

CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY

The position of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah on LGBT
in the aftermath of the 2016 anti-LGBT controversy in Indonesia

Dissertation

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For those on the margins.

Table of contents

List of tables	vii
List of appendices	vii
Glossary	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter 1. Introduction: Researching Muhammadiyah and LGBT	11
1.1. Research question	22
1.2. Research aim and objectives	23
1.3. Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah	24
1.3.1. Muhammadiyah.....	24
1.3.2. Aisyiyah.....	28
1.3.3. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)	30
1.3.4. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)	32
1.4. Literature review	33
1.4.1. Gender studies on Muhammadiyah.....	33
1.4.2. Gender studies on Indonesia	39
1.4.3. Non-normative gender studies on Indonesia	46
1.4.4. Studies on ‘LGBT’	51
1.4.5. Concluding remark.....	55
1.5. Methodology	56
1.5.1. Data collection.....	57
1.5.2. Analysis	63
1.6. Structure of the study	64
Chapter 2. Theoretical framework	68
2.1. Religion, culture, and politics	70
2.1.1. The nexus of religion, politics, and culture in the Indonesian context.....	76
2.1.2. The spectrum of perspectives in Muhammadiyah.....	87
2.2. The construction of contemporary gender and sexuality in Indonesia	91
2.2.1. Heteronormativity	97
2.2.2. Towards diversity of gender and sexuality	100
Chapter 3. Gender in Muhammadiyah	111
3.1. Ahmad Dahlan and the beginning of Muhammadiyah	112
3.2. Ahmad Dahlan’s gender discourse.....	120

3.2.1. Gender in Javanese <i>priyayi</i> society	121
3.2.2. Gender in Javanese <i>saudagar</i> society	122
3.2.3. Gender in the Dutch colonial government	123
3.2.4. Gender in Islamic modernism	124
3.3. Muhammadiyah's gender discourse after Ahmad Dahlan	127
3.3.1. The period of puritanism	128
3.3.2. The period of post-puritanism	137
3.4. The deployment of gender in Muhammadiyah	144
3.4.1. <i>Keluarga sakinah</i>	145
3.4.2. A family-like structure.....	156
3.5. Heterosexuality as the primary pillar	161
Chapter 4. Muhammadiyah's LGBT public narrative	165
4.1. Discrimination against minorities in Indonesia	166
4.2. The 2016 anti-LGBT moral panic.....	171
4.3. The grand narrative of anti-LGBT in Indonesia	178
4.3.1. LGBT vs. Islam	179
4.3.2. LGBT vs. Indonesia	181
4.3.3. LGBT vs. public health	181
4.4. An alternative perspective to the grand narrative	183
4.5. The position of Indonesian Muslim organisations on LGBT	186
4.5.1. MUI and its anti-homosexuality <i>fatwa</i>	188
4.5.2. NU and its official condemnation	190
4.5.3. Muhammadiyah and its 'soft approach'	192
4.5.4. Aisyiyah and its forbearance press release.....	194
4.6. The ambivalence of Muhammadiyah's public position	197
4.7. The paradox of perspective and practice.....	204
4.7.1. Televisi Muhammadiyah	205
4.7.2. Suara Muhammadiyah.....	217
4.8. Islam in the LGBT discourse in Indonesia.....	226
Chapter 5. Disputing LGBT	229
5.1. LGBT in Islam: Differences in interpreting the words of God.....	230
5.1.1. Contesting the interpretation of <i>kodrat</i> and <i>fitrah</i>	231
5.1.2. Contesting the interpretation of the story of Lot	241
5.1.3. Contesting the Islamic jurisprudence on LGBT	246
5.2. LGBT in the nation: The cultural and political justifications	251

5.2.1. Incompatible cultural practices	254
5.2.2. The dichotomy of human rights	257
5.3. The non-violent approach	263
5.3.1. The criminalisation of same-sex relations.....	266
5.3.2. <i>Dakwah kultural</i> embracing LGBT.....	272
5.4. Grassroots <i>dakwah kultural</i> towards the LGBT community	276
5.5. On same-sex marriage: A response from the LGBT community.....	281
5.5.1. PLUSH: Legalisation of same-sex marriage in Indonesia is a ‘myth’	283
5.5.2. Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah: Fighting for religious rights of transgenders	287
5.5.3. An expression of hope (for Muhammadiyah)	292
5.6. <i>Amar ma’ruf nahi munkar</i> and the challenge of diversity	295
Chapter 6. Conclusion	303
6.1. Muhammadiyah’s ambivalent position	306
6.2. (Traditional) gender belief in Muhammadiyah	308
6.3. An Islam of omnipresence	313
6.4. A challenge of diversity	316
6.5. Epilogue: Reflection on my role as a researcher	320
References.....	324
Appendices	348

