

THE MINORITY STIGMA OF NIQABI IN SOCIAL COMMUNITIES: A STUDY OF LIVING SUNNAH ON NIQAB-WEARING STUDENTS AT THE ISLAMIC STATE UNIVERSITY IN LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This study specifically focuses on the minority stigma faced by niqab wearers, particularly among university students in Lampung, Indonesia. On the one hand, this group of niqab-wearing students tries to apply Islamic teachings (read: hadith) in their everyday lives. However, this group finds itself as a minority and frequently faces a negative stereotype. Therefore, this study aims to reveal how both niqab and non-niqab-wearing students understand the hadiths pertaining to the niqab, how the majority group, consisting of students and lecturers, perceive the minority of niqab-wearing students, and how the attitudes of the minority of niqab-wearing

students toward the stigmatization they encounter. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method and phenomenological approach. The results revealed that students' understanding varied from understanding, to lack of understanding, and not understanding the hadith teachings about the niqab. Furthermore, the Islamic State University in Lampung adheres to the principle of providing equal service by the law. Similarly, in everyday situations, niqab-wearing students were not subject to any discrimination based on their minority status. Although several lecturers and students perceived niqabi as a different occurrence, they do not discriminate against students who choose to wear niqab. Consequently, niqab-wearing students remained at ease while confidently adhering to the teachings of the sunnah on the niqab.

Keywords: Minority Stigma, Niqab, Living Sunnah, Social Community.

A. Introduction

Islam is a religion that pays the most attention to all aspects of the lives of its people. This completeness of rules certainly makes it easier for adherents to carry out the rules of Islamic law. Among these rules is about dressing, both for men and women. There is a minimum standard that must be covered as a way to keep oneself from exposing the *'Aurah* (private parts of the body) (Hasan, 2013; Hassan & Ara, 2021). For women, in particular, their *'Aurah* in public is the entire body, excluding the palms of the hands and the face. Recently, in addition to the need to cover the *'Aurah*, women's clothing has often become a topic of discussion and is associated with the social traditions of society (Rezi, 2016). There is an assumption that the standard of dress for women is the same as wearing clothes when performing prayers and outside prayers. Along with the development of clothing models, clothing can symbolize individual existence, social status, obedience, and religiousness.

Historical evidence shows that religion is culturally and socially adaptive (Ulumuddin, 2020). The process of living a religious belief can be seen through religious events in the form of religious symbols or codes that can be accommodated in social and cultural circles (Andi, 2022). Religious symbols are brought to the surface so that they are more easily accepted by the broader community because they present the values of religiosity. One of the functions of religious symbols is to form the subjectivity of a person's character, while on the other hand, for secularists, this is an obstacle to the progress of a society (Saleh et al., 2022). Along with the progress of modern life with a strong communication network, the presentation of religious symbols in public spaces has an important role in disseminating the values of religious teachings, including Islam (Yusuf et al., 2021). It is well recognized that public spaces provide a highly accessible and unrestricted platform for expressing thoughts, opinions, and diverse interests that cannot be disregarded. Public information consumption through information disclosure is unstoppable (Ishaq & Mahanani, 2018).

Nowadays, wearing the niqab is assumed to be an implementation of the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in life and as proof of the obedience of a Muslim woman (Asis, 2017; Husna, 2019). The *living sunnah* and wearing the niqab are assumed to be indications of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on the niqab. The niqab or headscarf is a living sunnah phenomenon that conveys religious messages in cultured public space (Mubakkirah, 2020; Welborne et al., 2018). The practice of wearing the headscarf, as passed down through generations by oral testament from Prophet

Muhammad, is also considered a cultural tradition. This is where the encounter of religious teachings and local culture is inevitable. Religious teachings often inspire the traditions and culture of the community, whereas Islamic teachings are a point at which they halt and adapt (Sylviah & Muslim, 2020). Thus, wearing the headscarf orniqab is also a tradition among Muslim women with the motive of living the sunnah, although further study of the background and motivation is needed (Qolbi & Haidar, 2013). Female students at the State Islamic University in Lampung who choose to wear the niqab have individual motives and varying interpretations.

The State Islamic University in Bandar Lampung City, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, explicitly does not provide recommendations and prohibitions on wearing the niqab for female students. Students who wear the niqab have different backgrounds and motivations. Some of them were already wearing niqabs before they became students, which was a demonstration of their obedience (Lubis, 2020). Additionally, there are individuals who exclusively wear the niqab when influenced by others during activities such as recitation, liqa, and similar events (LA, Personal communication, December 11, 2022). The motivation that makes some students continue to wear the niqab, in addition to protecting themselves from disturbances from people around them, is more directed toward personal existence (KU, Personal communication, December 6, 2022). At the same time, other students stated that it is an effort to practice sunnah (*living sunnah*), although their numerical representation among the student population is relatively small. In addition, the pros and cons of the existence of the niqab itself among students cannot be ruled

out (Fitrotunnisa, 2018). Nevertheless, experiencing female students donning the niqab does not constitute a societal issue in the university.

