Profile.

On his Instagram feed, @Jullyyandi regularly uploads parody content primarily in the Acehnese language and Indonesian, occasionally blending in elements of Thai. These uploads are designed to entertain and bring joy to his followers, who often find the content endearing and relatable, as it reflects aspects of daily life within the local community. The content shared on the @Jullyyandi account can be broadly classified into several categories, including fashion and style, lifestyle and personal branding, as well as creative and visual content. This diverse range of posts contributes to the account's appeal and engagement among followers. In the fashion and style category, @Jullyyandi frequently showcases outfits and accessories characterized by a distinctive and unique style. His presentation often involves crossdressing and an androgynous appearance that blends both feminine and masculine elements. This is reflected in his use of makeup, attention to dress aesthetics, and carefully styled, fashionable hair, all of which contribute to a visually striking and unconventional personal style.



In the lifestyle and personal branding categories, @Jullyyandi shares a variety of daily moments that reflect both his social interactions and personal practices. These include gatherings with friends and former officials, attending parties and birthday celebrations, visiting clubs, and displaying affectionate gestures such as hugging and kissing men. His content also features religious activities, such as going to the mosque, wearing robes, performing dawn prayers at the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, and listening to early morning lectures. Additionally, he shares leisure activities like going to the beach and enjoying his favorite foods, offering followers a multifaceted glimpse into his life. In the creative and visual content category, @Jullyyandi, as a content creator, uploads reels and videos characterized by an aesthetic and inventive visual style. His videos often take the form of comedic dramas that incorporate the Acehnese language, occasionally spiced with a Thai accent, though the core content remains culturally Acehnese. The combination of visually appealing presentation and engaging storytelling resonates well with viewers, often resulting in a high number of “likes” and positive engagement on his posts.

#### *4.1. Anomaly of Aceh Instagram Celebrity Feminist Male Content*

As is widely recognized, the rise of Instagram has given birth to a new type of celebrity, with diverse models and content designed to attract and engage users. Non-controversial content often struggles to go viral and may be less profitable for content creators, prompting many to produce more provocative or controversial material to boost their follower count. This dynamic has led to the emergence of anomalies, particularly when gender expressions that diverge from traditional masculinity norms become central to content commodification. On one hand, this phenomenon creates space for diverse forms of self-expression and opens up new economic opportunities for creators. On the other hand, the commercialization of male feminist performance frequently sparks cultural and religious dilemmas, especially within societies governed by strict social norms. The popularity of such content is driven not only by its entertainment value but also by the allure of controversy, fuelled by the ongoing tension between entrenched traditional values and the forces of digital modernity.



**Picture 2.** Content ‘Siksa Mertua’.

The content described above is one of the reels uploaded on July 18, 2024, with the theme of “in-laws torture”, presented through a parody concept. On the @Jullyyandi Instagram account, the celebgram plays the role of a son-in-law, supported by colleagues portraying the father-in-law and a singer. The reel features background music by Armawati AR, accompanied by the caption “maka mak”. This particular content has garnered significant engagement, receiving 12.2k likes, 1,370 comments, and 3,390 shares. Additionally, a photo from the same account shows the celebrity relaxing on a beach while wearing a robe, further highlighting the diverse and personal nature of the content shared.



**Picture 3.** Cosplay as a Mermaid.

From the content above uploaded on December 19, 2023, the celebrity shows *cosplay* becoming a mermaid. In this video content does not show any promotion, so this content is made to entertain *followers*. She posted a video about the ani-ani area on December 8, 2024, so 10 days after the video she made a video of becoming a mermaid. In the video, it appears that the celebrity is wearing a mermaid and a curly skirt, hair shaved, a crown and a flower in the ear. He received a response in the form of *4,819 likes, 666 comments and 862 shares with the caption* “From a young age, wanting to be a mermaid finally came to be a blessing @tazzi.official”.