List of tables

Table 1. Interlocutors in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah	60
Table 2. Interlocutors from activists, scholars, and LGBT individuals.....	61
Table 3. LGBT-related videos on tvMu's YouTube channel	206
Table 4. LGBT-related articles on Suara Muhammadiyah.....	218

List of appendices

Appendix I – Muhammadiyah's media statement on LGBT	348
Appendix II – Aisyiyah's press release on LGBT	349
Appendix III – NU's official statement on LGBT	352
Appendix IV – Abstract / <i>Zusammenfassung</i>	356
Appendix V – Statement of originality	357
Appendix VI – Biography	358

Glossary

Amar ma‘ruf nahi munkar	: Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is evil.
Bapak/Pak	: An Indonesian honorific prefix for male.
Dakwah	: Propagation of Islamic religion.
Fatwa	: Edict or ruling on a point of Islamic law issued by a recognised Muslim authority.
Fiqh	: Islamic jurisprudence.
Fitrah	: Natural or innate disposition to follow the divine decree.
Hadith	: Written compilation of Prophet Muhammad's sayings and instructions. It is second to the Quran as a source of Islamic law.
Halal	: Lawful or permitted by Islamic law.
Haram	: Forbidden or unlawful by Islamic law.
Ibu/Bu	: An Indonesian honorific prefix for female.
Ijtihad	: Process of Islamic legal reasoning to solve legal issues due to conflicting or no previously recognised source.
Imam	: One who leads prayer.
Kodrat	: Divine decree or God's commandments.
Kyai	: A Javanese Islamic cleric or expert on Islam.
Liwat	: Anal penetration between men.
Madhab	: School of thought within Islamic jurisprudence.
Majelis	: Councils/departments within Muhammadiyah's structure.
Muktamar	: National assembly/the highest deliberation in Muhammadiyah.
Pengajian	: An activity of learning Islam within a group of people under the guidance of a teacher.
Persyarikatan	: Consensus-oriented assembly or association.
Priyayi	: A group of Javanese society that comes from the aristocratic class and the bureaucratic elite.
Quran	: Divine and highest reference source of Islamic law.
Saudagar	: Merchant/wholesaler.
Tajdid	: Islamic renewal and dynamisation.
Tanfidz	: Written approval to validate all policies and decisions made in Muhammadiyah formal meetings on the national level.
Tarjih	: Intellectual activity to respond to social and humanitarian issues from an Islamic perspective.
Ulama	: Muslim scholars who are knowledgeable in Islamic theology.
Ustadz	: Islamic teacher
Waria	: Indonesian transgender.
Zina	: Illicit/extramarital sexual intercourse between men and women.

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“Bersifat adil serta korektif ke dalam dan ke luar dengan bijaksana.”

(PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 70)

Chapter 1. Introduction: Researching Muhammadiyah and LGBT¹

Like in many other parts of the world, in Indonesia, social plurality does not automatically translate into pluralism. In many cases, it becomes the ground for discrimination and social conflicts. While the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and religions has been broadly acknowledged as a constructive element for Indonesia's nation-building, diversity based on sexual orientation and gender identity is impugned. They are “fiercely contested and ideologically colored, forcefully homogenized and expurgated of their inherent complexity” (Hamzic, 2012, p. 158). A normalisation of discrimination and violence associated with these specific aspects of diversity can be observed, exemplarily in the context of the anti-LGBT controversies that pervaded Indonesia in 2016.

¹ As a foreign term, the meaning of the acronym LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) in Indonesia is ambiguous and subject to numerous interpretations. Sometimes it is used to refer to a group, a movement, sexual behaviour, or mental disorder. In general, however, the term LGBT has a negative connotation and is associated with values that contrary to those of Indonesia. Here, in this dissertation, I would like to emphasise that the term is not used in a derogatory sense, but rather to refer a group of people who are politically stigmatised and marginalised because their sexual and gender identities do not conform to the heteronormative norms of Indonesian society. I use the acronym LGBT, instead of LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others) or SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression), because it is the most common term in Indonesian public discourse, including among my interlocutors.

