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Islamic Feminists' Rejection of the Textual Understanding of Misogynistic Hadiths for the Advancement of Gender Justice in Makassar, Indonesia

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Abstract: Islam is a religion that upholds the values of justice and equal rights between men and women, but the understanding of the Indonesian Muslim community is still wrong with the teachings of Islam. One of the reasons includes misunderstanding of misogynistic hadiths, namely hadiths that editorially seem to demean women. This study aims to explore Islamic feminists' rejection of the textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths to uphold gender justice. This Islamic feminist stance needs to receive support so that gender justice is in line with Islamic law. This research uses empirical qualitative methods by analyzing the theory of understanding hadith and gender theory. The study obtained data from interviews and a literature review. The respondents interviewed were academics, NGO activists, and community leaders, while the literature included journal articles, books, and Islamic textbooks on Islamic law. The study took place in Makassar City, Indonesia from September 2022 to March 2023. Findings reveal that Islamic feminists in Makassar City criticize the textual interpretations of misogynistic hadiths as they demean women's dignity and are not in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings. If analyzed from a gender perspective, Islamic feminists have played an important role in fighting for gender equality in a religious context. Meanwhile, in the context of hadith understanding theory, a contextual approach is needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of society so that gender justice is realized. The contribution of this study is that the Islamic feminist perspective that reviews misogynistic hadith through a contextual approach helps provide inspiration and direction for other efforts to encourage social change and gender justice.

Keywords: Misogynistic hadith, textual understanding, Islamic feminists, gender justice

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Abstrak: Islam adalah agama yang menjunjung tinggi nilai-nilai keadilan dan persamaan hak antara laki-laki dan perempuan, namun pemahaman masyarakat muslim Indonesia masih ada yang keliru terhadap dengan ajaran Islam. Penyebabnya antara lain karena keliru memahami hadis misogini, yakni hadis yang secara redaksional terkesan merendahkan perempuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi penolakan feminis Islam terhadap pemahaman tekstual hadis misogini untuk menegakkan keadilan gender. Pandangan feminis Islam tersebut perlu mendapat dukungan demi terciptanya keadilan gender yang sesuai dengan hukum Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif empiris dianalisis dengan teori pemahaman hadis (ilmu ma'anil hadis) dan teori gender. Data penelitian diperoleh dari wawancara dan studi literatur, informan yang diwawancarai adalah akademisi, aktivis LSM, dan tokoh masyarakat, sedangkan literatur yaitu artikel jurnal, buku dan kitab-kitab hukum Islam. Penelitian dilakukan di Kota Makassar, Indonesia. Penelitian berlangsung antara bulan September 2022 sampai bulan Maret 2023. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa feminis Islam di Kota Makassar, Indonesia menolak pemahaman tekstual hadis misogini karena telah merendahkan martabat perempuan dan tidak sesuai dengan nilai-nilai ajaran Islam. Jika dianalisis dari perspektif gender, maka feminis Islam telah memainkan peran penting dalam memperjuangkan kesetaraan gender dalam konteks agama. Sedangkan dalam konteks teori pemahaman hadis, pendekatan kontekstual diperlukan untuk memberikan pemahaman yang komperhensif bagi masyarakat sehingga keadilan gender dari terwujud. Kontribusi penelitian ini bahwa pandangan feminis Islam yang memahami hadis misogini melalui pendekatan kontekstual dapat memberikan inspirasi dan arahan bagi upaya-upaya lain dalam mendorong perubahan sosial dan keadilan gender.

Kata Kunci: Hadis misogini, pemahaman tekstual, feminis Islam, keadilan gender

Introduction

Islam is a religion that upholds the values of justice and equal rights between men and women, as evidenced by a number of Qur'anic verses and hadiths that emphasize the importance of justice and equal rights between men and women.¹ Justice in Islam not only puts emphasis on relationships between human beings

¹ Ghasem Darzi, et.al., "Revealing Gender Discourses in the Qur'an: An Integrative, Dynamic and Complex Approach," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021). Badruzzaman M Yunus, "Similarity Detection for Hadith of Fiqh of Women Using Cosine Similarity and Boyer Moore Method," *International Journal of Advanced Trends in Computer Science and Engineering* 9, no. 1 (2020), p. 65–73.

but also on relationships between human and God.² Muslims are required to manifest justice in everyday life and everyone must have the same rights and obligations.³ Justice is an inseparable part of Islamic teachings; thus, violation of justice is a violation of the Islamic religion, and the effort to uphold justice is the effort to uphold Islamic teachings.⁴ As such, Islam guarantees justice and equal rights between men and women.

However, textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths has resulted in gender injustice. Islamic feminists believe that the cause of gender inequality is partly because misogynistic hadiths has only been understood textually.⁵ For example, the textual understanding of the hadith about women being created from the crooked ribs of men has promoted gender inequality, even leading to discrimination against women. Such textual understanding also contributes to the view that Islamic women are oppressed and exploited.⁶ Another hadith interpreted textually is the hadith on *aqiqah* (sacrificing an animal on the occasion of a child's birth), which mentions that a baby boy shall have two goats while a baby girl only needs one goat for the sacrifice. Another one is about women leaders bringing upon destruction. Another is about women being a source of *fitnah* (trial), as more women will be in Hell than men, and other similar nuanced hadiths.⁷ Textual interpretations of such hadiths have given the impression that men are of a higher rank than women.

