



REREADING HADITH OF MAHRAM AND WOMEN'S MOBILITY IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

The differences in Muslim understanding of *mahram* impact women's mobility in the public sphere. This study aims to map the diversity of interpretations on *mahram* hadith among Indonesian Muslims viewed from the interpretation of arguments and their influence on women's lives. Through qualitative research, the data was obtained from online media, which was strengthened by interviews, and analyzed by using content analysis. The study results show that *mahram* is understood textually and contextually with three categories, namely family *mahram*, which impacts prohibitions, restrictions on women outside the home, and restraint on women in public spaces. Whereas *mahram*, as a friend and community, functions as a support system for protection for women, which is supported by the state's security system, affecting women's freedom in travel and public spaces. The arguments influencing this understanding are different arguments, interpretations, schools of thought, and individual experiences. In the Indonesian context, progressive ulemas reinterpret *mahram* traditions from personal protection to communal and state protection through three methods, namely reciprocal interpretation, considering context, and using maqashid sharia. The understanding of *mahram* is not

only related to protecting women while traveling but extends to all women's activities in the public sphere, including worship. Thus, the issue of *mahram* in the Indonesian context is inseparable from religious, social, cultural, and political discourse.

Keywords: Rereading hadith, *mahram*, women, progressive ulemas

Abstrak

Perbedaan pemahaman umat Islam tentang *mahram* berdampak pada mobilitas perempuan di ruang publik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan keberagaman penafsiran hadis *mahram* di kalangan umat Islam Indonesia dilihat dari penafsiran dalil dan pengaruhnya terhadap kehidupan perempuan. Melalui penelitian kualitatif, data diperoleh dari media daring yang diperkuat dengan wawancara, dan dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *mahram* dipahami secara tekstual dan kontekstual dengan tiga kategori, yaitu *mahram* keluarga yang berdampak pada larangan, pembatasan bagi perempuan di luar rumah, dan pengekangan bagi perempuan di ruang publik. Sedangkan *mahram* sebagai sahabat dan masyarakat berfungsi sebagai sistem pendukung perlindungan bagi perempuan yang didukung oleh sistem keamanan negara, sehingga memengaruhi kebebasan perempuan dalam bepergian dan ruang publik. Dalil yang memengaruhi pemahaman tersebut adalah perbedaan argumen, penafsiran, mazhab pemikiran, dan pengalaman individu. Dalam konteks Indonesia, ulama progresif menafsirkan kembali tradisi *mahram* dari perlindungan pribadi menjadi perlindungan komunal dan negara melalui tiga metode, yaitu penafsiran resiprokal, mempertimbangkan konteks, dan menggunakan maqashid syariah. Pemahaman tentang *mahram* tidak hanya terkait dengan perlindungan terhadap perempuan saat bepergian, tetapi meluas ke seluruh aktivitas perempuan di ruang publik, termasuk beribadah. Dengan demikian, persoalan *mahram* dalam konteks Indonesia tidak dapat dipisahkan dari wacana keagamaan, sosial, budaya, dan politik.

Kata Kunci: membaca ulang hadis, *mahram*, wanita, ulama progresif

Introduction

The concept of *Mahram* among Muslims is not only understood in the context of marriage but is also related to women's activities in the public sphere. *Mahram* is understood as a male companion who is trusted to protect and ensure women's safety. However, the understanding of *mahram* is understood and practiced in various ways by Islamic society so that it impacts women's mobility. This understanding comes from the hadith text stating that a *mahram* must accompany women who travel. This hadith caused controversy among Muslims. Some understand it as a form of prohibition and restriction on women outside the home. Conversely, some understand it as a form of protection for women in the public sphere (Ulya, 2013). This debate is in line with women's high level of mobility outside the home, thus requiring a safe and comfortable space for women. Therefore, Indonesian Muslim feminists reinterpret these hadith texts by making the community and environment a support system for women's protection and the state as a guarantor of women's safety.

Previous research has discussed more *mahrams* related to *mahrams* for haj women (Busyro et al., 2020; Hamdani, 2022), the role of *mahrams* in travel (Utami, 2019), government policies regarding *mahrams* such as Saudi Arabia (Mansyuroh, 2019), and memes *mahram* traditions on social media (Miski, 2021). This article differs from previous studies, which are more objective and descriptive in discussing *mahrams*. This study emphasizes the subjective, analytical, and critical aspects of understanding the factors and impacts of understanding *mahram* on women's mobility in the Indonesian context.