Public perceptions of homosexuality and transgender identity vary widely around the world. In most Western European countries, for instance, the acceptance and inclusion of the LGBT community have resulted in the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Whereas, in most Southeast Asian nations, such legalisation remains inconceivable as the cultural context continues to stigmatise and exclude LGBT people. The William Institute's report on global social acceptance of LGBT people may contextualise the varying perceptions of homosexuality and transgender identity worldwide. In this report, Indonesia ranks 147th out of 175 countries regarding its acceptance of the LGBT community (Flores, 2021). Acceptance, in this case, refers to "the extent to which LGBTI people are seen in ways that are positive and inclusive, both with respect to an individual's opinions about LGBTI people and with regard to an individual's attitudes about LGBTI rights" (Flores, 2021, p. 5). This ranking places Indonesia as the least accepting country of LGBT people in Southeast Asia. While acknowledging its limitations in portraying reality, this survey effectively illustrates discernible variations and fluctuations in LGBT acceptance worldwide. Notably, some countries have witnessed an increase in the acceptance level over the past few decades and others a decrease. Although relatively small, the William Institute's report shows a downward trend in the level of LGBT acceptance in Indonesia.

Numerous studies have been undertaken to comprehend how differences such as those in the survey could occur. A significant number of studies have identified personal religious beliefs and affiliation to religious communities as one of the most influential socialising factors in explaining homophobia (see, for example, Janssen & Scheepers, 2019; Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat & Ellison, 1997, Scheitle & Adamczyk, 2009). Janssen and Scheepers (2019), for instance, elucidate that individuals who hold a strong belief in religious particularism, which is the belief that their religion is the only legitimate one, are more likely to exhibit opposition towards homosexuality. This phenomenon, according to Halstead and Lewicka (1998), may be ascribed to the perception of homosexuals as deviating from religious norms and values, thereby potentially jeopardising one's belief system.

Scholars have also attempted to compare the acceptability of homosexuality among religious communities. For example, Finke and Adamczyk (2008) note that Muslims had more rigid attitudes about sexual morality than Catholics. In this light, Adamczyk and Pitt (2009) suggest that Muslims are less likely to approve of homosexuality than Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and people with no religion. They also indicate that there appears to be more significant disapproval of homosexuality in Muslim-majority countries, even among nonreligious individuals, compared to countries with a Catholic majority.

Besides religiosity, scholars have identified other possible beliefs and perspectives that may serve as catalysts for homophobia. Multiple studies have associated authoritarianism and traditional gender beliefs with the rejection of homosexuality (Adamczyk, 2017; Whitley, 2001; Basow & Johnson, 2000). People who negatively view homosexuals are likely to be authoritarian, status-conscious, and sexually rigid (Smith, 1971), and individuals who exhibit fear or intolerance towards homosexuals are more prone to displaying similar attitudes towards diversity in general (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978; MacDonald, 1974). Research has also shown that individuals who strongly adhere to the traditional gender system tend to hold negative attitudes toward homosexuals (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Durell et al., 2007; Stark, 1991). In this context, the traditional gender system is characterised by the belief that household responsibilities should be divided between the sexes, with men providing financial support and women tasked with childcare responsibilities. In contrast, non-traditional attitudes hold that labour should be divided according to both partners' needs, abilities, and family schedules and that career decisions and child-care responsibilities should be viewed equally for men and women (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Kerns & Fine, 1994).

In the Indonesian context, as a Muslim-majority country, the prevailing public sentiment towards homosexuality is unfavourable and it is considered socially unacceptable and subject to censure. The rejection of homosexuality and transgender expression appears to have gained momentum in recent years, with a notable peak in 2016 when Indonesia experienced a widespread anti-LGBT uproar across the country. Within only several weeks in January and February 2016, the

media echoed statements from prominent sources ranging from politicians to religious leaders and academics condemning LGBT people. Soon enough, these statements were picked up by the public and transformed into verbal abuse and physical violence toward LGBT people across the country. The Indonesian Psychiatrists Association proclaimed homosexuality and transgender expression as mental illnesses, defying the World Health Organisation's and the Indonesian Ministry of Health's guidelines for classifying and diagnosing mental disorders (IDI, 2016). Moreover, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission issued a decree against the so-called 'gay propaganda' and urged for its censorship on television (Setyobudi, 2016). This dramatic increase in anti-LGBT sentiment was perhaps best captured by the survey conducted by Wahid Foundation & LSI (2017), showing that after the 2016 controversy, LGBT people became the most hated group in the country for the first time.²

The anti-LGBT sentiment also transformed into legal efforts by civil groups and lawmakers to criminalise homosexuality (Yulius, 2016; Erdianto, 2018). One of the most successful legislative endeavours was the revision of the Criminal Code passed by the Indonesian parliament in December 2022. While this legislation does not specifically criminalise consensual same-sex relationships, it outlaws all forms of extramarital sex. Thus, sexual relations between same-sex couples who cannot get married in Indonesia are *de facto* criminalised.