Textual understanding is a form of religious view of hadith based on the meaning of the text. Understanding hadith generates to at least three typologies. The first is normative textual understanding, which believes that the original meaning of the hadith is represented by the meaning of the text.⁸ The second is historical contextual understanding, carried out by considering the editorial

² Rohmatun Isnaini, et.al., "Quality Management Development through Gender Equality Based Leadership in Nahdlatul Ulama Universities," *The Qualitative Report* 26, no. 11 (2021), p. 3374–91.

³ Marhumah, "Hadith, Justice, and Gender Equality: Indonesian Progressive Muslims' Thought," *Pertanika: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 27, no. 1 (2019), p. 405–17.

⁴ Muhammad Afzal and Muhammad Khubaib, "Flexibility in the Implementation of Islamic Criminal Law in Modern Islamic Society in the Light of Qur'ān and Sunnah," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 11, no. 1 (2021), p. 396–410.

⁵ Elviandri Elviandri, et al., "Pembacaan Kaum Feminis Terhadap Hadis-Hadis Misoginis Dalam Sahih Bukhari," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 19, No. 2 (2019). Indriaty Ismail, "The Development of Islamic Feminism in Malaysia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 23, No. 2 (2023).

⁶ Faye Bird, "ISIL in Iraq: A Critical Analysis of the UN Security Council's Gendered Personification of (Non)States," *Laws* 11, no. 1 (2022), p. 5.

⁷ Marhumah, "Hadith, Justice, and Gender Equality: Indonesian Progressive Muslims' Thought."

⁸ Adnan Abdul Aziz Gutub and Khaled Aydh Alaseri, "Refining Arabic Text Stego-Techniques for Shares Memorization of Counting-Based Secret Sharing," *Journal of King Saud University-Computer and Information Sciences* 33, no. 9 (2021), p. 1108–20.

context and historical context of the text. The third is socio-historical understanding, a result of the development of science, especially social sciences.⁹ Among the three typologies, textual understanding has a stronger influence among Muslims.¹⁰ Hence, textual understanding that seems to demean women has dominated critical opinions regarding Muslim belief to this day.

The dynamics of understanding hadiths have been a contentious debate, including between textual understanding and contextual understanding of the Qur'anic and hadith texts. Some Muslim scholars understand hadith textually while others understand it contextually.¹¹ The differences in paradigms for understanding hadith are caused by two factors. First, hadith texts typically have double meanings. This happens because some hadith texts are conveyed in the form of parables, symbolic languages, and dialogues. The diverse language forms of the texts provide space for hadith reviewers to have different understandings. Second, there is a subjectivity of the hadith reviewers. Subjectivity is greatly influenced by the development of knowledge and social phenomena.¹² Thus, the debate between textual and contextual understanding will always be current.

Textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths strongly influences Indonesian Muslim society. Research found that the practice of gender discrimination in society occurs in the division of tasks based on gender as well as in separation in public spaces.¹³ Even among Indonesian society, many women experience sexual violence and harassment, but they choose not report them due to social pressure. Sexual harassment results in many women being forced to raise their children in poor conditions without the help of men.¹⁴ Another research showed that women in Indonesia often experience discrimination in terms of

⁹ Wahyudin Darmalaksana, et. al., "Latent Semantic Analysis and Cosine Similarity for Hadith Search Engine," *Telkomnika: (Telecommunication Computing Electronics and Control)* 18, no. 1 (2020), p. 217.

¹⁰ Nur Aqilah Paskhal Rostam and Nurul Hashimah Ahamed Hassain Malim, "Text Categorisation in Quran and Hadith: Overcoming the Interrelation Challenges Using Machine Learning and Term Weighting," *Journal of King Saud University - Computer and Information Sciences* 33, no. 6 (2021), p. 658–67.

¹¹ Ali Kaya, "Tecsim ve Teşbih İçerdiği İddiasıyla Bısr El-Merisi Taraftarlarının Tartışma Konusu Yaptığı Bazı Hadisler," *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 22, no. 1 (2018), p. 193–224,

¹² Muhamad Rozaimi Ramle and Miftachul Huda, "Between Text and Context: Understanding Hadith through Asbab Al Wurud," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022), p. 92.

¹³ Hasniati, et. al., "Does Local Wisdom Improve Quality of Public Services?: Learn from the Bugis-Makassar Culture," *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 24, no. 03 (2020), p. 825–39.

¹⁴ Sastro Mustapa Wantu et. al., "Early Child Marriage: Customary Law, Support System, and Unwed Pregnancy in Gorontalo," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 2 (2021): 780,

access to education, employment, and political representation.¹⁵ Many people still view that women should take care of the household and children, whereas men should work outside to earn a living. Such reality is believed to be the impact of textual understanding of the misogynistic hadiths.

