

VEILED WOMAN “MUSLIMAH WAHDAH ISLAMIYAH” (PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN MAKASSAR CITY OF SOUTH SULAWESI)

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses and focuses on veiled women. Aims to understand the role of veiled women, where most Indonesians consider veiled women as a form of radicalism, terrorist followers of radical or deviant Islam. The focus of this research is the veiled women of the Salafi organization affiliated with a more independent organization called "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" which has a contemporary trend different from that of a veiled woman in general. This research uses qualitative approach, with constructivism paradigm and study type is phenomenology. Research subjects are veiled women who are members of the Islamic community organization Wahdah Islamiyah, located in Makassar City selected purposively. This study obtained through in-depth interviews, role observation, and literature study. The results of this study revealed, that women veiled "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" were able to build veil meanings in the development of the Wahdah Islamiyah Islamic organization movement for the benefit of the people who focus on the equality of the people and the nation. "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" has succeeded in becoming an example of the true 'active piety' of Muslim women. "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" is able to develop the development of veiled women who are active in increasing knowledge, practicing faith and actively sharing the pleasure of undergoing worship activities in all spheres of life. They also provide management of the impression that the veil as a personal and social identity that is by carrying veils in every realm of their lives, in the modern Islamic world, active in work, broad-minded by becoming a full-fledged Muslim woman to understand others follow their path as a way of preaching. Their pleasure can be seen as a sign of achievement in realizing the "habitus" soleha. The phenomenon of veiled women "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" becomes interesting, not only in terms of the application of "active piety", ways of speaking and dress all based on the symbol of Islamic law, but women veiled "Muslim" Wahdah Islamiyah "also contribute to the benefit of the people, nation and country.

Key words: Veiled woman, muslimah wahdah islamiyah, veil meaning, social identity

INTRODUCTION

The discussion about the veil (niqab) for women does not seem to be the only part of the dynamics of civilization, but has become a symbol of kindness and adherence to a belief, in this case, is Islamic beliefs. The world is not yet fully familiar with the veil in its true sense of the great dress symbol so there is still a lot of negative news about the veil in various parts of the world both in the territory of the Islamic State or the Middle East, Western Countries and Europe. France is one of the countries in Europe that strongly opposes the use of veils for its people. France banned people from wearing face coverings in 2011 and set fines for violators of up to 150 euros (Rp2.4 million).¹ Ghazal & Bartkowski (200: 395-417) stated in his research in Austin in the United States that the veil meaning contradicted the rules between Islamic religious leaders and Islamic feminists in Texas. Although gender discourse is dominant among Muslim leaders who make the veil a culture. Anti-veiled discourse was announced by Islamic feminists who have gained recognition in recent years in the state of Austin Texas in the United States.

Negative debate and reporting that has been around the veil is also felt in the Arab state, Tunisia. Although Tunisia is an Arab state but veils are not permitted even headscarves are prohibited in some conditions. The veil discussion is an international discussion that assumes negativity from several countries in the world regarding veil controversy and its relation to culture which is often associated with the word terrorism in the world. But the veil and its use will be interesting to discuss when the application of the veil can have a positive impact on the community and its presence in the general public can be felt. This different understanding can be felt in Indonesia .

Before the veil was known in Indonesia, its predecessor the hijâb, which is part of Islamic teachings, has attracted many people to study about it. The study of veil thus also begins, not only from the interpretive side of the sacred texts (al-Qur'an and al-hadith), but also from the perspective of history, mythology, archeology, and ideology. So it is not surprising if there are many views about this matter.

The popularity of the veil in Indonesian society has raised the discussion about what is the meaning of veils for Muslim women (Muslimah), what is the veil's role in the development of the organization, how is the development of Muslim women with the veil, and about the veil as an Arabic tradition and as a religion teachings. The veil then developed along with the rise of Islam and with the development of da'wah in Indonesia. Even before knowing the veil, Indonesian women have transformed, it is shown in the 1980s, Muslim women and students began to wear hijab with a perfect and intrinsic meaning. Entering the 1990s, muslim women began to know about the veil more openly and the veil has undergone a rapid development.