The anti-LGBT wave is noteworthy, given the prevalence of homosexuality within Indonesian traditional cultural productions. These cultural products not only view non-normative gender and sexuality positively but also institutionalise them. As such, the repudiation of homosexuality and transgender expressions in Indonesia today stems from the modern Indonesian culture that has assimilated the influence of Islam, Christianity, and the West (Oetomo, 2003). To illustrate the acknowledgement of Indonesia's traditional cultural productions of homosexuality and transgender identity, I wish to present several examples. The first example is

² In previous years, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) has consistently been the most hated imaginary group. The persistence of this hatred was the result of a massive propaganda campaign by the New Order government.

sadati, a form of art performance incorporating dance and literature originating from Aceh that is notable for its practice of transvestism and homoeroticism lyric. Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch scholar and advisor on native affairs to the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia, reports that “a considerable portion of the poetry recited by the *sadatis* and their *daléms* is erotic and even pederastic in character; while the *sadati* himself in his female garb forms a special centre of attraction to the onlookers” (Hurgronje, 1906, p. 222). Hurgronje mentions that *sadati* is a favourite caricature among the religious *ratéb* (a form of prayer consisting of repeated chanting in chorus) prevalent in Aceh. *Rateb sadati* is a performance involving 15 to 20 men, referred to as *daléms* (elder brothers), who dance to religious rhymes. This performance features a *sadati*, a boy dancer of exquisite beauty attired in a feminine garment, who has undergone specialised training. *Sadatis* were typically taken from the slaves of Nias, an island situated off the western coast of Sumatra, or from the poor family of Acehnese from the highlands. They were purchased through transactions with their parents (Hurgronje, 1906).

Another example of an Indonesian traditional cultural product that institutionalises homosexual relationships comes from Ponorogo, East Java, in the tradition of *warokan*. In this tradition, *warok*, a male artistic figure with a chivalrous nature, virtuous character, and high authority within the community, is prohibited from having sexual relations with his wife in his quest to enhance his magical power. Due to this restriction, a *warok* chooses a *gemblak*, a handsome adolescent male, to live with him. It was customary for a *warok* to offer dowry of cattle or other valuable items to the family of his *gemblak*. The *gemblak* would then move in with the *warok* and follow his *reyog* troupe’s performance across various regions. According to the agreement, the *warok* would provide proper care for the *gemblak* during a cohabitation period of around two years or more. Even the women who married the *warok* were expected to participate in this cohabitation by pampering their husband’s *gemblak* with, for instance, preparing appetising meals and dressing him up in beautiful attire to make him feel comfortable practising his dance. While not part of the rituals of acquiring magic, it was common that *warok* and their

gemblak engaged in sexual relations, which were not concealed (Ishomuddin, 2019).

Furthermore, in contrast to the binary gender system, the Bugis community acknowledges five genders: *makkunrai*, *oroané*, *calabai*, *calalai*, and *bissu*. This non-binary gender concept has been an important aspect of their culture for at least six centuries (Davies, 2010). While *makkunrai* and *oroané* can respectively be considered analogues to cisgender (a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth) women and men, *calabai* and *calalai* can respectively be loosely compared to transgender women and transgender men. Davies (2010) elucidates that *calabai* are assigned male at birth, but they adopt the role of heterosexual women with fashion and gender expression that is distinctly feminine, albeit not necessarily conforming to the conventional norms of heterosexual women. She notes that although *calabai* embrace their femininity and live as a woman, they generally do not identify as female, desire to be one or experience a sense of being trapped within a male body. As Davies observes, *calalai* also assumes a gender identity contrary to the one assigned to them at birth. Assigned female at birth, they adopt the gender roles of heterosexual males and present themselves, accordingly, often occupying masculine professions and cohabiting with female partners. Their attire does not precisely mirror the *oroané's* clothing but displays their unique *calalai* identity. Meanwhile, a *bissu*, who holds a sacred position in the Bugis community, is neither a man nor a woman. The Buginese believe them to be able to harness the power of women and men, as well as humans and gods, to bestow blessings for things such as restoring good health, sanctifying a building site, or ensuring a good harvest. As Davies notes, to attain the status of a *bissu*, one must be born both female and male or a hermaphrodite. This implies that a *bissu* does not undergo a binary gender transition but rather embodies a synthesis of all genders (Davies, 2010).