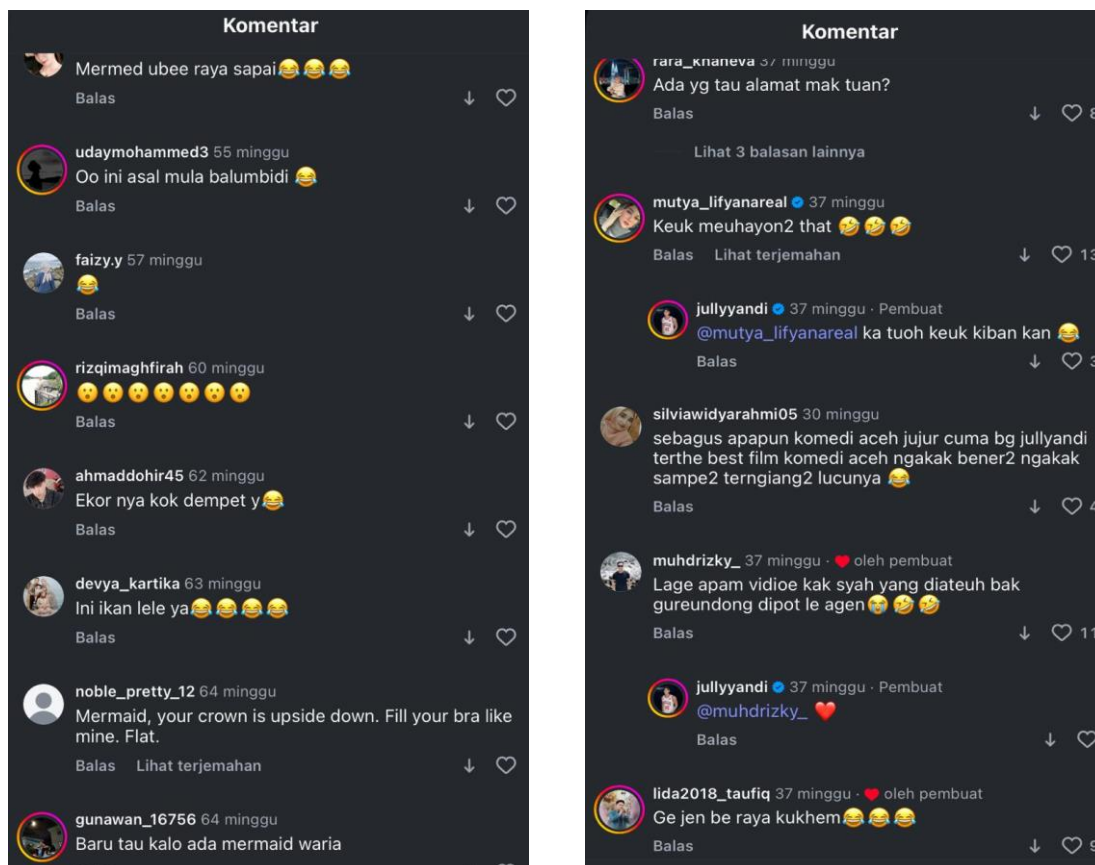
At the level of the media space, celebrities @Jullyyandi use social media to spread their content. The Instagram application can be opened using a *smartphone* or laptop. Instagram can be used after registering, filling in the required data, such as name, display name, account opened to the public or private, posting a profile photo and so on. The @Jullyyandi account made the first post on January 12, 2015. He shared his account for everyone to see. Even in his controversial posts, he never closes the comment column so that we can see how the public responds to the content he publishes.

At the media document level, @jullyyandi account posted 1080 content in the form of photos and videos. Of the 1080, there are 2 images that represent the overall representation of the celebrity post. In picture 2 with *the caption of torture of your mother* and picture 3 with the *caption of becoming a mermaid*. The 1 minute 27 second video of the *torture of the mother tells* the story of a son-in-law who was treated badly by his in-laws. In the video, @Jullyyandi plays the role of a tortured son-in-law. In the first scene, he is thrown with clothes in the bathroom which requires him to wash all the clothes. It also appears that he was pushed in the bathroom until he fell and cried.

In the second scene, @Jullyyandi is shown standing in a backyard scattered with leaf litter. Suddenly, his in-laws arrive and deliberately spill more leaves, causing him great distress as he is forced to sweep them up. The third scene takes place in a rice field, where he carries a hoe and diligently works on the tough soil. However, his in-laws appear again and jump on him, adding to his torment. In the fourth scene, they push him into a chicken coop and lock him inside. Throughout all four scenes, @Jullyyandi wears the same outfit: a milky brown hijab, a cream shirt adorned with floral patterns, and a red skirt. Her makeup is kept simple yet polished, featuring eyelashes, shaped eyebrows, blush, and lipstick. This post indicates that there is a dramatic condition between sons-in-law and in-laws in the dynamics of family relationships. As is known, Aceh is an area that adheres to a patriarchal culture so that the dynamics of family relationships are not always harmonious and give meaning that daughters-in-law receive rough treatment from in-laws.