¹ www.bbc.indonesia.com

As described before, the veiled women's phenomenon does not only come from the development of Arab culture that has entered Indonesia, but also comes with the development of da'wah both from individually and organization that have explained about the importance of hijab and veil. They believe that both are the true clothing and the identity of the Muslim although it is still discussed whether it is an obligatory or sunnah.

Being a veiled woman in Indonesia is not easily acceptable, most Indonesians consider veiled women as a form of radicalism, terrorist followers of radical or deviant Islam. The negative response of the Indonesian people about the veiled women can be diverted by showing the positive image of veiled women. The positive image building of veiled women has been formed and developed by many organizations, one of them is by the Islamic organization "Wahdah Islamiyah". Wahdah Islamiyah is a mass organization of Islam based on understanding and amaliyah on *Alqur'an* and *Sunnah* according to the understanding of *As Salaf Ash-Salih (Manhaj Ahlusunnah Wal Jamaah)*. Wahdah Islamiyah was first established on 18th of June 1988 as the Union of Ummat Institute named *Yayasan Fathul Muin*. On 19th of February 1998, it then changed to Wahdah Islamiyah Foundation which means the unity of Islam.

This organization is engaged in da'wah, education, social, women, information, health, and environment spread all over Indonesia, and centered in Makassar-South Sulawesi. One of the developments of veil in Indonesia is formed with a veiled women movement based on the salaf of "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" which has a contemporary trend that is different from the veiled women in general.²

LITERATUR REVIEW

The study of veiled women is closely related to the visual representation of Muslim women who reflect the image of Islam significantly. Islam is a religion that encourage its followers to create art and beauty as long as it does not clash with the Qur'an and Sunnah. One study mentions that the veiled Arab women create colorful clothes and face coverings for women which are rich in design as well as embroidery (Potts, 2009: 9). Both religious symbols and ethnic identity are still often displayed. The veils worn by veiled women are designed as a form of creative expression to maintain the politeness of women.

In some studies the role of veil for veiled women is also used as a commodity of Muslim women and even some of them also make a veil as a clothing disguise to commit a crime. There are several studies that illustrate the veil as a form of backwardness that paints women as weak and powerless creatures. Therefore all forms of knowledge about the veil by veiled women will form a culture and interaction in it. The created interaction will build new symbols and forms of communication of every veiled woman.

The meaning of the veil that is formed is widely reported by the media whose truth is not highlighted. Research conducted on veils is an answer that can help the world view of veils and their use. Veils which are increasingly becoming an important issue have ranked the most important in Muslim clothing, so that with research studies on veils in any part of the world will bring fresh air about the veil and its true role.

The veil itself in Arabic is called niqab, which means a woman's dress that covers the face. The veil itself is a woman's dress that cover part of a woman's face with eyes as the only visible part of the face. The veil in Arabic is called *khidr*, *niqab*, or *burqu'*. For that the veil is understood as a woman's clothes that cover the face, in Mulhandi Ibn Haj (2006: 06). The veil in the study of Islamic interpretation itself is a veil that is thick, loose, and cover the entire aurat, including face and palm, in which a veil is basically an advanced version of the use of hijab in Salih (2010: 14). Generally women who wear a veil are also always synonymous with wearing clothes with all-loose, dark color, and it covers the whole body except the eyes. In research conducted by Jackson and Turner (2015: 06) also revealed that the veil does not only refer to pieces that cover the face, but it is a stated goal in which the whole clothing is worn together with a significant face covering with the hijab concept that involves more than just covering the head and hair.