Islamic feminists reject the textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths since they conflict with Islamic teachings, which uphold justice and gender equality. Islamic feminists criticize the textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths; while simultaneously reinterpret them through contextual understanding, i.e., through a linguistic approach. Islamic feminists emphasize such an approach to be highly significant to avoid distorting the meanings of hadith texts.¹⁶ Kaliyar Rohit, who has offered a BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) based approach to handle the ambiguity of natural language understanding, also supports this Islamic feminist stance.¹⁷ Apart from that, Islamic feminists also offer a hermeneutical approach and a *ta'wil* (esoteric interpretation) approach.¹⁸ Such steps show the courage of the thought movement of Islamic feminism against the general mainstream, and present it demonstratively.

This study aims to explore Islamic feminists' efforts to uphold gender justice based on re-understanding of misogynistic hadiths. The study also evaluates the impact of the thought movement of Islamic feminism in shifting society's understanding of women's rights based on religious views. Therefore, the study explores the reasons why Islamic feminists reject the textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths. This discussion is significant to understand the solutions offered by Islamic feminists in promoting gender justice and equality in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings. In addition, the study can provide new nuances in future hadith studies, as conventional methods and approaches are no longer adequate for understanding hadiths.

This research uses qualitative-normative methods analyzed with hadith understanding theory (*ilmu ma'an al-hadith*) and gender theory.¹⁹ Data collection

¹⁵ Abdullah Pandang et al., "Gender Disparities in Students' Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) with Various Areas," ed. Ehsan Rezvani, *Education Research International* 2022 (2022), p. 1–9.

¹⁶ Varsha Raghunandan, "Changing Equations: Empowerment, Entrepreneurship and the Welfare of Women," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 19, no. 3 (2018), p. 187–98.

¹⁷ Rohit Kumar Kaliyar, et.al., "FakeBERT: Fake News Detection in Social Media with a BERT-Based Deep Learning Approach," *Multimedia Tools and Applications* 80, no. 8 (2021), p. 11765–88.

¹⁸ Bambang Qomaruzzaman and B Busro, "Tolerance Islam Theology of Education Hermeneutic Reading of Tariq Ramadan Thought," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 7, no. 2 (2019), p. 203. Kholila Mukaromah, "Hermeneutika Hadis Fatimah Mernissi (Aplikasi Terhadap Hadis Kepemimpinan Perempuan)," *Universum* 12, no. 1 (2019), p. 47–62.

¹⁹M. Syuhudi Ismail, *Hadis Nabi yang Tekstual dan Kontekstual: Telaah Ma'ani al-Hadis tentang Ajarah Islam yang Universal, Temporal dan Lokal*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1994. Salim

was conducted through in-depth interviews and literature studies related to the discussion. Credible informants who are believed to be able to provide the necessary data are women activists, the Women's Study Center Institute, the Women's Advocacy Institute and community leaders in Makassar City. The literature study is a search for current references related to Islamic feminist thought on misogyny hadiths. The data is then critically analyzed to obtain an overview of the details of Islamic feminist arguments against the textual understanding of misogyny hadiths. We do data analysis by comparing data, presenting data, analyzing data then drawing conclusions.

Misogynistic Hadith in the Perspective of Islamic Feminists

The term misogyny comes from the word *'mis-ogyn-ist'*, which means hatred towards women. This definition is in accordance with the lexical meaning in the English-Indonesian Dictionary that misogynist contains the meaning of degrading women.²⁰ Therefore, in this context, misogynistic hadith is a hadith that editorially seems to contain elements of degrading women.²¹ Islamic feminists realize that the textual understanding of misogyny hadiths is contradictory to the early history of Islam. During the time of the Prophet PBUH, women had strategic roles, such as serving on the battlefield. Hence, Islamic feminists highlight that no hadith of the Prophet discredits women; however, the understanding of the hadith is rather incorrect.²² The Islamic feminists assert the assumption that it is impossible for the Prophet PBUH to possess a discriminatory nature that differentiates between men and women. Thus, discrimination against women is a reduction of Islamic teachings and the image of the prophethood.

The term Islamic feminists refers to Muslims who make efforts to empower women with a gender justice paradigm. Islamic feminism, however, does not only apply to women, but can also be addressed to men. This is because the benchmark is a gender category, not a biological category.²³ In the study of hadith, in particular, Islamic feminists concentrate on misogynistic hadiths. The beginning of Islamic feminist awareness of gender inequality can be seen from the emergence of their works at the end of the 19th century.²⁴ Islamic feminist figures

and Erlies Septiana Nurbani, *Penerapan Teori Hukum Pada Penelitian Tesis Dan Disertasi*, Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2013.

²⁰ John M. Echols and Hasan Shadily, *Kamus Inggris Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1987).

²¹ Siti Rahmah, et. al., "Patriarchal Opression in Kim Ji-Yeong, Born 1982 By Cho Nam Joo: A Feminist Literary Study," *KnE Social Sciences* 2020 (2020), p. 390–411.

²² Siti Rahmah, et. al., "Patriarchal Opression in Kim Ji-Yeong, Born 1982 By Cho Nam Joo: A Feminist Literary Study."

²³ Tarmizi M. Jakfar and Arifah Fitria, "Understanding Multiple Interpretations on the Hadith That Husbands Allow Wives to Have Outdoor Activities: A Study of Islamic Law Perspectives," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 1 (2021), p. 210.