This article aims to map the Muslim understandings of the

mahram that impact women's mobility outside the home, focusing on three questions. First, how is the interpretation of *mahram* hadiths among Indonesian Muslims, including the understanding of progressive ulemas who reread *mahram* hadiths? Second, what factors are causes of the differences in women's interpretation of *mahram*? Third, how does *Mahram's* interpretation impact women's mobility? These three questions are the foci of the discussion in this article.

This article argues that the understanding of *mahram* reflects the knowledge, beliefs, and experiences of Indonesian Muslim communities related to religious understanding and policies to protect women in the public sphere. Differences in the interpretation of the *mahram* show the strength of the debate between conservative Muslims who limit women's space in the public sphere and, on the other hand, progressive Muslims who fight for the equality of men and women in various aspects of Muslim life. Online media represents the representation of this understanding. The mapping of the diversity of understanding shows the diversity of Indonesian Muslims in understanding and internalizing religious values in daily life according to the local context.

This study uses a qualitative approach by collecting data through online media and strengthened by interviews. The researcher used the keyword "*mahram*" or "*mahram* for women" by using Google search. After that, the researcher chose online media that described the diversity of interpretations of *mahram* for traveling women. For three reasons, the data obtained was strengthened by interviews with Mataram State Islamic University (UIN) students. First, UIN Mataram female students have in-depth religious knowledge to understand hadiths related to *mahrams*. Second, the educational background is alums of Islamic boarding schools which focus on studying religious knowledge. Third, female students attend schools outside the city, far from their parents and families, whereas, in the hadith, it is stated that a *mahram* must

accompany women who leave the house. These three contexts are interesting reasons to be discussed in this study. Data from online media and interviews were collected, categorized based on certain themes, and classified thematically. Followed by data reduction and interpretation. The data is then analyzed using content analysis.

Hadith interpretation

Hadith are the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the second source of Islamic teachings after the Koran. Hadith is not only a guide in worship but also a guide in social activities in the daily life of Muslims (Brown, 2009). Muslims understand hadith with two methods: textual and contextual. Textual understanding is a literal understanding, according to the text (Majid et al., 2014; Zakiyah et al., 2019), while contextual understanding is an understanding that considers the past and present contexts (Begg, 2012; Masruhan, 2019; Thohari et al. 2021). The past context is related to the socio-historical context of early Islamic Arab society and was specifically a factor that caused the hadith to appear or be uttered by the Prophet (Ramle & Huda, 2022). Understanding Arabic is one of the factors in understanding hadith (Shah, 2016). Meanwhile, the current context is a socio-cultural and modern context in which Muslims read, understand, and practice hadith at this time. Differences in the context of space and time lead to different interpretations of the meaning of hadith.

Viewing from the method of understanding hadith, Muslims are divided into conservative and progressive groups. Conservative Muslims are a group that understands hadith in a literal textual way, while progressive groups are a group that understands hadith contextually. The method of interpretation used influences the construction of Muslim society. Progressive Muslims using hermeneutic, contextual, and thematic-holistic approaches based on objectives or ethical values

construct “normative Muslima” as women with autonomy, equal to men, distinguishing them only taqwa/piety to Allah (Duderija, 2008). Contextualization of hadith presents an understanding of hadith that is gender fair and breaks patriarchal traditions (Ali, 2016; Damanhuri, 2017; Yahya & Zainuddin, 2021).

The Description of *Mahram*

Mahram is a person who is forbidden to marry either because of heredity, breastfeeding, or marital relationship. For women, who are considered *mahram* by lineage, there are seven categories: father, son, brother, father’s brother, mother’s brother, brother’s nephew, and sister’s nephew. Meanwhile, there are four categories of *mahrms* due to marriage: father from husband, son from husband (stepson), husband from son (son-in-law), and husband from mother-in-law (stepfather). The *mahram* caused by breastfeeding is like a sibling (salaah) (QS.4:23). In Islam, the discussion of *mahram* is related to marriage and the protection of women in the public sphere and relationships with the opposite sex.

Previous studies on *mahrms* can be divided into two categories. First, the *mahram* for haj and umrah women. The policy of the Saudi Arabian government, followed by the Indonesian government regarding *mahrms* for women who go on pilgrimage and umrah, has made it difficult for women to perform their prayers. Women under 40 who do not have a *mahram* are required to pay *mahram* money as a substitute for a *mahram* (Ulya & Maulana, 2018). However, with the ‘ill at approach, a woman on pilgrimage can be accompanied by other women to guarantee her safety (Busyro et al., 2020).