The use of veils and veiled women in the knowledge of the world can be an interesting issue to be developed into a global understanding especially for the Muslims. There is an image building, which shows the veiled women in their interaction and in their life which is as graceful as displayed by women in "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah". The meaning of veils from veiled women will certainly give birth to a social identity that will be lived which becomes a bridge for the general public to know and learn to understand the veil meaning felt by veiled women based on the scales of religion, culture and social world they form.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is oriented to the social world based on the interpretation of research subjects hence the method used in this research is qualitative method. Qualitative research is a study that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of research. Qualitative research is descriptive and tends to use analysis and further highlight the process and meaning. According to Denzin and Lincoln, (2009: 109) research with constructivism paradigm has characteristic that is, relative, meaning reality which is specially constructed and local, subjective and produce knowledge based on findings that occur in the field including findings that occur during interaction process occurred among researchers and key informant. This research uses phenomenology approach which is one of the methods of qualitative research.

²www.wahdah.or.id

Phenomenology is a study with the assumption that people are actively interpreting their experiences and trying to understand the world with their personal experiences Litlejohn (2009: 57). So it is as the background for researchers to describe the phenomenon of the experience of women's life with veil without any category or limitations of researchers. The same thing is also expressed by Mulyana (2001: 59) that "the approach of phenomenology includes the subjective or interpretive approach, which views the humans as active, in contrast with the objective approach or the behavioristic and structural approach that assumes that humans as passive", the study discusses veiled women in "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah", including in it their own view of life Kuswarno (2009: 09). Women veiled "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" are the subject of research where they use veils actively and actively socialize in the city of Makassar. This research was conducted to find out and describe what is felt directly understood and interpreted by women veiled "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" about themselves, their interactions and experiences consciously.

The subject of this research is women using veil who are active in Islamic organization Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar. The sample was conducted by purposive method as many as 10 people. In qualitative research the usual methods used are interviews, observations, and the use of documents, which aim to examine and understand the attitudes, views, feelings, and behaviors of individuals or groups of people. The use of various methods is intended for the authors to obtain a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of the phenomena studied.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Impression Management of "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah"

Being a different community is not an easy thing to do, but different things are indeed shown by the interaction of the veiled women, in this case, "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" in Makassar. In addition to the veil as the clothes code, Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah also carry veils in every aspect of their lives, including in organizations and communities. Although their presence is still often getting the bad treatment through the false judgement from the community such as direct rumors, being accused as a fundamentalist, fanaticism, excessive radicalism and even physical bad treatment, does not necessarily make "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" cover their identity and religious symbols that become a separate sign to be interpreted differently and complex. Through the clothes and veils that they wear, it was laden with performances of impression and identity management that are present inside and outside the community environment. The veiled face clearly represents religious and cultural symbols. But even the religious symbols that are considered sacred cannot be separated from the pull of social symbols as a feature behind the management of the impression in their daily lives.

The management impressions and consciousness of "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" women can be proven by the difference of their interaction both in community and society. Their inclusion in conservative self-development and the significant wisdom of knowledgeable and faithful women in contemporary nuances makes them full of the meaning of identity they build. In the management of the impressions, they create deep awareness and understanding in which they are able to see the real situation so that they are not only aware of the consequences but are able to find answers in it. This consciousness which Mead claims in (Mulyana, 2004), "is the core of the self and the source of identity, this consciousness is the relation of the individual to her environment as far as the environment exists for the individual". The consciousness of the veiled women in "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" about themselves and the accompanying symbol shows the relationship of self observing, knowing and reflecting social world in their environment.

2. The Meaning of the veil for "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah"

The participation of Muslim women of Wahdah Islamiyah is different from most veiled women who are also salafists in Islam. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah became one of the bearers of changes from the Wahdah Islamiyah Islamic organization which differentiate them from several other Muslim organizations in Indonesia, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, and PKS. Veiled women in general are often viewed as oppressed and invisible fanatical women, hidden within their communities. However, the veiled women in "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" have a clear movement and become the active agents in the Wahdah Islamiyah organization. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah believes that wearing a veil is part of Muslim women's efforts to revive the sunnah (the practice of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions). Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah believe that the veil is a Muslimah obligation derived from the knowledge of religion possessed and from the knowledge of the law of hijab through Al-Qur'an surah Al-Ahzab verse 59. It is this knowledge that encourages them to act by changing themselves to use loose dress that completely covers their body.