This research uses a living sunnah approach that is believed to reveal the values of the Prophet's sunnah among niqabi students. This approach is required to explain the values of the living sunnah with the niqab in the activities of female students on campus at this time (Zuhri & Dewi, 2018). The issue of the niqab continues to be a concern among Indonesian Muslims, both in relation to the obligation to wear the niqab (Lubis, 2020; Rasyid & Bukido, 2018) or simply because it is a part of Arabic culture (Sudirman, 2019). Some people view that the niqab needs to be worn in the present time (Dharmayani et al., 2022). Some people view the niqab as an implementation of the Islamic treatise and religious identity (KU, Personal communication, December 6, 2022). Unfortunately, with the rise of terrorism issues, wearing the niqab for Muslim women tends to be considered part of a terrorist family or member. Coincidentally, niqabis are often closely associated with terrorists (Cahyaningrum & Desiningrum, 2018). In turn, niqabis are categorized as a minority group (Rahman & Syafiq, 2017; Yuhadi & Murtini, 2019) in addition to being negatively stigmatized as fanatical and puritanical.

There are several studies on the niqab; for example, Rasyid and Bukido (2018) examined through a normative-historical approach to the book of Tafseer that the niqab is permissible, may be worn and may not, depending on the region and society. The requirement to wear the niqab has its roots in the historical context of the period of the Prophet,

where it was deemed necessary. It also serves as a distinct identity for Muslim women. Sheikh (2019) also leads to the existence of legal disputes on the niqab among scholars, namely *wajib* (obligatory), *mandub*(recommended), and *mubah* (permissible). The same thing was found in Ilham's (2021) research, specifically the niqab normatively, asno verses and traditions require it. There are also *khilafiyah* (opinion differences) among *fuqaha* (the scholar of fiqh), even though the majority leads to the law of *mubah*.

The primary purpose of wearing the niqab is to conceal the 'Awrah, despite its origins in non-Islamic traditions. It was later embraced in Islam because to its perceived benefits (Hakim, 2020). Juliani (2018) examines the existence of tolerance and building a positive stigma towards the niqab at Teuku Umar University in Aceh, which is indeed based on Islamic shari'a in community life. The allegation that niqab wearers are involved in radicalism cannot be denied. They often participate in recitation activities (liqa or dauroh), which involve preachers from outside the campus with Wahabi, Tarbiyah, and Tahririyah schools. Commonly encountered terms in the gathering activities include *toghut*, *hijrah*, *khilafah*, and *kafir* (Saifullah & Afrizal, 2021). Apart from the debate above, niqab wearers in Indonesia have recently been able to modify the model to eliminate the impression of the niqab as a religious practice into a cultural practice so as not to be alienated, more modern, and accepted in the social environment (Dewi, 2019).

This study focuses on the acceptance of niqabi students at the Islamic State University in Lampung as an effort to living sunnah (hadith), the wearing of the niqab,

and their experiences and feelings in socializing in the campus community. In another part, it also aims to reveal the wearing of the niqab as a religious phenomenon among students. The main problem of this study is how the niqabi students understand the normative basis of the Prophet's hadith about the niqab and their experience while wearing the niqab on campus. In addition, to reveal the intentions and purposes of the niqab wearers, it is limited to following the recommendations of *Shara'* or following in order to maintain the solidity of the group that is considered a minority in the campus community.

This study aims to identify, analyze, and understand the stigma experienced by niqab wearers in social communities, especially within the Islamic State University in Lampung. Therefore, this study adopts a descriptive research design that utilizes a qualitative approach by looking at complex phenomena through contextual and naturalistic inquiry methods (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is considered a practical descriptive approach to describing complex phenomena (Miles et al., 2013). At the same time, the approach used is phenomenological as a research approach. Phenomenology (phenomenon) is a term introduced by Johann Heirinckh (Masin, 1993; Moran, 2002) oriented towards explaining the apparent reality. Meanwhile, the process of analysis and approach was employed to derive findings based on the principles and teachings of the living sunnah (Qudsy, 2016). The living sunnah approach leads to the use of the niqab to live the sunnah, which is certainly based on the hadith text formulated through interpretation and passed down continuously from generation to generation (Salleh et al., 2020).

This research involved three subjects: niqab-wearing students, general students, and lecturers. A purposive sampling method was used to determine the research subjects. The research subjects were selected based on several criteria, namely: (1) The students of the Islamic State University in Lampung as the research location, (2) niqab-wearing students, (3) students who live socially in the environment of niqab-wearing students, and (4) lecturers in the environment of niqab-wearing students, (5) lecturers in several Islamic universities in Indonesia, and (6) lecturers from Malaysian Islamic universities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were considered an essential tool in gaining an in-depth understanding of the stigma of niqab-wearing minorities in the social community at the Islamic State University in Lampung. Casual observations were made of niqab-wearing female students and students who live socially around them. Observation data served as supporting data for primary data obtained through in-depth interviews. Meanwhile, document analysis was used to obtain additional information about the social, cultural, and historical contexts related to the wearing of the niqab in the social community, examining campus policies related to the wearing of the niqab and existing procedures for dealing with issues related to stigma and diversity in the campus environment.