In picture 3 becoming a mermaid, the video which lasts 1 minute 27 seconds tells the story of a mermaid who is sitting around while enjoying the outdoors. Every now and then he smiled, shook his body, wagged his tail and put soap all over his body. Then he jumped into the river and swam. From the content of the text that @Jullyyandi wrote that she wanted to be a mermaid from a young age, finally arrived thanks to @tazzi.official, AHA soap from @tazzi.official again a promo of only 20 thousand and winning a *motorcycle door prize* shows that there is a soap promotion that she does. As for symbolically @Jullyyandi choose the role of being a mermaid by using a mermaid skirt suit, a woman's underwear without a shirt, long hair that is sloping down, wearing flowers in the ears, red lipstick, holding a fairy wand to attract *the attention of followers*, AHA soap from @tazzi.official can be a "magic tool" for the transformation of oneself from a human to something beautiful (mermaid) implying that the soap user looks more beautiful, confidence even "changes" and becomes free.

At the *media object level*, at this level the text that is responded to/interacted with other users, the focus is on *likes*, comments and shares. In picture 2 titled *Maka Tuan Mak*, 12.2k likes, 1370 comments and 3,390 shares and picture 3 with the caption *Becoming a Mermaid* gets 4,819 likes, 666 comments and 862 shares. Here are some of the comments that are in *capture*:



**Picture 4.** Netizens' comments on the content of the torture of the in-laws and mermaids.

From the netizen's comments above, it can be seen that netizens like the controversial anomalous content uploaded by @Jullyyandi. Followers respond to @Jullyyandi content with supportive replies and provide love emoticons. In addition, there are also followers @Jullyyandi do not support the controversial content that is published as said by the gunawan\_16756 account who said that "I just found out that there are mermaid waria". @Jullyyandi content also often uploads content about social issues that occur in Aceh such as the issue of prostitution, corruption, juvenile delinquency, outdated customs and the like.

From the content that has been produced by female male celebrities, it is found that there is a pattern of shifts in enjoying entertainment by the community created by celebrities. Celebgrams choose to use feminine expressions with the aim of getting uniqueness from the content, increasing *the engagement rate* so that the content becomes viral and she becomes famous. In Judith Butler's perspective, the gender expression displayed can be read as a form of performativity, which is a repetitive act that shapes gender identity through culturally constructed social practices. Thus, celebrities not only display identities, but also create those identities within the framework of a digital marketplace that encourages virality and commercialization of self-expression.

#### 4.2. Content Controversy in Cultural and Religious Perspectives

In Aceh, there is an expression *hadih maja* about the culture of "*Mate aneuk meupat jirat matee adat pat tamita*" which means that if a child is alone, a grave can still be found/made but if the custom is dead, it can be found and returned. Meaningfully, this proverb emphasizes

the importance of maintaining customs, traditions, and cultural values in the life of the Acehnese people. Customs and cultural values are invaluable heritage that must be well maintained. From two pieces of content taken on Instagram @Jullyyandi, namely the content of Maksa Merin-law and Becoming a Mermaid, if analyzed with the level of experience (*experiential stories*) that connect content with reality, it was found that both content contradicts cultural and religious values.

The content of Torture of the In-laws and becoming a Mermaid played by @Jullyyandi undermines cultural and religious values. In terms of culture @Jullyyandi playing the role of a woman, using *makeup*, accessories, non-verbal to voices with female voices has shifted the role of the original gender as a man. The phenomenon of feminine male content is considered as a crisis of celebrity self-identity, as told by Acehnese cultural expert, Mr. Yusri Yusuf from the Aceh Customary Assembly who said that "Instagram has changed all joints of Acehnese lives, it seems that popularity and money have made the people of Aceh out of their noble cultural values" (Interview with Yusri Yusuf on June 2, 2025). Furthermore, Ahmad Fauzan as an Acehnese cultural expert said that "Actually, the problem lies in his personal celebrity, he does not understand Acehnese values when he creates content, does not think that he is displaying Acehnese identity" (Interview with Ahmad Fauzan on March 10, 2025).