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah believes that wearing a veil is their attempt to become obedient with their religion which makes them as the real women. The examples of true Muslim women. So wearing the veil is related to their efforts to realize taqwa which in this context refers to the truth or obedience to God and is part of their efforts to have rewards in the presence of Allah SWT. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah believe they are able to collect God's gifts by trying to correct their attitudes and wearing proper dress to be blessed by Allah SWT. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah assume that what they do is a form of obedience to the husband as obliged for Muslim women. it is impossible for them to be able to go out alone at night without their Mahram (husband/male relative). Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah explain that wearing a veil is believed as a tool to train women to behave respectfully. They feel responsible for keeping their neighborhood community more Islamic by presenting women to be honorable.

3. Active Piety of “Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah”

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah is so active in organizations as well as outside organizations. Their liveliness is one key to the development of the level of piety and faith. In addition to being active in organizing they are also actively engaged in helping members to strengthen their influence among Muslim women around their neighborhood. Their outward-directed activities for recruitment purposes can be regarded as the most visible aspect of their institution as well as their active piety. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah are actively involved in “*Dawra*” activities (training) and journalistic workshops, Arabic learning, child care and consolidation in reading the Qur'an (tajwid). In addition to training activities, they are also active in recruiting older women who are active in the *Majlis Ta'lim* (meeting place for Islamic learning) so they can enter all levels of women's lives in general.

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah was born from the formation of da'wah activities developed by *daiyah* or commonly called *Murabbiyah* who is responsible for supervising and educating women in the *Majlis Ta'lim* around their own neighborhood. Their activity is named *Tarbiyah*. In 2007 they have been successfully followed by forty *Majlis Ta'lim* in Makassar, and some educated Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah have also formed *Ta'lim/tarbiyah* or new *Majlis*. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah's activities are consistent with the argument of active piety that covers the whole piety for all Muslims, in this regard is showing the relentless effort to lead Muslim woman completely.

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah perform pious practices for the internalization of '*kafa'ah* obedience' to Allah which means Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah continues to practice Islam rightly (*kafa'ah*) and this includes their ability to make a commitment to make Islam visible and have guidelines for society nation and state. For a personal level, the active piety shown by Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah is with the love they give in the form of their commitment to be role models for other Muslim women, especially in terms of their da'wah by wearing a veil. Wearing the veil is one of the most important aspects of their da'wah and form of love, since one of the criteria for becoming a *dā'iya* is to follow all the sunnah, which includes wearing a veil at the level of personal piety. Therefore the da'wah they do is so related to the insight that dakwah can be described as 'a special way of connecting activity with moral reform'. For them, wearing a veil makes their pious practice visible and is part of the embodiment of religious customs to gain obedience because it is part of their true commitment to religion and society. For example, Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar branch establishes additional requirements for women to pass from one level to another in religious training (*dawra*) in dakwah (*tarbiyah*) by wearing clothes that are not conspicuous in color, and are able to memorize verses of the Qur'an eloquently.

The exposition that is told by them in undergoing, namely, the use of veils for *murabbiyah*, will be an example of active piety that will attract a sense of curiosity of new members to seek and practice piety towards Allah SWT. This means that in increasing their piety, the new Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah were trained to actively develop curiosity, and to practice it. Not just know but then, not practice it, after knowing and practice it, the next level is providing an example, this is the process of da'wah activities in *tarbiyah* that will bear active piety. It should be noted that the level of training in *tarbiyah* discussed above does not always address clothing but also other life issues. There is a degree of consensus among new and old members, the new members are not required to use the veil, they are only given an understanding about it so that there will be no compulsion in the active piety that is created.