Thus, the use of the document analysis method in this study aims to obtain a more complete and in-depth understanding of the stigma of niqab-wearing minorities in the social community at the Islamic State University in Lampung. At the end of the study, the analysis technique used

in this research is the same as that of Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (verification) (Miles & Huberman, 2004). Data reduction is carried out based on data obtained from various literature and sources. The reduced data is then presented, and conclusions are drawn through the established train of thought.

B. Theoretical Review

1. The concept of minority

The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*) mentions that a minority is a social group whose citizens are much smaller when compared to other groups in society (Diknas, 2005; Partanto & al-Barry, 1994). Meanwhile, according to M. Ali Kettanim, quoting from Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, minorities are part of a population with several different characteristics and often receive different treatment (Kettani, 1994). A similar opinion is expressed by Suaedy et al. (2012), who define minorities as social groups whose citizens are far fewer than other groups in a society.

Citing the 1977 report of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Francesco Capotorti defines a minority as a group that, in terms of numbers, is lower than the rest of the population of a country, is in a non-dominant position, whose members -being citizens of a country- have ethnic, religious, linguistic characteristics that are different from those of the population and

show, albeit implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed at preserving their culture, traditions, religion and language (United Nations, 2010).

Helmiati (2022) summarises the existence of two categories from the definition, namely first, the objective category in the form of facts about the lower quantity of the population in a country so that it is in a non-dominant position. Secondly, the subjective category is having a sense of solidarity as a minority community that is directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion, and language (Helmiati, 2022).

2. Theoretical study on the niqab

Niqab is a type of cloth used to cover the head and face of women (Ministry of National Education, 2008). The way of dressing with a niqab is often used by women living in the Arabian Peninsula and Persia. In Arabic tradition, theniqab is defined as a cloth that covers the face so that only the eyes are visible. The niqabis separate from the jilbah or niqab, a separate cloth tied over the nose and extends to cover the chin of the user (Ulumuddin, 2020b). The Munjid at-Tulab dictionary identifies niqab from the word نقابا-ينقب-نقب meaning a cloth used by a woman to cover her face (al-Bustani, 1973). At the same time, Syuqqah (1997) said that the niqab or niqabis an ancient type of clothing that serves to beautify itself by covering the face.

The Quran does not use the term *niqab* to cover women's 'Awrah but uses the word *jalaba* (jilbab) as in

QS. Al-Ahzab. 59. The word jilbab comes from the Arabic language; the plural form of this word is *jalabib*, meaning a broad garment, meaning loose and airy clothing that is able to cover the entire 'Awrah of women from top to bottom to reveal only the face and palms of the hands (Yulikhah, 2017). In Muslim countries, there are different terms for jilbab; in Iran and Iraq, for example, the head covering cloth is called the *chador*; this word is closer to the translation in Indonesian, namely *cadar* (Ilham, 2021). Covering cloth is also represented by the word *khimar*, which comes from the word *khamara-yakhmuru-khamran*, which means storing and covering something. All intoxicating drinks are said to be *khamr*, because they can cover the mind and eliminate consciousness. Khimar is the singular word form, while the plural is *khumur*, *khumr*, or *akhmirah*, meaning something (cloth) that can cover the head (Rasyid & Bukido, 2018).

In terms of language, the dictionary *al Mu'jam al Wasith* states that jilbab has several meanings, namely: *qomish* (a kind of cloak); cloth that covers the whole body, *khimar* (veil); top clothing such as *milhafah* (blanket); a blanket-like veil that a woman wears to cover her body (Dhaif, n.d.). Based on the previous statement, it may be inferred that the niqab is an extra garment used to conceal the face for numerous reasons, including covering the 'Awrah and enhancing an individual's appearance through clothing. Niqabis are those who comply with the practice of wearing a headscarf or hijab that conforms to the principles of Sharia, as it includes a certain type of fabric that covers the face, leaving only the eyes and

palms of the hands exposed. The term “cadar” bears a closer phonetic resemblance to the term “chador.”

In recent developments, the niqab phenomenon has been intensely discussed, including in various forums, media, and the community, especially in the Arab region. There is a tendency to attribute the origins of the niqab to Arab culture despite the fact that the tradition of wearing the niqab did not originate there. This is evidenced by Shihab’s (2014) research that wearing covered clothing, including the niqab, is not a monopoly of Arab society, nor did it originate from their culture. Mutahhari (1990), a prominent Iranian scholar and philosopher, asserted that the tradition of wearing covering clothes, including the niqab, was prevalent in ancient civilizations preceding Islam. He further emphasized that this practice was deeply ingrained in Persian culture, particularly among the Sassans of Iran, and was even more rigorously enforced than what Islam prescribes.