Second, *mahram* and women’s mobility. Through the hadith science approach, women can travel alone without a *mahram* with strict

requirements, a) related to women's security and safety, b) traveling women must fulfill several requirements, namely with the permission of their husbands, covering their genitals, safe travels and not Cabarrus (Aziz & Dinata, 2021). However, based on maqashid syariah, the *mahram* is a protector and security guard for women. The function of the *mahram* is not only in the form of a personal man but can be replaced by rules and public policies that can encourage security and protection on the way (Rohman, 2018).

The Interpretation of *Mahram*

Mahram Hadiths are understood in various ways by the Indonesian Muslim community. There are three categories of understanding: *mahram*, understood as a male companion from the closest family, *mahram* in the form of friends and communal, and *mahram* as a security system that protects women. The three forms are described as follows:

First, the family *mahram*. What is included as a family *mahram* for women is that a man has a relationship in lineage or descent, breastfeeding, and marriage as stated in the Koran (QS 4: 23). One informant stated that women could only travel with a *mahram* (A, Student, interview, 25 May 2023). The *mahram* functions as a protector on the way, as expressed by other sources:

"When I go to college, I am not accompanied by my *mahram* because it is near my home, but when I am far away, it seems like I am out of town; my *mahram* always accompanies me, be it my father or my older brother" (N, female student, interview, 25 May 2023)

Meanwhile, another informant stated that she wanted to continue her studies in a postgraduate program. Still, she would marry first so that she would have a *mahram* or husband to accompany her:

"I want to continue studying to Master, but I will get married first

so that someone will accompany me outside the city” (S, female student, interview, 25 May 2023)

Second, friend, community, and environment *Mahram*. An understanding of a *mahram* can be in the form of friends, community, and the environment, a support system for women’s protection. For example, someone accompanies women when they go to school and attend activities outside the city, including Hajj and Umrah (Karlina, 2021).

One informant stated that she did not need a *mahram* when traveling or going to school far from home because she was an adult and had friends accompanying her when she left the house (AD, student, interview, 25 May 2023).

Third, *mahram* is a security system. The state guarantees the concept of *mahram* as a security system that substantially provides protection and security for women (Arrahmah, 2021). Such protection is the state’s duty to ensure security for every citizen, both male and female, in the form of rules, adequate facilities, and infrastructure (Putri, 2021a).

The Arguments for the Interpretation of the *Mahram* Hadith

The differences in Muslim arguments in understanding *mahram* are influenced by four factors: differences in the theorem used, differences in methods of interpretation, differences in sects/*mazhab*, and personal experience. The four factors are described in further discussion.

First, the difference in dalil/argument. Differences in interpretation of *mahram* are caused by differences in the theorems originating from the Quran or hadith. These differences are related to the text prohibiting women from leaving the house and the permissibility of

women traveling without a *mahram*. The arguments for the prohibition of women traveling without a *mahram* are as follows:

‘Let not a woman travel for three days except with her *mahram*’” (HR Bukhari and Muslim).

In another hadith, it is stated, ‘Don’t let a woman travel for a day and night except with her *mahram*’” (HR Tirmidhi).

“Don’t let a woman travel and let no one (man) meet her unless her *mahram* accompanies her. Then someone said: “O Messenger of Allah, in fact, I want to go to war, while my wife wants to perform the pilgrimage.” He said: “go out (go on pilgrimage) with her (your wife)” (HR. Bukhari and Muslim).

The theorems for allowing women to go alone include:

The Prophet asked his companions: O Adi, have you ever been to Hirah? I replied: not yet, but I just heard about it. The Prophet said, “When your life is long, you will see women traveling from the city of Hirah and tawaf in the Ka’bah, with no fear except Allah alone`. Adi said, “Finally, I saw women traveling from Hirah to tawaf in Kaaba without fear except for Allah.” (HR Bukhari).

“You do not forbid Allah’s female servants to go to Allah’s mosques” (HR Bukhari)

Second, the difference in interpretation methods. Differences in interpretation methods can cause differences in one’s understanding of *mahram*. In general, interpretation methods are divided into textual and contextual categories. For textualists, the *mahram* hadith for women indicates a prohibition for women to travel, but for contextualists, this hadith is to protect women who travel. Based on the socio-historical context, women who traveled during the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century were very dangerous. The natural conditions that pass

through a vast desert, the population is still quiet, frequent conflicts and wars between tribes, the means of transportation and geographical location are difficult, and the legal order that can guarantee the safety of every citizen has not been established. Thus, women will be safer if they travel with a *mahram*.