The feminine male content raised by @Jullyyandi so clearly shows the crisis of self-identity and culture. The presence of Instagram has provided a stage for her feminine to appear freely on her account, thus subconsciously inviting other feminine men to be able to perform the same expressions as her. Some others appear such as @auliajepara, @Ratuudeki, @Tuanloen1 and so on. From a cultural perspective, Acehnese cultural experts assess the tension between global and local cultures. Global culture that enters through social media has made the people of Aceh express themselves not in accordance with the rules of religious norms that apply in Aceh. The identity shown by celebrities to bring in profit, so they make themselves digital mannequins.

From a religious perspective, the expressions shown by the content of feminist men @Jullyyandi violate Islamic sharia and have sparked the spirit of Islamic sharia in Aceh. As the hadith of the Prophet PBUH narrated by Imam Bukhari:

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْمُتَشَبِّهِينَ بِالنِّسَاءِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالْمُتَشَبِّهَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ بِالرِّجَالِ (رواه البخاري)

It means: *"The Messenger of Allah cursed men who resemble women and women who resemble men."* (HR. Bukhari).

In addition, Acehnese religious leaders said that *"The content created by female male celebrities is clearly an aberration because basically he is a man then he acts, creates content like a woman, behaves like a woman, uses female accessories"* (Interview with Ustad Fakhruddin on February 26, 2025). Religious leaders in Aceh said that the content uploaded by female male celebrities is deviant and contrary to the moral values of the application of Islamic law.

In addition, Ust Abizal said that *"Related to this there is the term al-wasīlah tubi'u al-ghāyah; an intermediary will lead to the destination'. The meaning is that even though he is only acting or just pretending, but because he is doing something contrary to his nature, the*

*income becomes haram and what he does will have an impact on something haram*" (Interview with Ustad Abizal on March 3, 2025).

The meaning of the term said by Ustad Abizal *al-wasīlah tubi'u al-ghāyah* (means of following the goal) means that if the intermediary leads to money, popularity is taken in a way that is haram and the result will also be haram. So in this case, even though there are female male celebrities who argue that only acting or content styles, characteristics and so on still lead to prohibited things. Islam here exists to reject moral relativism, where halal and haram are determined by results rather than processes. Islam is concerned with process, means and goals.

From the above statement, it is clear that Islam in its main source is the Qur'an and Hadith to provide guidance to humans to earn income to fulfil life (eating) with what is halal. Halal means business that is sourced from good efforts, does not deceive others, does not make something that is contrary to and contrary to human nature, suitable for consumption that has no effect on human health. Female male celebgrams still do prohibited content because the money (income) for their content is immediately visible, it can be used to meet daily needs while the effect of the content, the way the content is made is not considered.

Thus, the phenomenon of female male celebrities is not only considered as individual deviant behaviour, but also has the potential to weaken the moral foundation of the Islamic society in Aceh. In the Islamic view, behaviour that resembles the opposite sex cannot be reduced to just a "content style" or "entertainment strategy", because it concerns human nature that has been outlined by Allah. When fitrah is violated, not only personal identity is damaged, but also the social order and sharia values that have been upheld. This practice shows a tendency to make what is haram as normal because it is constantly consumed by the public. If this is left unchecked, there will be banality of evil, where people are no longer sensitive to prohibited acts. It is in this context that Islam emphasizes the importance of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* to prevent wider moral damage.

In addition, Islam views that wealth produced from something haram is not only not a blessing, but can also be the cause of obstruction of prayer and good deeds. This emphasizes that the problem of female male celebrities is not just digital entertainment, but touches on aspects of faith, worship, and *muamalah* at the same time. If the way of obtaining sustenance violates the sharia, then the result will not bring good, but damage to oneself and society. Therefore, this firm view of Islam is not intended to limit creativity, but to maintain the glory of human beings according to their nature. Freedom of expression in the digital space must not go beyond the limits of sharia, because without religious signs, freedom will turn into excesses that damage oneself and the people. Religious leaders see this phenomenon as a threat to the morale of the younger generation. They are worried that if feminist male content is allowed to circulate widely, there will be a normalization of prohibited behaviour, so that people lose sensitivity to the limits of *halal* and *haram*. In their view, this phenomenon is not just a matter of personal style, but part of an identity crisis and the degradation of faith in the midst of global cultural penetration. Therefore, Islamic religious leaders in Aceh emphasized the importance of moral control, strengthening da'wah, and stricter social media regulations. They are of the view that Islam is not anti-creativity, but creativity must be directed to things that are useful, strengthen faith, and maintain the honour of self and society.