Another view indicates that Arab societies adopted the practices of the Persians who adhered to the Zardasyt religion, where women were regarded as impure creatures (Shihab, 2012; Surawardi, 2021). Therefore, women were required to cover their mouths and noses in various ways so that their breath would not contaminate the sacred fire that was the object of worship in the ancient Persian religion. Arab societies also adopted the Byzantine (Roman) Empire’s practice of restricting women’s access to the home. This comes from the Ancient Greek culture, where their houses were divided into two separate sections, one for men and the

other for women (Jannah et al., 2021; Mujahidin, 2019). Wearing niqab became a powerful practice in Arab society during the Umayyad dynasty, especially during the reign of al-Walid II (125 AH/747 CE). At that time, the ruler authorized the division of special rooms for women in houses. However, during the Jahiliyyah and early Islamic periods, Arab women used clothes that attracted men, while the niqab was only to protect themselves from the heat that generally existed in the desert (Jannah et al., 2021; Nurcholish, 2020). Although they wore niqabs at the time, they were usually only placed on the head and often dangled backward, thus making the breasts and necklaces adorning their necks clearly visible. After the advent of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah addressed clothing and provided guidelines on how it should be worn (Shihab, 2012).

C. Theoretical Study on Living Sunnah

Scholars differ in their definitions of the living sunnah (hadith). Syamsudin (2007) states that living sunnah refers to the interpretation of the Prophet's sunnah by scholars, rulers, and judges based on the specific circumstances they encounter. According to Suryadilaga, the living sunnah is a symptom that appears in society in the form of patterns of behavior that originate from or respond to the interpretation of the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (Kholidun & Channa, 2021; Lubiset al., 2022). According to Qudsy (2016), living sunnah is a form of study of the phenomenon of practices, traditions, rituals, or behaviors that live in the community and have their basis in the hadith of the Prophet.

The statement above indicates that hadith can be interpreted and applied according to the situation being faced in a particular place, especially when new problems arise that are not addressed by existing legal provisions. The focus of living sunnah studies refers to the practices, traditions, rituals, or behavior of groups or individuals in society that are believed to come from the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

The term living sunnah (hadith) emerged in the late 20th century in the Islamic world (Rahman, 2000). The term originated from Fazlur Rahman's interpretation of the Prophet's sunnah. He contended that the development of hadith and sunnah has occurred in a realistic manner throughout history. Fazlur Rahman's approach was a response to orientalists when he was in the West, a response to traditional and fundamental Islamic scholars who blasphemed him when he was in Pakistan, and a response to modernist Islamic figures.

Fazlur Rahman responded to the orientalists' thoughts on the theory of evolution. In his study, he confirmed the findings and theories of orientalists about the evolution of the sunnah and hadith, but he disagreed with the theory put forward by orientalists that "the concept of sunnah is a creation of Muslims made after the death of the prophet". According to him, the concept of sunnah, which is a later creation of Muslims in the view of Orientalists, is considered invalid. According to Fazlur Rahman, Sunnah is a valid and operative concept since the beginning of Islam and applies throughout the ages (Rahman, 1965). The living sunnah is synonymous with Muslim *ijma'* or agreed practice, and the living sunnah is an ongoing process because it is accompanied by *ijtihad* and *ijma'* (Amal, 1996).

Fazlur Rahman recognizes the close relationship between the sunnah and hadith, even though a considerable distance separates them. According to him, the common thread that connects the two is the early generation's sunnah or living sunnah. The early generation's sunnah was their *ijtihad* activity, according to the Prophet's example, and in turn, the "living sunnah" was formalized into hadith (Rahman, 1965). Although hadith is the verbal transmission of the sunnah, Fazlur Rahman points out the salient differences between the living sunnah of the early generation and the formulation of hadith. According to him, the living sunnah was a living and continuous process, whereas the hadith is formal and seeks to establish the absolute permanence of the synthesis of the living sunnah, which lasted until the third century AH (Rahman, 1965).

Furthermore, the term living sunnah has been popularized by Barbara Metcalf through her article "Living Hadith in Tablighi Jamaah" (Metcalf, 1993). In this article, Metcalf explores the Jamaah Tabligh (JT) movement and describes it as people who live by the hadith. They preach with books such as "faḍail a'māl," and "ḥikayah al-ṣaḥabah". Metcalf examines how JT's disciples utilized the hadith as a kind of cultural criticism to analyze and evaluate reality. On further investigation, it becomes evident that this topic is an extension of the concept of living sunnah (Syamsuddin, 2007) and the practice of the Companions and the *Tabi'in*, which were influenced by the Medinan tradition initiated by Imam Malik (Dutton, 2004). As a result, this is not a novel concept. However, the originality lies in the way the words are phrased in the sentence.