²⁴ Nina Nurmila, "The Spread of Muslim Feminist Ideas in Indonesia: Before and After the Digital Era," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 59, no. 1 (2021), p. 97–126.

known to reject textual understanding include Qasim Amin, Amina Wadud, Fatimah Mernessi and Asghar Ali Engineer²⁵. They have attempted to avoid textual understanding and maximize contextual understanding of misogynistic hadiths through various approaches to promote gender justice.

The presence of Islamic feminist figures is not to reject the hadiths per se, but rather to reject their textual understanding, which has been detrimental to women.²⁶ Apart from that, Islamic feminists also trace the basics of Islamic teachings that put forward the commitment to gender equality and justice.²⁷ Islamic feminists attempt to solve the problem of gender inequality based on the hadith texts. Islamic feminists also reinterpret misogynistic hadiths on the basis of gender justice. The emergence of the feminist movement in the West has provided valuable inspiration for Islamic feminists to reinterpret misogynistic hadiths. Thus, the thought movement of Islamic feminism that criticizes the interpretations that degrade women needs to receive support for the promotion of gender justice.

Justice is an essential aspect of human life, and therefore, justice is one of the goals of every religion.²⁸ The issue of gender inequality leads to the problem of inequality in position between men and women. Men have more opportunities than women do in the public sphere.²⁹ There are social groupings that determine a person's life path and participation in community life, which can be detrimental to women. For example, the wife plays the role of caring for the children, while the husband plays the role of working outside to provide for the family. In several aspects of social life, women are consistently in a vulnerable position, such as gender segmentation of the workforce and domestic violence.³⁰ Underage marriages that do not receive legal protection from the government have also resulted in women being forced to raise their children in poverty and other limitations.³¹ Islamic feminist advocacy against gender injustice is carried out through misogynistic hadiths, in the aspect of understanding, to introduce gender justice and respect for women in a unique way.

²⁵ M. Jakfar and Fitria, "Understanding Multiple Interpretations on the Hadith."

²⁶ Tamer Koburtay, et.al., "Implications of Religion, Culture, and Legislation for Gender Equality at Work: Qualitative Insights from Jordan," *Journal of Business Ethics* 164, no. 3 (2020), p. 421–36.

²⁷ Ghasem Darzi, et. al., "Revealing Gender Discourses in the Qur'ān." p. 1–11.

²⁸ Ilham Mundzir and Yulianti Muthmainnah, "The Progressiveness of Quranic Interpretation in the Fatwa of Muhammadiyah on Female Circumcision," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 12, no. 2 (2022), p. 285–311.

²⁹ Marhumah, "Hadith, Justice, and Gender Equality: Indonesian Progressive Muslims' Thought."

³⁰ Mabutho Mkandla and Yolanda Dreyer, "Healing History, Healing a Nation: A Prophetic Practical Pastoral Ministry of Care," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (2020), p. 1–15.

³¹ Wantu, et. al., "Early Child Marriage."

Challenges of Textual Reasoning towards Misogynistic Hadiths

The first misogynistic hadith understood textually that Islamic feminists disapprove of is the hadith about the creation of women from the ribs of men. Rasulullah PBUH said, "I advise you to treat women kindly, for the woman was created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its uppermost part. If you try to straighten it, you will break it; and if you leave it, it will remain crooked."³² Islamic feminists reiterate that the inequality of men and women in Islam is rooted in the concept of the creation of women.³³ One respondent commented, that the results of our research at the Center for Women's Studies conclude that the cause of gender inequality is a misunderstanding of religion, one of which is the misinterpretation of misogynistic hadiths. Therefore, we are obliged to convey the correct understanding to the Muslim community of Makassar City through *taklim* (religious studies) gathering and social media.³⁴

In line with the statement above, other research showed that the hadith regarding the origins of the creation of women has been understood textually, giving a negative impression of the equality of men and women.³⁵ Islamic feminists thus reject the textual understanding of the said hadith on the creation of women.

In addition to criticizing textual understanding, Islamic feminists also propose a way to understand the hadith on the creation of women. Islamic feminists seek to perceive the hadith of the creation of women through a metaphorical approach.³⁶ Metaphorically, the meaning of the hadith on the creation of women from the men's ribs is to remind men to be wise in dealing with women, as the traits, characters, and tendencies of women are in fact different from those of men. If people fail to understand its true meaning, it is highly likely that men will behave inappropriately towards women.³⁷ Men should be very careful when dealing with women's character and traits. If men are

³² Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari* (Istanbul: al-Maktabah al-Islamiyah, 1977).

³³ Ruhama Wazna and Hamim Ilyas, "The Logic Probability on Hadith (Counting Gender Occupants of Heaven and Hell)," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 27, no. 2 (2019), p. 145. Samuel H. Allen and Shawn N. Mendez, "Hegemonic Heteronormativity: Toward a New Era of Queer Family Theory," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 10, no. 1 (2018), p. 70–86.

³⁴ Interview with Aisyah Kara, Professor and Head of Center for Gender and Child Studies UIN Alauddin Makassar (2013-2016), December 7, 2022.