Third, differences in religious schools of thought. Differences in sects also cause differences in views about *mahrams*. The sects of ulemas who forbid women from traveling without a *mahram* are Abu Hanifah and Ahmad bin Hanbal. Conversely, Ibn Hazm stated that this hadith is not prohibiting women from traveling, but a man must accompany women. (swararahima, 2018b). Meanwhile, Imam Malik and al-Syafi'i believe that a *mahram* can accompany women who travel within a distance of less than 81 mills. Suppose it is more than the specified distance. In that case, it is permissible with strict conditions: permission from the husband or guardian, avoiding slander, not worrying about *khalwat* (mixing) between men and women, or being accompanied by a trusted woman. However, Yusuf Qardhawi stipulated that if there is a security guarantee, women are not required to be accompanied by their *mahram* (Nazahah & Sahidin, 2021; Rohman, 2017)

Fourth, personal experience. Personal experience also influences differences in understanding of *mahram*. One of the informants had an unpleasant experience carrying out the Umrah pilgrimage. Therefore, she thinks that women who perform the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages should be accompanied by their *mahram* (T, interview, 25 May 2023).

The Impact of Interpretation on Women's Mobility

Differences in the interpretation of *mahram* impact women's mobility in two categories. First is the subordination of women, which is marked by the existence of prohibitions, restrictions on women

traveling and restraining women in public spaces, both for school and work. Based on a textual understanding of the *mahram* hadith, in 2000, the Indonesian Ulema Council issued a controversial fatwa regarding the prohibition of women from working outside the city or abroad. In 2003, the government issued law no. 13 of 2003 concerning prohibiting female workers under 18 working at night from 23.00 to 07.00. For those who work at that time, getting food, maintaining decency and security, and a car to shuttle workers is obligatory. For the safety of female workers at night, the government regulates through Minister of Manpower Decree number 224/Men/2003, where employers must provide security officers, provide separate bathrooms for men and women (Andrean W. Finaka, 2021).

In 2012, the Indonesian Commissioner for the Protection of Women noted that 282 sharia regional regulations were discriminatory against women, including local regulations that prohibited women from going out at night, such as in Tangerang and Gorontalo (Ananta, 2013). In Aceh, women are forbidden to go out at night with non-*mahram* men after 10 pm (Hayati, 2015). Restrictions on women leaving the house also apply to schoolgirls. Women who go to school must obtain permission from their parents or husband. A female lecturer cannot continue her education abroad because she does not get permission from her parents, who believe that women traveling without a *mahram* violates religious teachings (Hamid, 2019). The restriction also applies to girls who attend Islamic schools. One Islamic boarding school made a policy for female students who traveled to avoid slander and maintain ethics outside the home, such as lowering their gaze, covering their genitals, not wearing perfume, not showing jewelry, doing it according to the level of need, being the last choice and other ethics (umma, 2020). Not only in Indonesia but a literal understanding of hadith has also limited the space for women to move in several Islamic countries. In

Saudi Arabia, women are prohibited from leaving the house without a *mahram*, including going to school, the market, and going abroad. Even the Taliban government in Afghanistan forbids women from boarding domestic and international flights without being accompanied by a male family (Ariyanti, 2022).

Second, women's freedom is marked by allowing women to travel alone and be active in public spaces. This freedom can be seen from the *mahram* policy for women who perform the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's social and political changes have affected the *mahram* policy for women who go on pilgrimage and Umrah. The Saudi government has abolished the mandatory *mahram* policy for women. This policy impacts Indonesian women who will carry out these services from an administrative and economic standpoint. When the *mahram* policy is implemented, women who are on the pilgrimage and do not have a *mahram* or a husband can appoint another man (Panjabi) or someone trusted by the family as a *mahram*. Whereas, for women who go to Umrah, the *mahram* can be replaced by paying *mahram* money to the travel agent organizing the Umrah to ensure their safety during the pilgrimage. Currently, the government of Saudi Arabia implements a policy of using a security system to protect women in the form of good and safe infrastructure, in the form of transportation, surveillance cameras (Hakim, 2022), and regulations that protect women, including an anti-sexual harassment system which is equipped with sanctions for violators (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Implementing the no-*mahram* policy for haj women is a step forward not only for the rights of Saudi women but also for Muslim women worldwide, especially those who perform the haj and Umrah pilgrimages. Regardless of the rules of the Saudi Arabian government, the Indonesian government has implemented a policy of replacing a *mahram* for women who perform the pilgrimage. The Ministry of Religion took over the role of the *mahram* by imposing a

community *mahram* for female pilgrims with guides and transportation borne by the state so that safety is guaranteed (Anwar, 2021).