The rejection of LGBT in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islamic influence, can be ascribed to the interpretation of two accounts in the Quran: the story of the genesis of humankind and the story of the tribe of Lot. The mainstream understanding of the narrative of human genesis gives rise to the notion of gender

binaries, which posits that humans were created to pair and reproduce, in which, from this perspective, homosexuality and transgender expression are seen as a perversion. Meanwhile, the narrative of God's retribution upon the tribe of Lot is commonly construed as an exemplification of the prohibition of same-sex relations. This situation aligns with Yip's (2005) observation that, while most religions reinforce the importance of respecting others, they tend to categorise behaviours associated with homosexuality as 'unnatural,' 'ungodly,' and 'impure.' Likewise, the fear of divine punishment leads more religious individuals to encourage others to adopt anti-homosexual attitudes and implement intolerance policies (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009; Regnerus & Smith, 1998).

Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that Islam is not a monolithic entity. It is imperative to mention the diversity in interpreting the aforementioned stories conveyed in the Quran. Despite constituting a minority, some Muslims interpret the story of Lot within a broader context and deduce that the divine punishment received by the tribe of Lot was a consequence of their various transgressions, with coercive homosexual acts being just one of them (Alfikar, 2020; Ali, 2016; El-Rouayheb, 2009; Kugle, 2010). What needs to be highlighted in this interpretation is that the homosexual acts in question were carried out under duress. Consequently, this interpretation has inspired a new discourse regarding the accommodation of LGBT rights in Islam.

Apart from the religious interpretation, opposition to LGBT in Indonesia also stems from the perceived tug-of-war between the West and Islam. Within the current global political landscape, various governments and non-governmental organisations employ LGBT rights as a measure of progress (Lennox & Waites, 2013). The absence of such rights is often utilised to depict Muslim cultures as being resistant to Western modernity and incompatible with Western social values (Rahman & Valliani, 2017). Conversely, Indonesian Muslims perceive this as an attempt of Western hegemony to encroach Indonesian culture and social values. The result has been the emergence of a political and cultural framework that fosters a perception that situates LGBT in a confrontational position vis-à-vis Islam and Indonesia. As such, LGBT Muslims face a complex set of challenges. In the specific

context of Indonesia, LGBT Muslims encounter marginalisation on the grounds of being deemed un-Islamic, un-Indonesian, and a by-product of Western cultural influence. On the global level, with such a dichotomy of Islam vs. the West, LGBT Muslims are caught between cultural Islamophobia, Muslim homophobia, and a Western-centric understanding of LGBT identity categories (Rahman & Valliani, 2017).

However, the perception that the LGBT discourse is a consequence of Western cultural impact may not be wholly inaccurate. As mentioned above, the cultural encounter between the West and Muslim societies has emerged as a significant subject of investigation concerning the LGBT identity within Muslim communities. For example, Kugle (2014) explores the challenges faced by Muslim LGBT activists coming from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, and South Africa as they navigate the process of reconciling their sexual orientation and gender identity with Islam, while simultaneously attempting to conform to the Western LGBT identity paradigm, which places significant emphasis on the act of ‘coming out.’ The cultural encounter between Islam and the West is also a substantial issue in the study of modern homosexuality and transgender identity in Indonesia. Several studies have presented evidence indicating that Western conceptualisations of LGBT identity serve as a foundation for LGBT individuals in Indonesia to cultivate a cohesive sense of identity. For example, Boellstorff’s (2005 & 2007) anthropological study on gay men in Indonesia demonstrates the amalgamation of Western identity discourses with that of local and national, resulting in the emergence of new communities and identities. Blackwood’s (2010) study on lesbians in Indonesia corroborates this perspective and highlights the formation of transnational sexualities that incorporate Indonesian, both local and national, and Western discourses.