The sunnah and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which serve as the authoritative source for Muslims, have been manifested in the lives of the wider community. Therefore, there are at least three variations and forms of living sunnah: written, oral, and practical traditions. This description suggests that various forms are commonly practiced and that one realm with another is sometimes closely interrelated. This is because the Muslim culture of practice is more prevalent than the other two traditions, written and oral traditions. The use of the niqab among students is very appropriate if it is classified in the category of practice tradition. In this study, living sunnah becomes an analytical knife to refine phenomenological theory by tracing various Prophetic sunnah related to the tradition of using the niqab among students.

D. Theoretical Study of Hadiths on the Niqab

Most jurists from the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, and Hanbali schools believe that the face is not part of the 'Awrah. In this case, women can cover it with a niqab and uncover it. According to the Hanafis, in modern times, it is forbidden for young women to show their faces to strange men who are not their mahrams. Not because the face is included in the category of 'Awrah, but rather to avoid fitnah. The Maliki school of thought considers it *makruh* for women to cover their faces during and outside of prayer, as this school considers such behavior to be an act of exaggeration. The Maliki school also considers that covering the face and palms of a beautiful young woman who is afraid of causing fitnah in a situation where there is much bad behavior and immorality is recommended (al-Islamiyah, n.d.).

The following are some of the Hadīths on which it is recommended to wear the niqab to protect oneself from the gaze of men and to avoid temptation:

كَانَ الْفَضْلُ بْنُ عَبَّاسٍ رَدِيفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمَ عَرَفَةَ ، قَالَ : فَجَعَلَ الْفَتَى يَلْحَظُ النِّسَاءَ ، وَيَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِنَّ ، قَالَ : وَجَعَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَصْرِفُ وَجْهَهُ بِيَدِهِ مِنْ حَلْفِهِ مَرَارًا ، قَالَ : وَجَعَلَ الْفَتَى يَلَاحِظُ إِلَيْهِنَّ ، قَالَ : فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ” :ابْنُ أَخِي إِنَّ هَذَا يَوْمٌ مَنْ مَلَكَ فِيهِ سَمْعُهُ وَبَصَرُهُ وَلِسَانُهُ عُفِّرَ لَهُ .

“Fadhli bin Abbas rode with the Messenger of Allah on the day of Arafat. Fadhli, who was very young then, looked at and watched the women in Arafat. So, the Prophet repeatedly moved his hand to turn Fadhli’s face away from looking at them. However, Fadhli repeatedly looked at them again. So, the Messenger of Allah said, “Son of my brother, on this day whoever is able to control his hearing, sight, and tongue, Allah will forgive him.” (Reported by Ahmad, Ibn Sa’d, Abu Ya’la, Ibn Khuzaimah, Ath- Thabarani, and Al-Baihaqi)(Hanbal, 1995).

In another narration from Ibn Abbas:

أَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بْنَ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا كَانَ رَدِيفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْحَجِّ فَجَاءَتْهُ الْحُنَاعِمِيُّ تَسْتَفْتِيهِ ، فَأَخَذَ الْفَضْلُ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهَا وَتَنْظُرُ هِيَ إِلَيْهِ ، فَصَرَفَ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةَ وَالسَّلَامَ وَجَهَ الْفَضْلُ عَنْهَا .

“Once, al-Fadhl ibn ‘Abbas was riding with the Prophet during the Hajj when a woman from Khats’am came by. Al-Fadhl looked at her, and she looked at him. So, the Prophet turned Fadhl’s face in another direction.” (HR. al-Bukhari from Ibn Abbas) (al-Bukhari, 1422H).

In the hadith narrated by Ali ibn Abi Talib, there is an additional wording:

فَقَالَ لَهُ الْعَبَّاسُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوَيْتَ عُنُقَ ابْنِ عَمِّكَ قَالَ: رَأَيْتُ شَابًّا
وَشَابَّةً فَلَمْ آمَنِ الشَّيْطَانَ عَلَيْهِمَا، وَقَدْ رَوَيْنَاهُ فِي كِتَابِ الْحَجِّ مِنْ
حَدِيثِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ بِبَعْضِ مَعْنَاهُ.

“Al-‘Abbas then asked the Messenger of Allah: O Messenger of Allah, why did you turn away your cousin’s neck? The Prophet replied, “ I saw a young man and a young woman who were not safe from the devil’s interference” (Baihaqi, 2003).