³⁵ Busran Qadri and Ihsan Mulia Siregar, "Islamic Renewal in the Field of Family Law: A Historical Analysis of Gender Equality," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, No. 2 (2023). Miftahul Huda and Tri Wahyu Hidayati, "The Concept of Muḥammad Shaḥrūr on Gender Parity in Inheritance Legislation," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, No. 2 (2023).

³⁶ Rostam and Malim, "Text Categorisation in Quran and Hadith."

³⁷ Ghasem Darzi, et. al. "Revealing Gender Discourses in the Qur'ān: An Integrative".

careless, the consequences will be as harmful as straightening a crooked rib.³⁸ Thus, the creation of women from crooked ribs does not mean that the position of women other than Eve is lower than that of men.

The socialization of Islamic feminist understanding has succeeded in changing the mindset of the Muslim community in Makassar City. The Head of the Center for Women's Studies at the Indonesian Parahikma Institute described, research conducted in 2021 has found that the feminist movement in Makassar City has succeeded in increasing public awareness about issues of injustice and promoting gender equality in various sectors, including in education and politics.³⁹

This information was confirmed by one community figure who noted, "In general, the Muslim community in Makassar City understands that men and women are the children and grandchildren of Adam. Therefore, from a human perspective, there is no difference between men and women. They even need each other. Men's strength is needed by women and women's gentleness is admired by men.⁴⁰ Islamic feminists also denounce the textual understanding of *aqiqah* hadith because textually the hadith regarding *aqiqah* creates the impression that men are of a higher rank than women. The narration of the hadith is, "Umm Kurzin asked Rasulullah about *aqiqah*. Rasulullah PBUH replied: two goats for a baby boy and one goat for a baby girl."⁴¹

The textual understanding of the *aqiqah* hadith is found in conservative Salafi works.⁴² Therefore, Islamic feminists criticize the textual understanding of this hadith, as it is contrary to Islamic teachings that uphold equal rights between men and women. The Head of the Center for Women's Studies of Alauddin State Islamic University affirmed Islamic feminism believes that textual understanding of several misogynistic hadiths causes Muslim society to position men at a higher level than women. Such a theological perception has become entrenched that it seemed as if no problems had arisen.⁴³

To counter gender inequality in the *aqiqah* hadith, Islamic feminists employ the hermeneutic approach. The hermeneutic approach is an approach that studies

³⁸ Masruhan Masruhan, "The Unprecedented Contextual Interpretation of The Misogynic Hadith At The Reformist Persis Pesantren In Bangil," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, No. 2 (2019), p. 480,

³⁹ Interview with Suryani Jihad, Academician of Institut Parahikma Indonesia, South Sulawesi, December 9, 2022.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mustakim Jamaluddin, Community Figure at Makassar, December 23, 2022.

⁴¹ Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

⁴² Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub, "Implications of Religion, Culture, and Legislation for Gender Equality at Work."

⁴³ Interview Interview with Aisyah Kara, Professor and Head of Center for Gender and Child Studies UIN Alauddin Makassar (2013-2016), December 7, 2022.

the expressions of other people who differ widely over the historical period.⁴⁴ Hermeneutics directs the text studied to have meaning at present. The use of hermeneutics as an approach to the study of hadith is a form of knowledge integration used today, such as the integration of knowledge between hadith studies and hermeneutics in the inter-religious tolerance in Salatiga.⁴⁵ Islamic feminists believe that if the hadith about *aqiqah* is understood using a hermeneutical approach, there will be no impression that Islam differentiates between men and women.

Islamic feminists argue that before the arrival of Islamic teachings, girls who were born would make their parents frown, whereas when a boy was born, they would rejoice. They would welcome the birth of a baby boy with a ceremony, but not the birth of a baby girl.⁴⁶ To end this injustice, Rasulullah PBUH began to give rewards to women. Rasulullah PBUH demonstrated his concern by starting *aqiqah* for girls with a goat. The initiation of the *aqiqah* tradition carried out during the time of the Prophet Muhammad was a symbol of women's liberation from injustice. Before Islam, girls were greeted with disappointment, and after Islam, the status and dignity of women have been raised even though they are yet to be optimal.

The impact of the hermeneutical approach socialized by Islamic feminists on the Muslim community in Makassar City has started to bear fruit. A community figure described; the socialization conducted by Islamic feminists in Makassar City has changed people's perceptions. A Muslim person in Makassar City slaughtered two goats for his baby girl because he did not want to differentiate them from his other children.⁴⁷ This statement suggests that the Muslim community in Makassar City has begun to shift from the provision that only one goat is allowed for baby girls. The reasons stated emphatically indicate not to differentiate between the children who receive the *aqiqah*.

The next misogynistic hadith is about women being a source of *fitnah*. Rasulullah PBUH said, "I have not left a *fitnah* after me more harmful to men than women."⁴⁸ Textually, this hadith has given rise to a degrading understanding of women because the meaning of the word *fitnah* generally has the impression of being something bad, evil, and scary. As a result, men have to be highly cautious with women. Islamic feminists thus try to explain the meaning of the word *fitnah* that is free from degrading nuances to women. One respondent stated,

⁴⁴ Mukaromah, "Hermeneutika Hadis Fatimah Mernissi (Aplikasi Terhadap Hadis Kepemimpinan Perempuan)."