The impact of Western culture on contemporary Indonesian society extends beyond the emergence of modern homosexual and transgender identities, as it has also contributed to the reinforcement of heteronormativity within the culture. Through colonisation, the consciousness of Indonesian society was imbued with notions of the ideal family, division of gender roles, and appropriate sexuality

(Davies, 2010; Blackwood, 2010), which are then institutionalised by the state and religious institutions (Dzuhayatin, 2015; Robinson, 2009; Suryakusuma, 2011; Syamsiatun, 2016). In this particular context, the presence of LGBT is a social actuality that, in many respects, runs counter to the prevailing social and moral standards in Indonesia, which tend to regard homosexuality and transgender expression as deviant, erroneous, and unsuitable. As such, this results in the manifestation of social behaviour characterised by a lack of tolerance toward them.

According to Adamczyk and Felson (2006), non-religious people may still be impacted by the religious environment in which they reside. This implies that religious norms prevalent in a given society extend beyond the practices of its adherents and exert an influence on the broader societal norms and way of life. From this framing, two assumptions can be drawn in the Indonesian context. Firstly, the correlation between the 2016 nationwide resistance against LGBT in Indonesia and the country's predominant religion of Islam is undeniable. The prevailing anti-LGBT sentiment across Indonesia can be interpreted as a display of Islamic doctrines pertaining to homosexuality and transgender identity. Secondly, this means that anti-LGBT sentiments in Indonesia are not exclusively disseminated through religious proselytism but rather through a diverse array of avenues such as public discourse, governmental establishments, legislative framework, customary practices, organisations, and familiar arrangements. Therefore, in this context, an investigation into the LGBT phenomenon in Indonesia necessitates an exploration of the Muslim community's perspective. It has led me to focus on Muhammadiyah, a prominent component of the Muslim community in Indonesia.

Muhammadiyah is the second-largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia and is regarded as a proponent of reformist Islam. As a *persyarikatan* (association), Muhammadiyah has several autonomous organisations formed based on age and gender. These autonomous organisations include Aisyiyah (an organisation for Muhammadiyah women), Nasyyatul Aisyiyah (an organisation for young Muhammadiyah women), Pemuda Muhammadiyah (an organisation for young Muhammadiyah men), and Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah (an organisation for Muhammadiyah student). Muhammadiyah is estimated to have 22 million

followers and affiliates as of 2016 (Ali, 2017).³ The organisation manages a vast array of philanthropic endeavours, encompassing hospitals, orphanages, financial institutions, publishing houses, mass media outlets (including magazines and television), schools, and universities throughout Indonesia. Many of its members have been occupying public offices on both the national and local levels, including ministries and members of parliament. In terms of gender relations, family structure, and sexual morality, Muhammadiyah promotes *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious family), a concept that emphasises, to some extent, traditional norms with a fairly strict view on the relationship between sexes within gender binaries, the nuclear family model, and the distinct gender roles within the family unit. As a *dakwah* (propagation of Islamic religion) movement, Muhammadiyah integrates and propagates these principles across all its organisational operations, including its charitable establishments, particularly its educational institutions.

The selection of Muhammadiyah was, therefore, based on several assumptions. Besides the state, religion is a powerful institution for shaping gender discourse. In this case, Muhammadiyah employs stringent mechanisms to govern and monitor gender and sexuality through its *keluarga sakinah*. As I have mentioned previously, Muhammadiyah holds a prominent and influential position in Indonesia, thereby exerting a significant influence on public opinion-making within the country. On top of that, non-normative gender and sexuality have so far remained unexplored subjects in Muhammadiyah studies.

In its 47th *muktamar* (national congress), Muhammadiyah reaffirmed its idea of *Islam berkemajuan* (Islam with progress). With this concept, Muhammadiyah invites the Muslim community to abandon religious conservatism, value rationality, and be open and tolerant of differences (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 139). Muhammadiyah's *Islam berkemajuan* seeks to develop Islamic thought that is inclusive of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity and to spread messages of peace, tolerance, and moderation in all aspects of life (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 65). Within the nationhood discourse, Muhammadiyah reiterates its commitment to

³ There is no exact data showing the number of Muhammadiyah memberships. This number is only an estimate made by Alvara Research Centre.

Indonesia by upholding Pancasila (Indonesian ideology) and the Constitution, wherein the organisation emphasises the significance of fundamental rights such as freedom of opinion, expression, and religion, as well as the promotion of human rights and the establishment of social security for all Indonesian citizens (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015).