Hadiths narrated by Imam Bukhari from Ibn Abbas become a normative-authoritative basis for niqabi students to wear the niqab consistently. They understand that the Prophet’s action of turning Fadl’s face is a form of prohibition to see the face of the woman from Banu Khats’am. Thus, the niqab is one of the ways to avoid the view of non-*mahram* men. Niqabis believed in the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari from Usamah ibn Zaid, which stated that women are a source of *fitnah* for men. For them, wearing the niqab is a form of minimizing the occurrence of *fitnah*. Below are two traditions about the slander of women as slander for men:

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ: حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ التَّمِيمِيِّ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَثْمَانَ النَّهْدِيَّ، عَنْ أُسَامَةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: « مَا تَرَكْتُ بَعْدِي فِتْنَةً أَضَرَّ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

“Usamah ibn Zayd reported that the Messenger of Allah said: I have left no greater temptation for men than women” (al-Bukhari, 1422H).

E. Results and Discussion

1. Perceptions of niqab wearers among Islamic State University students

Several Islamic state universities in Indonesia have explicitly prohibited female students from wearing the niqab while on campus; one of these campuses is UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (Hantoro, 2018). The Islamic State University in Lampung itself has not yet prohibited in writing the use of the niqab for female students when doing activities in the campus environment. There are pros and cons for policy makers at the university level, and there are leaders who clearly state their disapproval of female students using the niqab in the campus environment. Nevertheless, there are dissenting voices that argue that wearing the niqab should be a universal right if individuals do not exhibit an exclusive mindset and believe that their attire represents the epitome of religious devotion and adherence to Sharia law. It is a significant issue when niqab-wearing students are subjected to bullying and marginalization on campuses

that uphold openness, including openness in terms of understanding differences in *fiqh mazhab*. Is there a solution that can serve as a negotiation, ensuring that those who wear niqabs are not subjected to verbal and psychological (non-violent) mistreatment? How are niqab-wearing students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung campus generally treated?

On a campus where most female students wear a regular veil or hijab, as members of a minority group, these students should ideally receive services and have access to a range of educational and teaching-related activities on campus, as well as additional activities organized by BEM, SEMA, and DEMA students., the carded students become a kind of minority group in the campus community. As a “minority”, ideally, these students also get services and access to various activities on campus related to education and teaching, as well as other activities led by Student Union (BEM), Student Senate (SEMA), and Student Council (DEMA). There is an impression that niqab-wearing students get different treatment from students and lecturers.

This study also aims to explore the experiences and opinions of niqab-wearing students while they are studying on campus. The results of interviews with several students indicate that the niqab is not a barrier for them to interact intensely with students and lecturers. They follow activities in class and outside the classroom regularly. This minority group said there was no discriminatory attitude from friends, education staff, and lecturers. According to EN (Personal communication,

December 15, 2022), as one of the niqab users, personal attitudes and beliefs also affect the attitude of students and lecturers towards niqab users. Niqabis who feel exclusive will maintain their association with fellow students. According to her, this is due to concerns about being contaminated and influenced by “bad” attitudes and ideologies different from classmates.

PE (Personal communication, December 14, 2023) is one of the students who wear the niqab, and she decided to wear the niqab as an effort to improve herself by continuously improving her quality and avoiding slander caused by her face and appearance. She intends to wear the niqab to get closer to Allah by always doing what Allah commands and always avoiding His prohibitions. Wearing the niqab is the first step to self-improvement. She believes that she has committed numerous mistakes in the past, and by wearing the niqab, she is resolved to avoid repeating those mistakes. More importantly, according to her, wearing the niqab is carrying out the sunnah of the Prophet to keep herself away from fitnah.

In line with Pina’s opinion, SD (Personal communication December 6, 2023) has been wearing the niqab for two years; she uses the niqab to live the sunnah of the Prophet. She claims that wearing a niqab can protect her from engaging in *khalwat*, which refers to dating or being alone with men who are not her mahram. She believes that the niqab makes her feel self-conscious and consequently protects her from avoiding such situations. She believes that *khalwat* is a sinful act that leads to adultery and rape. She also expressed her

personal preference for wearing the niqab, stating that it makes her feel more at ease and considers it a garment that enhances a woman's elegance.

RY (Personal communication, December 15, 2023) has been wearing the niqab since the eleventh grade of Vocational High School, and she said, "Since I wore the niqab, I feel better than before". She believes that wearing the niqab leads to spiritual development, making her feel more at ease and alert. Based on the teachings she has received, she has learned that women can be a source of temptation, and one of the many ways this can manifest is through their speech. By covering her face and mouth with a niqab, she sees it as a constant reminder to avoid sinful behavior. Furthermore, by wearing the niqab, she intends to emulate the Prophet's wives. Based on her knowledge, all the Prophet's wives adhere to wearing the niqab and are esteemed ladies who are assured entry into heaven. If she emulates women other than the Prophet's wives, her entry into paradise will not be guaranteed. When questioned about her feelings following the use of the niqab, she expressed a notable contrast in her behavior. Prior to wearing the niqab, she interacted freely with individuals of all genders without making any distinctions. However, after wearing the niqab, she restricted her social interactions to only those individuals who were positive and trustworthy. She asserts that the niqab serves as a protective barrier against immoral actions and serves as a constant reminder to abstain from wrongdoing.