⁴⁵ Adang Kuswaya and Muhammad Ali, "The Concept of Peace in the Qur'an: A Socio-Thematic Analysis of Muslims' Contestation in Salatiga, Indonesia," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 1 (2021), p. 73.

⁴⁶ Khalif Muammar A. Harris and Adibah Muhtar, "Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Menurut Perspektif Islam dan Barat," *Afkar* 21, no. 2 (2019), p. 33–74.

⁴⁷ Interview with Azman Arsyad, Community Figure at Makassar, November 27, 2022.

⁴⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

“We have taken various ways to eliminate the negative stigma against women. It is undeniable that the various vices that women bear have become the perception of society in general.”

Islamic feminists point out that the word *fitnah* in the hadith cannot be interpreted textually. Linguistically, *fitnah* is a neutral word, which can have either a bad meaning or a good meaning. For example, in the Qur'an, children and property are also referred to as *fitnah*, in which the basic meaning of which is a test or trial. Thus, *fitnah* can bring a family to gratitude and can lead to disbelief. Here, the linguistic approach is essential to avoid distorting the meaning of vocabulary.

Islamic feminists also disapprove of the misogynistic hadith's textual understanding that most women become dwellers of the Hell. The hadith referred to narrates that Rasulullah PBUH said, I looked into Paradise and found that the majority of its dwellers were the poor people, and I looked into the (Hell) Fire and found that the majority of its dwellers were women.⁴⁹ Textually, this hadith hints that women have bad traits so that most of them become dwellers of the Hell, and such a derogatory perception has been deeply rooted among Muslim communities. A female activist from the Women's Advocacy Institute remarked, “It is difficult to eradicate the negative stigma of society regarding the various vices that women bear from religious and social perspectives. We are trying to eliminate the negative stigma towards women to uphold gender justice.”⁵⁰

To end the negative impression of women in this hadith, Islamic feminists seek to understand it in accordance with the basic principles of Islamic teachings. Islam teaches that the cause of someone going to heaven or hell depends on the actions and grace of Allah SWT. Both men and women are given the same potential to do good deeds. In this regard, Islamic feminists view the said hadith with a phenomenological thematic approach. Through a phenomenological approach, Islamic feminism emphasizes that the female birth rate over time shows a significantly increasing trend compared to male birth rates. Using a calculation scale, more women will be born on earth than men will.⁵¹ Thus, it is not appropriate if the hadith is used as a tool to discredit women, associating them with evil characters, and that they become the majority of the inhabitants of hell.

According to Islamic feminists, such an understanding indicates that Islamic teachings do not differentiate between the degrees of men and women. Hence, such issues continue to be socialized by Islamic feminists to the people of Makassar City. One respondent stated, “We should be grateful that in an interview with the media in 2020, the Head of the Empowering Family Welfare

⁴⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

⁵⁰ Interview with Ahkam Jayadi, Women's Advocacy Institute Activist, Makassar, November 27, 2022.

⁵¹ Wazna and Ilyas, “The Logic Probability on Hadith (Counting Gender Occupants of Heaven and Hell).”

(*Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/PKK*) Mobilization Team for Makassar City acknowledged that the Islamic feminist movement in Makassar City has helped strengthen the role and contribution of women in regional development, especially through programs that support the welfare of women and children.⁵²

The textual understanding of a misogynistic hadith in domestic matters also faces criticism among Islamic feminists. The hadith narrates that Rasulullah PBUH said, "When a man calls his wife to his bed, and she does not respond, the One Who is above the heaven becomes displeased with her until he (her husband) becomes pleased with her."⁵³ One study concluded that textual understanding of the hadith on household matters is very familiar among Muslims.⁵⁴ The textual understanding of the hadith implies that the husband's rights must be obeyed, and so the wife should prioritize her husband's rights over her own rights. The textual understanding also insinuates a wife's obedience to her husband as a matter of course. Such an assumption arises because of the tug-of-war between religion and culture to create subordination and oppression of women.

Islamic feminists believe that the textual understanding of the hadith on household matters places women under the full authority of a husband. Therefore, Islamic feminists advocate the need to review the sources of Islamic teachings, which have resulted in the institutionalization of men's authority over women. Islamic feminists conclude that the current interpretation of the hadith on household affairs does not provide a sense of justice for women. In an interview, one respondent noted, "All *fiqh* books that discuss hadiths regarding household affairs are textually understood. Therefore, a new *fiqh* is needed that can guarantee justice to women. For example, in the case of a wife's rejection, a husband should understand it because sometimes the wife refuses due to being in a poor mood or suffering from pain."

In line with the statement above, Varsha Rangunandan proposes the need for an understanding of religion that benefits women. Varsha points out that women's empowerment is as important as economic empowerment for individual welfare and women's freedom.⁵⁵ The hadith associated with a wife's obedience to her husband has exceeded the limits of normal human logic.⁵⁶ A wife who diligently prays at night and does many good deeds becomes worthless only because she refuses her husband's invitation for a very short time. On the other hand, the Qur'an says that if humans do whatever goodness, they will be rewarded without

⁵²Interview with Suryani Jihad, Academician of Institut Parahikmah Indonesia, South Sulawesi, December 9, 2022.