At the communal level, Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah's active piety is manifested in the way they embrace their responsibility to educate Muslim women seeking Islamic knowledge who are eager to return to true Islam. This visibility can be seen through the activities of *tarbiyah* either as mentor or *murabbiyah* and students or *mutarabbiyah* and *ta'lim* (Islamic teachings), All of which is more open to all Muslims. This *tarbiyah* activity has entered almost all universities in Makassar and even in the mosques where the activities of Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah are often held.

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah also actively interacts with the community without feeling any limitations, both in daily activities, social and religious that they never hesitate to share it. They are active in public works and love social interaction especially for the common good of society. However, their public activities do not match the western liberal conception of the distinction between public and private space. It is broadly defined to cover not only activities located in the public sphere but so many types of work are seen as contributing to the common good, although not exclusively, they remain active in the general scope of the institutional framework of social welfare or community development organizations.

Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah admits that joining the *tarbiyah* and using the veil is not demanding and pressing at all, but they enjoy it because it is part of their struggle to be a good Muslim woman and truly committed to Islam, especially about the veil, there is no coercion. Ummu Juni explained that the veil does not interfere with the interaction and the communication of wahdah women: "I was able to establish good interaction and communication with people who are not from Wahdah Islamiyah group especially colleagues and college students. I am veiled but able to do the same activities with women in general through gender equality". Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah, the veil gives an essential active piety that does not force to be a close-covered woman but as an educated woman especially in the matter of religious knowledge which will certainly be accounted for in the future. Being active in da'wah for Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah is closely related to self-satisfaction as it embodies their religious habitus and maintains their commitment to their religion (Islam).

CONCLUSION

The discussion about veiled women in the lives of the world community has been widely discussed. Several countries in the world, both Western and Eastern and Central Countries have provided discussions about the veil and its use and the phenomenon

of veiled women to be known to the world with many negative discussions while positive discussions are still minimal published. veiled women appeared together with salaf mashab into Indonesia and developed into *manhaj ahlul sunnah wal jamaah* which became the rodents of Wahdah Islamiyah Muslim women and salaf followers of veiled women began to emerge in accordance with the emergence of *da'wah* of love, especially among women who wear the veil.

Although there are still a lot of negative stigma often addressed and attached to their appearance because the veil and lifestyle chosen are more consistent with religion but impression management, the creation of positive messages and faith-based awareness, women veiled "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" can be evidenced by differences in good in the community and in the community. The inclusion of them in self-development consistently and according to the system and showing significant wisdom of women who have knowledge and faith in modern nuances makes them full of the meaning of the identity they build. in contemporary nuances makes them full of the meaning of identity they build. Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah believe that the veil is a Muslimah obligation derived from the knowledge of religion possessed and from the knowledge of the law of hijab through Al-Qur'an surah Al-Ahzab verse 59. It is this knowledge that encourages them to act by changing themselves to use loose dress that completely covers their body.

The veiled women in Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah have managed to change the meaning of the veil to be more visible, especially as the number of users has increased (from the 2000s on wards) and the establishment of women's institutions in their groups has grown (from 2005 on wards). Their visibility can be seen through the manifestation of the active piety and all of it is manifested in da'wah activities on both personal and communal levels (da'wah for self and da'wah for others). Although negative stigma is often addressed regarding to their appearance and the lifestyle they choose.

The efforts of "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" to make themselves visible in public through displaying them in veils in the activities of religious communities have contributed greatly to fostering positive perceptions in the general public where their activities always emphasize da'wah, emphasis on love for institutions and community, expressing their pleasure in carrying out acts of piety active in the institution as well as in the public sphere. Da'wah for "Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah" is closely related to self-satisfaction in realizing a pious "habitus" in religion and maintaining a commitment to their religion (Islam). The main rule is for public activities that are associated with the commitment to live as Muslim women who play an active role and are dedicated to maintaining the dignity of the group. They are active not only in groups but also in creating a sense of security and respect for women in the eyes of the nation and the world.

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