TN (Personal communication, December 2, 2023) has been wearing the niqab for two years. She felt embarrassed when she first wore the niqab, because some friends and lecturers offended her at the beginning of wearing the niqab, but according to her, it was not a barrier to remain consistent in wearing the niqab. At first, she was interested in wearing the niqab because she saw the *akhwat* wearing the niqab, currently she intends to wholeheartedly wear the niqab because it is carrying out the sunnah of the Prophet. In addition, she hopes that by wearing the niqab, she can be protected from the disturbance of non-mahram men.

The essence of the niqab for SN (Personal communication February 28, 2024) is a form of carrying out Allah's command to cover the 'Awrah. She said, "Before wearing the niqab, there was anxiety in my heart, but after deciding to wear the niqab *Alhamdulillah bi idznillah* the anxiety disappeared, and I felt calm and comfortable." The evidence she uses as a basis for wearing the niqab is the following hadith. The Prophet said, "When a woman reaches puberty, nothing should be seen of her except this and this, and he indicated the face and palms of the hands" (al-Sijistani, 2009, 4104). She reasoned that the face is the area that is visible when looking in the mirror, so the part under the chin is no longer part of the face, so the lower part is included in what should not be seen. For this reason, she decided to cover it by wearing a niqab.

FL (Personal communication, December 11, 2023) has been wearing the niqab since she was in the eleventh grade of high school. She wears the niqab

because she was inspired by her friends at school who had already worn the niqab. According to her, the niqab is a religious identity, and she feels comfortable wearing it even though it feels hot. She said that before wearing the niqab, she often uploaded photos and videos to social media, making close friends with men. After wearing the niqab, she limits her relationships. The niqab means a new identity that makes the self more awake, a barrier to falling into sin. She criticized the stigma in society that considers women who wear the niqab strange, even to the point of being labeled as terrorists. According to her, terrorism is not based on the identity of clothing or niqab but the mindset.

2. Stigma and perception of the student community towards niqab wearers

The study community has a significant influence on its members to wear the niqab. Acceptance in the community is one of the reasons why respondents wear the niqab. YC (Personal communication, December 20, 2022) was motivated to wear the niqab by the study community, and she was initially interested in wearing the niqab to be the same as community members. Later, she believed that the niqab was a cloth that could better protect herself, her honor, and her morals. She has been wearing the niqab for six years; the first time she wore the niqab was when she was in eleventh grade. Before wearing the niqab, she felt insecure because she was often bullied by her classmates and often photographed without her consent. After wearing the niqab, she felt

more comfortable, safe, and more careful in acting because she had to maintain her attitude (behavior) to not tarnish the meaning of the niqab. After wearing the niqab, she does not limit her association; she considers adjustment and self-positioning as the key to socializing; she is inclusive of everyone as long as it is not excessive and not out of bounds.

EN (Personal communication, December 15, 2023) also felt the influence and motivation to niqab from the place of study. She was inspired by AR (Personal communication December 19, 2023), one of the many people she knows, although, according to her, the desire to wear the niqab has been growing for a long time in the past five years. She believes that the main factor that made her wear the niqab was Allah's guidance, which moved her heart. She feels grateful to have met and been accepted into her study community. Eka does not limit her socialization; she associates reasonably with men and women. According to her, the main thing is self-control, not to associate to the point of going beyond the limit. She wears the niqab to maintain her honor as a woman.

One of the many respondents said that their motivation for wearing the niqab was to avoid male harassment. PU (Personal communication, December 11, 2023) said that she was once harassed by some unknown men while going to campus. This unpleasant experience then became the reason for wearing the niqab. Based on her experience after wearing the niqab, people respect her more and do not bother her anymore; wearing the niqab

is a positive thing. Moreover, she feels uncomfortable when people look at her with a sharp gaze, which she thinks is accompanied by feelings of liking.

Not all respondents wear the niqab motivated purely by religious recommendations. For example, FZ (Personal communication, December 9, 2023) wore the niqab at first just out of curiosity. She watched an anime character named Gojo Satoru (Jujutsu Kaisen); the character in the movie wears an eye patch to focus the mind and restrain his strength, which is unimportant according to her. It motivated her to be consistent in wearing the niqab because she is a person who has difficulty focusing. This student, who is currently in her eighth semester, has been consistently wearing the niqab since she started college. According to her, wearing the niqab has boosted her self-confidence. Previously, she felt uncomfortable speaking in public, such as during class presentations. However, once she started wearing the niqab, she saw an improvement in confidence and concentration. She does not know the evidence from the Qur'an and hadith specifically, but she understands that hadiths recommend wearing a niqab and avoiding fitnah. According to her, some schools of fiqh strictly recommend the use of the niqab for women. When asked about socializing with classmates, he gets along as young people usually do, mingling and interacting without any significant obstacles. It was just that some people are excessively reluctant; it will make discussions or small talk so flat, formal, and very dull. The researcher sees that Ulan and Zahra's motivation for wearing the niqab

is to preserve themselves and their minds for their own benefit while protecting and preserving the self and intellect is a form of observing the concept of the purpose of Sharia (*Maqashid as-Sharia*).