⁵³ Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

⁵⁴ M. Jakfar and Fitria, "Understanding Multiple Interpretations on the Hadith That Husbands Allow Wives to Have Outdoor Activities."

⁵⁵ Rangunandan, "Changing Equations: Empowerment, Entrepreneurship and the Welfare of Women."

⁵⁶ M. Jakfar and Fitria, "Understanding Multiple Interpretations on the Hadith That Husbands Allow Wives to Have Outdoor Activities: A Study of Islamic Law Perspectives."

relying on the power of men. The textual understanding of the misogynistic hadith above is a failure in reading and examining the hadith of the Prophet PBUH.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is necessary to take various approaches to understand any misogynistic hadith.

Islamic feminists promote such information to the Muslim Community in Makassar City. One respondent mentioned, "We have collaborated with several organizations that are striving for women's rights and promoting gender equality, such as Aisyiyah (Muhammadiyah) and Fatayat (Nahdlatul Ulama). The existence of these organizations shows that there is public support and awareness about gender issues and the need for action to overcome injustice against women."⁵⁸

Islamic feminists in Makassar City also promote understanding of the misogynistic hadith on women's leadership. Abu Bakrah narrated that Rasulullah PBUH said, "A nation which placed its affairs in the hands of a woman shall never prosper."⁵⁹ This hadith about women's leadership has been understood textually and used as a political tool to prevent women from improving their careers, i.e., in becoming leaders.

To resolve the polemic of misogynistic hadiths, Islamic feminists have tried to understand them contextually. Contextual understanding is based on the assumption that some of the Prophet's hadiths are related to conditions that occurred at that time.⁶⁰ Understanding the context of the hadith is crucial since some hadiths are difficult to comprehend properly unless the circumstances in which the hadith was said are also taken into account. The message contained in a hadith sometimes has a general meaning, but after in-depth analysis, the hadith is oriented towards a special meaning.⁶¹ Islamic feminists argue that contextually the hadith on women's leadership emerged when the Persian country was on the verge of destruction. Political paganism had made the people and the state share the inheritance that was given to a young woman who had no awareness of political issues. This indicated that the Persian country was heading for

⁵⁷ Faisal Ahmad Shah, "Fiqh Hadith Dalam Kalangan Ulama Hadith Kontemporari. Kajian Terhadap Metode Kefahaman Al-Ghumari Dalam Isu-Isu Terpilih," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 19, no. 1 (2021), p. 83–112.

⁵⁸ Interview with Ahkam Jayadi, Women's Advocacy Institute Activist, Makassar, November 27, 2022.

⁵⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari*.

⁶⁰ Masruhan, "The Unprecedented Contextual Interpretation of The Misogynic Hadith At The Reformist Persis Pesantren In Bangil"; Henriette Raudszus, Eliane Segers, and Ludo Verhoeven, "Use of Morphological and Contextual Cues in Children's Lexical Inferencing in L1 and L2," *Reading and Writing* 34, no. 6 (2021), p. 1513–38.

⁶¹ Ahmad Muttaqin, "Women's Identity in the Digital Islam Age: Social Media, New Religious Authority, and Gender Bias," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 2 (2020), p. 253.

destruction. This hadith has expressed wisdom from the Prophet PBUH when he commented on the events experienced by the Persian country.⁶²

The contextual understanding of this hadith further emphasizes that the background aspects of the emergence of the hadith shall not be ignored.⁶³ Through contextual understanding, Islamic feminists conclude that women can become state leaders. The prohibition on women from becoming leaders based on the said hadith cannot be justified. The contextual approach has also been taken to the term *aqwam* in the Qur'an to ensure the concept of justice and equality between husband and wife who both earn a living in a household.⁶⁴ Therefore, gender observers suggest the need to create a new *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) that refers to contextual understanding to create harmonious household conditions. In this regard, contextual understanding is one solution to grasp information from hadiths properly.

The discussion on these misogynistic hadiths implies that Islamic feminists examine hadiths with their own methodology in accordance with feminist theology. Islamic feminists refute the textual understanding of hadiths, which ignores the existence of women. Islamic feminists seek to introduce Muslim society to the concept of gender justice in an unprecedented way.⁶⁵ The approach to studying hadiths carried out by Islamic feminism also suggests that Islamic feminism uses the basic principles of Islamic teachings to understand the hadiths. Islamic feminists believe that the Qur'an and hadith have indeed attempted to eliminate hatred between humans.⁶⁶

Such understanding also becomes a resource for Islamic feminism in defending gender justice in Makassar City. The Islamic feminism movement in Makassar City has contended for women's rights to become leaders. A respondent informed, an article published by the *Harian Tribun Timur* in 2021 reported that the feminist movement in Makassar City has helped increase women's

⁶² Ibn Kathīr, Commentary Method, and Text Criticism, "Cumhuriyet İ Lahiyat Dergisi - Cumhuriyet Theology Journal Tefsîrû ' 1 - Qur'âni ' 1 - 'azîm ' de İbn Kesîr ' in Hadis Şerh Metodu ve Metin Tenkidi," *Cumhuriyet Theology Journal* 24, no. 1 (2020): 97–118; Syekh Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyah Bayn Ahl Al-Hadits Wa Ahl Al-Fiqh*, (Daar Asy Syuruuq, 1989).