However, these expectations do not necessarily correspond with the actual attitudes of its members. Following the 2016 controversy of LGBT, some prominent Muhammadiyah leaders have joined the chorus of public condemnation of LGBT people. For example, Muhammadiyah's general secretary, Abdul Mukti, stated, "LGBT is an act against humanity. LGBT practice is caused by lifestyle or social behaviour, not because of natural factors" (Sakinah, 2018). Muhammadiyah's treasury, Anwar Abbas, also made a public statement as reported in *Republika* newspaper, where he said that "this [LGBT] is a deviation from religious teachings or natural law. The state must help [LGBT people] redirect their sexual orientation back to *sunnatullah* (law of God)" (Putra, 2015). The Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedhar Nashir, gave an ambivalent message, emphasising that LGBT people must not be harmed but also insist that LGBT should be cured because it is a disease (Abdillah, 2016). These public condemnations further stigmatise this already marginalised community. The denunciation appears significantly inconsistent with the organisation's intention to value rationality, inclusiveness, and toleration of societal differences. This inconsistency becomes one of the crucial topics in my exploration of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT in this dissertation, as well as another essential research reason.

The most intriguing factor in the selection of Muhammadiyah is that, following the 2016 anti-LGBT controversies, the organisation did not issue any official statement against LGBT people. According to Muhammadiyah's Secretary General, Abdul Mukti, an official statement would only inflame the controversy, while a dialogue might be a better way of resolving the issue (National scene, 2016). This decision was unexpected as the other two major Indonesian Muslim organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), officially issued statements condemning LGBT. The NU is regarded as a proponent

of traditionalist Islam that upholds the assimilation of Islam and local cultural customs. Meanwhile, the MUI is a quasi-state entity comprised of delegates from various Indonesian Islamic organisations and serves as a *fatwa*-issuing authority for Muslims and the government. In addition to not condemning LGBT individuals, Muhammadiyah has designated the LGBT community as a target audience for their *dakwah* programs for special and marginalised communities (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p.108). Hence, in this context, the condemnations expressed by some of Muhammadiyah's leaders have conveyed an ambivalent signal, wherein they appear to serve as a substitute for the absence of formal statements by the organisation.

The inconsistencies that I mentioned above have led to Muhammadiyah's ambivalent public position on LGBT. Therefore, it is these ambivalences that pique my curiosity to further examine Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT issues in this thesis. To interpret these ambivalences, I investigate the formation of public and internal discourse in Muhammadiyah on LGBT. Especially in examining the internal discourse, I explore the ideas and narratives on LGBT shared by members of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid of the Muhammadiyah's central board. This *majelis* (council) is the organisation's central body with the authority to decide religious rulings. As such, the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid members are vested with the authority to shape the organisation's religious opinion and thus influence its LGBT discourse.

1.1. Research question

During the initial data collection process, I recognised that Aisiyiah should also be included in the study. Aisiyiah is referred to as '*organisasi perempuan Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah*;' officially, it is, therefore, Muhammadiyah's women's organisation. As an autonomous organisation within the *persyarikatan* (association), Aisiyiah has both the rights and responsibilities to manage its affairs while under the guidance and supervision of Muhammadiyah. The inclusion of Aisiyiah in this study is necessary due to its vital role in the establishment of Muhammadiyah's gender system. This significant role has fostered a widely held

perception among Muhammadiyah members that matters pertaining to gender, sexuality, and family are the domain of Aisyiyah. Considering the intertwining of both organisations, this thesis addresses the following research question:

How have Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah positioned themselves on LGBT in the aftermath of the 2016 anti-LGBT controversy in Indonesia?

1.2. Research aim and objectives

This thesis aims to analyse the position of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah on LGBT in the aftermath of the 2016 anti-LGBT controversies in Indonesia. I set four objectives to achieve this aim:

- 1) to explore Muhammadiyah gender norms,
- 2) to examine Muhammadiyah's public narrative on LGBT,
- 3) to scrutinise Muhammadiyah's internal discourse on LGBT, and
- 4) to investigate the response of the LGBT community to the discourse of Muhammadiyah.

To realise these objectives, I collect two data sets: empirical data and data from written and visual sources. The empirical data is collected through field observation and in-depth interviews with the selected interlocutors from the Muhammadiyah leadership, the LGBT community, and human rights activists. The data from written and visual sources include the organisations' official documents, academic publications, news and articles, and social media posts relevant to the topic. After these data sets are collected, data triangulation is performed to examine the position of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah in LGBT issues since the 2016 controversies.