3. Community perceptions of niqab-wearers on several campuses in Indonesia and Malaysia

KN (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) said that with the use of the niqab at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, there was resistance between students and institutions, along with the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation improved significantly. Several female students choose to wear the niqab, not merely due to religious beliefs but as a personal lifestyle choice. This does not have any negative impact on the socialization of their fellow students. RD (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) said, not unlike what happened at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, that the niqab tends to be worn as accessories and lifestyle. However, it became a polemic issue because one of the rectorate leaders stated that there was a ban on wearing the niqab. Although sometimes there is a negative stigma and impression, the niqab tends to be exclusive from fellow students. Among lecturers and institutions, there are no prohibitions or negative opinions for niqab wearers.

SS (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) from UIN ar-Raniry, there are several niqab wearers, and this makes lecturers strange because there are no initial orders or prohibitions from the institution. At

the time of practice for the psychology study program, female students were asked to remove the niqab; they followed the directions and did not question it. There is no prohibition or order to wear the niqab among lecturers and institutions. Meanwhile, AM (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) explained that niqab-wearing students do not get prohibited and are better than students who wear minimalist clothing at IAIN Salatiga. At least the niqab helps students and lecturers to lower their gaze. In the association of fellow students, no intersection leads to bullying or similar mistreatments. Although Salatiga is renowned for its several Islamic boarding schools and community members who adhere to the practice of wearing the niqab, it is noteworthy that the number of students who really do so is relatively small. They are not subject to any negative connotation when utilizing university services and engaging in social activities on campus.

AH (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) did not find many female students who wear the niqab at UIN Batu Sangkar. They tend to be exclusive and less mingled in the company of fellow students on campus. However, there is no information that they are negatively stigmatized; other students are open and respectful. RA (Personal communication, February 1, 2024) found that several female students wear the niqab and actively participate in studies among themselves independently on campus at UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. The institution does not limit their activities because it is a personal inclination. There

are no obstacles or issues in the student community, particularly for those in the Islamic psychology study program, when engaging in practical activities relating to their field of study. They are willing to remove their niqab without any objections. There is a tendency among niqab wearers to become their own lifestyle.

IF (Personal communication, March 1, 2024) stated that there are some niqab wearers at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, but they do not limit themselves to socializing with fellow students. The niqab wearer and other students are familiar with socializing. The same thing was conveyed by RR (Personal communication, February 28, 2024) study at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. She explained that there is no negative stigma to niqab wearers because niqab wearers among students are also not solely because of ideology but rather a lifestyle that follows those who follow the *hijrah* lifestyle.

Although AHI (Personal communication, March 16, 2024) from the University Islam Selangor (UIS) Malaysia provided information, it is important to note that UIS Malaysia does not impose any limitations on students who wear niqabs. The niqab is considered a sunnah of the Prophet and is thus obligatory to wear. They seem polite when mingling with fellow students, and there is no negative stigma from fellow students. However, some lecturers do not allow wearing the niqab in class, while outside the class, it is allowed.

Some of the above discussions illustrate that wearing the niqab at UIN Raden Intan Lampung and

several other campuses does exist. The background of wearing the niqab is based on the ideology that the niqab is part of religious teachings and revives the sunnah of the Prophet. Sociologically, the existence of niqab wearers does not affect the socialization of fellow students, although some negative stigma still occurs. Islamic higher education institutions generally do not provide official restrictions and prohibitions, which is also the case at UIS Malaysia. The existence of lecturers prohibiting niqab wearers from attending lectures is only a case in point.

D. Conclusion

Some of the motivations and factors of female students wearing the niqab include efforts to live the sunnah as a religious identity whose urgency is to prevent negative actions. Some niqab wearers view it as a symbol of cohesiveness and acceptance in the congregation community (*liqa'*), a medium to protect themselves (*hifzun an-nafs*) and maintain dignity (*hifzu al-'irdi*). The motivation for wearing the niqab is to follow trends, lifestyles, and the recent hijrah among celebrities. The student community did not encounter a significant amount of negative stigma. However, there are occasional insinuations and accusations that they belong to radical ideologies which are associated with terrorism. Thus, the wearing of the niqab by female students does not impede freedom of expression and participation in on-campus activities.

Some lecturers in Islamic and Malaysian universities do not prohibit the niqab, although some personal lecturers are less pleased with female students who attend lectures in class. Further research may investigate strategies to support niqab-wearing students in navigating a diverse and dynamic higher education environment without compromising their religious beliefs and compliance with Shariah principles. The researcher conveyed profound gratitude to the respondents who willingly participated in interviews and provided information for this research.

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