⁶³ Ramle and Huda, "Between Text and Context: Understanding Hadīth through Asbab Al Wurud."

⁶⁴ Ja'far and Hermanto, "Reinterpretation of the Rights and Duties of Contemporary Husbands and Wives."

⁶⁵ Khalif Muammar A. Harris and Muhtar, "Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Menurut Perspektif Islam dan Barat."

⁶⁶ Kuswaya and Ali, "The Concept of Peace in the Qur'an: A Socio-Thematic Analysis of Muslims' Contestation in Salatiga, Indonesia"; Jean Pierre Unger et al., "In Defence of a Single Body of Clinical and Public Health, Medical Ethics," *BMC Health Services Research* 20, no. Suppl 2 (2020), p. 1–10.

representation in the local parliament and policies that support women's rights, such as land rights and reproductive health.⁶⁷

This information shows that the efforts made by Islamic feminists have produced significant outcomes in Makassar City. Other than Islamic feminists, several Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, have also opened schools for women. One respondent attested, "The establishment of the Ummul Mukmin Islamic Boarding School and the Atirah School in Makassar City is clear evidence of the struggle of Islamic women in Makassar City to guarantee women to have the rights to receive education equal to men."

In line with this statement, the Islamic feminist movement also campaign for women's rights to work and to obtain the same jobs as men. They also advocate for women's rights to receive equal legal protection in workplace.⁶⁸ The Islamic feminist movement through religious symbols has also delivered autonomous Indonesian Islamic women to the realms of personal, social, and political life.⁶⁹ Still, the struggle of Islamic feminism in Makassar City has never been easy. One respondent recalled, "Initially, Islamic feminist activities in Makassar City were suspected of being liberal ideas that were contrary to Islamic teachings. However, thanks to the aptness of Islamic feminists in approaching the local people, what is conveyed can be understood and accepted as something good."

The respondent's statement highlights the progress of the successful campaign of Islamic feminists in Makassar City to manifest women's moral autonomy and individuality in facing male power. Islamic feminists have shown independence in comprehending misogynistic hadiths and no longer rely solely on the way classical Muslim scholars interpret the hadiths.⁷⁰ They have developed hadith studies through several approaches in understanding hadiths, particularly on misogynistic hadiths.⁷¹ Islamic feminists conclude that many textual interpretations of hadiths are unrealistic and lack strong evidence.⁷² On this point,

⁶⁷ Interview with Nasrullah Nawir, Women Activist at Makassar City, January 22, 2023.

⁶⁸ Silvana Mariano and Beatriz Molari, "Gender Equality from the MDGs to the SDGs: A Feminist Analysis," *Revista de Administração Pública* 56, no. 6 (2022), p. 823–42.

⁶⁹ Yulia Nasrul Latifi, "The Autonomy of Indonesian Muslim Women In The Novel 'Adhrā' Jakarta By Najīb Al-Kylānī: A Feminist Literary Criticism Perspective," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, No. 1 (2021), p. 103.

⁷⁰ Ismail Ismail, "Pendekatan Feminis Dalam Studi Islam Kontemporer," *Jurnal Hawa : Studi Pengarus Utamaan Gender Dan Anak* 1, No. 2 (2019), p. 217–38,

⁷¹ Wardani Wardani, "Integrasi Ilmu Tafsir Dan Ilmu Sosial: Sebuah Catatan Awal Tentang Sosiologi Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (2020), p. 42,

⁷² Hazel T Biana, "Journal of International Women ' s Studies Extending Bell Hooks ' Feminist Theory," *Journal of International Women ' s Studies Extending Bell Hooks ' Feminist Theory* 21, no. 1 (2020), p. 13–29.

Islamic feminist efforts in Makassar City shall be appreciated as a critical effort to uphold gender justice in society.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Islamic feminists in Makassar City, Indonesia refute the textual understanding of misogynistic hadiths due to conflicting values with Islamic law uphold the values of justice and gender equality. Islamic feminists in Makassar City have campaigned for women's rights in various aspects of life, particularly in terms of education, work, and politics. The Islamic feminist movement has played an important role in promoting gender equality in religious contexts. Islamic feminists have shown that there should be re-interpretation of such misogynistic hadiths, which trigger contradictory views among Muslims. If there is an understanding of a hadith that is contrary to the values of Islamic teachings, it is necessary to carry out a review using various approaches to ensure the conformity of the hadith with Islamic teachings. . If analyzed from a gender perspective, Islamic feminists have played an important role in fighting for gender equality in a religious context. Meanwhile, in the context of hadith understanding theory, a contextual approach is needed to provide a comprehensive understanding for society so that gender justice is realized. Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. One notable limitation is no prior investigation as to why Islamic feminists differ in understanding misogynistic hadiths. Further, the misogynistic hadiths displayed here do not represent all aspects that concern with gender issues such as polygamy, witnesses, inheritance, and so forth.

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