Thus, the interpretation of *mahram* greatly impacts women's lives. Women whose activities are prohibited and limited outside the home are seen as creatures that are not the same as men; their position is equal to children who do not yet have independence in making decisions and cannot maintain their own security due to literal textual interpretations of *mahram* hadiths. On the other hand, contextual interpretation is urgently needed when women's mobility outside the home is quite high due to work, school, or other social activities. Trusting women to leave the house alone signifies a mature and independent woman.

***Mahram* transformation: from the concept of munakahat to protecting women**

The initial concept of *mahram* in Islam is related to the prohibition of marriage between men and women due to attachment due to blood relations, breastfeeding, and marriage. In the early days of Islam, relations between *mahrms* were very close and strong, so the presence of other parties outside the family was seen as threatening the existence of a family. Women's mobility is still limited, so *mahrms* can accompany them on trips. A *mahram* is a person who is trusted to be responsible for the dignity of the family, guarding and protecting women, guardians of chastity, and security for women from things that harm women and their families (Putri, 2021b). Therefore, the role of the *mahram* is very important in ensuring the security, comfort, and protection of women outside the home, whether on trips or in public spaces. Thus, there is a change in the concept of *mahram* from marriage to the protection of women.

Debates about *mahrms* in the Indonesian context are related to religion and gender, social, cultural, and local politics. Understanding

religion becomes the spirit of implementing *mahram* toward women. One of the narrations associated with the *mahram* is that women are a source of slander that originates from the hadith of the Prophet, “I do not leave greater slander for men than women” (HR Bukhari)

Slander has many meanings, including trials, temptations, enticements, attractions, and tests (Kamali, 1993). Women as a source of slander can be interpreted as women as a temptation or attraction for men. As a source of slander, women are often seen as a source of problems and are blamed especially for societal morality. Women are seen as triggers for social disturbances for men and a source of powerlessness for men in terms of sexuality, thus encouraging men to do something bad to them.

In a social context, women who leave the house at night get a bad social stigma. They are constructed as naughty and immoral women and are even considered commercial sex workers because they are considered to violate norms, customs, and religion. However, there are also concerns about the safety of women going out at night, being harassed by men, and being the target of crime or crime on the street. In the political context, the government participates in limiting the role of women in the public space through regional regulations that discriminate against women as a form of literal understanding of the hadith. From 1999 to 2014, 443 sharia regional regulations in Indonesia regulated aspects of people’s lives related to crime, worship, and dress codes (Candraningrum, 2007), including restrictions on women in public spaces.

Thus, women are a group that is vulnerable to various gender-based discrimination and violence perpetrated by men. To avoid this slander, women are prohibited from leaving the house, their association is limited, the way they dress is regulated, they are not allowed to decorate, and when they leave the house, they must be accompanied by

their male relatives. These restrictions are intended so that the charms of women do not tempt men. The reasons above legitimize the existence of the concept of *mahram*, to protect men from being slandered by women, which can have bad consequences for women. The understanding of women as a source of slander creates injustice for women.

The existence of a *mahram* for women is expected to be a protector and guard for women when other men disturb their safety and comfort in public spaces. Thus, something bad that might happen to a woman on a trip can be avoided by the presence of her *mahram*. So, the concept of *mahram* was originally a form of protection for women as creatures considered weak (swararahima, 2018b). Thus, *mahram* is not only understood in the context of marriage but also includes women's protection in a broader context.

Rereading Hadith of *Mahram* in Indonesian Context

Considering the negative impact of the literal understanding of *mahram* on women, progressive ulemas, including Indonesian Muslim feminists, have reinterpreted Islamic texts using the hermeneutic method. In general, hermeneutics is understood as a way of understanding the text. In the Islamic context, Islamic hermeneutics is related to the study of interpretation theories and understanding of text sources, namely the Koran and hadith, especially those related to the meaning of texts, the role of readers and writers in interpreting texts (Duderija, 2015). Muslim feminists criticize patriarchal ideology based on monotheism principles and social justice values (Rohmaniyah et al., 2022). In rereading *mahram* hadiths, feminists do this in three ways: carrying out reciprocal interpretations, considering the context of hadiths, and using maqashid sharia. The three are explained as follows:

First, Reciprocal Interpretation. Reciprocal interpretation is

a method of reading religious texts based on reciprocity and equality between men and women. Both are related entities that respect, work together, and complement one another (Kodir, 2016). This method is used to read al-Quran and hadith texts which literally give rise to interpretations of Islam that are gender unfair, which violate monotheism and the principle of equality in Islam (Kodir, 2016). The hadith about slandering women can be reinterpreted to mean that not only women are a source of slander for men, but men can also be a source of slander for women. Therefore, both were ordered to protect their private parts and hold their gaze (QS. An-Nur: 30-31). However, apart from slander for the opposite sex, men, and women are also a source of grace, a gift for the common good (Editor, 2021).

Second, consider the context. *Mahram* traditions are understood using a contextual approach, which considers the socio-historical context of early Islam in the 7th century and today's socio-cultural and modern contexts. Historically, it was very unsafe for women to travel alone because of the natural conditions, geographical location, and the social context of the people of Mecca at that time. Therefore, the Prophet protected women by advising them to stay home or be accompanied by a *mahram* outside the home. *Mahram* is someone trusted by the closest family who can protect women. If there is no *mahram*, the scholars allow other people or friends to accompany them, both men and women (swararahima, 2018c). Today, the context for *mahrms* is very different from during the time of the Prophet. Therefore, the application of *mahram* can be adapted to the context. If conditions are unsafe, then women need a companion from the family and someone else they trust. Conversely, if conditions are safe, women can travel alone without a *mahram*. Thus, this hadith is not a ban on women traveling but a requirement for women to be accompanied by a *mahram* for reasons of security and protection for women (swararahima, 2018d). Thus, protection can be personal or

communal.

Third, the principle of *maqashid sharia*. *Maqashid sharia* is an idea or goal to be achieved by religion for the benefit (good) of humans. In the context of *maqashid sharia*, *mahram* acts as self-protection (*hifz nafs*) to prevent threats or harm from happening to women (Arrahmah, 2021; Rohman, 2018). Thus, the concept of *mahram* as a form of protection for women, which was previously personal protection, was reinterpreted to protect groups or countries (swararahima, 2018d). The presence of the state in the protection of women can take the form of rules or legislation and the availability of state apparatus that provide protection for women (Ishmah, 2022) which aims to create a safe environment and a women-friendly culture so that women can go anywhere and anytime without feeling afraid of being disturbed (swararahima, 2018a). For example, the law on criminal acts of sexual violence to guarantee the safety and protection of women from sexual violence. In this case, women who become victims can report cases of violence they experience to the state apparatus and the perpetrators receive punishment for violating these rules. Therefore, it is necessary to educate women to report if there is a security violation against them. Government regulations are needed for women, men, and other vulnerable groups. Thus, *mahram* is no longer understood as a personal form but also as a communal form as a support system for women's protection and the state's involvement in ensuring the safety and protection of women under the Islamic spirit.

The interpretation of *mahram* is not only related to women traveling but extends to women's activities in the public sphere, including performing religious rituals such as *Hajj* and *Umrah*. In this context, *mahram* does not aim to restrain women in public. Instead, it gives women freedom (Ulya, 2013) to carry out activities safely and comfortably with protection from the community and the state.

Conclusion

This research shows the diversity of Muslim understandings about *mahrms* that impact women's mobility. People who understand the hadith textually interpret the *mahram* as a companion to the female family so that they focus more on prohibitions, restrictions, and restraints on women outside the home. Conversely, people who understand *mahram* contextually interpret *mahram* as a community as a support system and security system from the state, which focuses on the protection and safety of women in traveling and doing activities in public spaces. In this case, the state's involvement is important in guaranteeing security for everyone. The difference in understanding is influenced by the different theorems about *mahram*, methods of interpretation of hadith, both textually and contextually, differences in sects, and personal experience.

This research found that the understanding and practice of *mahram* is multi-aspect, influenced by religion and gender, society, culture, and politics. In practice, the concept of *mahram* is not only understood in the context of women traveling but also related to women's activities in the public sphere. In the context of Indonesian Muslims, this hadith was reinterpreted by Muslim feminists with three methods, namely reciprocal interpretation, considering the context, and using the principles of *maqashid sharia*.

This research is limited to online media and information from the State Islamic University of Mataram students. To be more comprehensive, the study can be expanded with different data sources and informants according to the socio-religious groups in Indonesia. This research recommends that policy makers be more gender-responsive in making public policies related to gender and women's issues.

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