The phenomenon of male Instagram celebrities with feminine appearances in Aceh presents an interesting space for critical discussion, especially when viewed through Judith

Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler asserts that gender is not an essential or natural identity, but rather the result of social practices that are continuously repeated and performed. In other words, masculinity and femininity are not born naturally, but are shaped and maintained through everyday performativity. In this context, the expression of male Instagram celebrities who present themselves with feminine attributes—whether through their style of dress, use of makeup, or body language—can be read as a form of gender performativity. He is shaking up the rigid boundaries that have long separated men and women. His presence on social media, especially Instagram, makes gender identity something fluid, negotiable, and even commodified to gain attention, popularity, and economic gain.

However, when this phenomenon is encountered in the context of Acehese culture, tensions arise. Acehese culture, which is based on the values of collectivity, customs, and symbols of traditional masculinity, demands that men appear gallant, firm, and authoritative. Feminine expressions in men are considered a cultural anomaly because they are contrary to the social construction of honour and masculine identity. In the Acehese public sphere, this kind of performativity is not merely a matter of personal style, but is considered an act that disrupts the collective moral order. From a religious perspective, Islam, which is the basis for the implementation of Sharia law in Aceh, strictly prohibits *tasyabbuh*, or men imitating women and vice versa. The Hadith of the Prophet SAW, which condemns such actions, is often used as a basis for religious leaders to judge the phenomenon of feminine men as a form of moral deviation and a desecration of human nature.

Thus, gender performativity, which in Butler's perspective is considered legitimate as an expression of freedom, is interpreted within a religious framework as a violation of *sharia* law and a threat to public morals. This controversy becomes even more complex when the global and local spheres interact. Instagram as a global platform provides free space for individual expression, while Aceh as a local space demands strict adherence to Islamic law and customs. The meeting of these two poles gives rise to a battle of discourses: on the one hand, gender is seen as fluid and open to negotiation; on the other hand, gender is understood as a fixed creation that must be maintained in accordance with religious and cultural norms.

Thus, the phenomenon of feminine male celebrities in Aceh is not just a matter of entertainment or digital lifestyle, but also an arena of struggle between the idea of freedom of gender performativity and binding cultural and religious norms. It reveals a clash between the logic of social media capitalization, which turns identity into a commodity, and the logic of cultural and religious morality, which seeks to preserve the purity of values. From a cultural and religious perspective, it is clear that both bring harm, content produced by feminist men damages cultural values and violates Islamic religious values. Cultural experts and scholars consider that celebrities must review the content created, because the content uploaded characterizes one's identity and can bring harm to others and ultimately damage oneself and society.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The content produced, uploaded, and disseminated by feminine male celebrities has contributed to the creation of gender ambiguity within social media platforms. This study revealed that many cultural and religious leaders in Aceh remain largely unaware of the presence of such feminine male Instagram celebrity content. This lack of awareness can be



attributed to social media algorithms that limit the visibility of these atypical contents in users' timelines, as well as a generational divide that restricts older authorities' access to and engagement with trending topics that circulate widely among the Acehnese population. This situation highlights a significant information gap between cultural and religious authorities and the digital realities consumed by the broader community.

Therefore, da'wah efforts, traditionally dominant in conventional public spaces, must be transitioned and reinforced within digital platforms to effectively reach audiences who increasingly engage through social media. Religious leaders have also emphasized that the financial income earned by these celebrities is considered *haram* because it is obtained through means that contradict Islamic values. Consequently, it is imperative to educate the wider community about these concerns and to discourage emulation of celebrities who produce content deemed inappropriate or non-compliant with religious teachings. Following such influencers is viewed as tacit support of immoral behaviour, underscoring the need for proactive religious guidance in the digital realm.

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