This study delves into the position of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah regarding LGBT issues, portraying Indonesian Muslims' perspectives on gender and sexual diversity that extend beyond the boundaries of heteronormativity. Islam holds significant importance for the majority of Indonesian Muslims when it comes to discussing LGBT. This discourse typically manifests itself in a dichotomy of perspectives, characterised by either a favourable or unfavourable position, a

welcoming or unwelcoming disposition, and an inclusive or exclusive outlook. However, I must acknowledge that I do not have the capacity to interpret and make commentaries on Islamic canonical texts regarding this issue. Instead, I include religious debates surrounding the LGBT issue by presenting differing opinions of Islamic scholars. Thus, I do not attempt to make any religious justification for the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity. Furthermore, this study does not seek to prescribe solutions or policies to fix potential problems. Instead, it asks questions, however uncomfortable they might be, that could lead to a further constructive discussion on gender and sexuality as matters of diversity.

1.3. Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah

The focus of my analysis in this dissertation is on the organisational perspectives of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah. Other Islamic organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), occasionally appear as a comparison.

1.3.1. Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah was founded by Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 in Yogyakarta and can be seen as a reflection of religious awakening in the history of Islam in Java. It was established amid a severe rift among the royal servants in the Yogyakarta sultanate palace when several servants in religious affairs began to criticise the weak faith in Islam and the lack of religious devotion of their fellow royal servants. Muhammadiyah, which means the followers of Muhammad, demonstrates the process of Islamisation of Java in which many Muslims at that time were dissatisfied with the existing religious situations. According to Nakamura (2017), Muhammadiyah was a form of corrective action that sought to return Islamic teachings, whether in terms of rituals, morality, and ethics, to what they imagined as the standard of Islamic orthodoxy.

Muhammadiyah was formed for Islamic *dakwah* based on the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining the right and forbidding evil). Its initial mission was to reform and purify the Javanese Muslim community's religious practices and bring progress to their life (Beck, 2019). Historically, the purification

element of Muhammadiyah aimed at cleansing Islamic teachings from *takhayul* (superstition), *bid'ah* (heresy), and *khurafat* (animism/dynamism) practices, many of which were syncretism with the *kejawen* (Javanese religious tradition resulting from a blending of animistic, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions). Because it emphasises the importance of reforming and purifying Islam from *kejawen*, Muhammadiyah is often labelled a puritan movement.

In addition to religious purposes, Muhammadiyah was founded with political objectives. Solichin Salam (as cited in Beck 2019, p. 5) suggests that Muhammadiyah was a movement to fight against the Dutch colonial government, significantly to liberate the Javanese Muslim society from the damaging impacts of colonialism, imperialism, conservatism, and dogmatism. According to Burhani (2016a, p. 64), however, such political goals were not necessarily manifested in the agenda and actions of the organisation but were channelled through education, which, in the end, also significantly influenced politics. Muhammadiyah's education program through its schools has at least three targets: strengthening awareness of Indonesian Islam, propagating the ideology of reformist Islam, and promoting practical knowledge and modern sciences (Nakamura 2017, p. 107). This strategy was used to avoid confrontation with the Dutch colonial government, which did not hesitate to destroy any person or organisation that indicated political provocation against them (Burhani, 2016a, p. 64).

Furthermore, the establishment of Muhammadiyah was aimed at stemming the Christianisation of the *bumiputra* (native) population in Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas. The proliferation of Christianity in Java was facilitated by the Dutch colonial government's policy that supported Christian missionaries. Apart from granting formal authorisation, the Dutch government also extended financial assistance for Christian missionary activities while effectively forcing the Sultan of Yogyakarta to allow the propagation of Christianity in Java in 1889. When the Dutch government applied ethical policy in 1901, Javanese Christians were the primary beneficiaries of this policy (Burhani, 2016a, p. 66). While both Beck (2019) and Burhani (2016a) point out that Muslims have perceived the Christianisation of indigenous people as a threat to Islam, they view this differently. Beck suggests that

Muslims felt threatened by Christianisation because it would open access for the local community to the modern world and modern education, which is deemed to be in contradiction with Islamic teachings (p. 5). Meanwhile, Burhani suggests that there was fear among Muslims that Christianisation may lead to the disappearance of Islam from Indonesia (p. 67).

Apart from being labelled as a puritan movement, Muhammadiyah is also equated with the modernist Islamic movement because of the organisation's commitment to *tajdid* (continued renewal of Islamic thoughts in response to new social development and challenges). According to Nashir (2016, p. 45), Muhammadiyah modernism can be understood in terms of the organisation's "moderate position (*wasathiyyah*) in believing, understanding, and practising Islam, which enables flexibility in adapting to new social challenges and tolerating religious differences." Meanwhile, Beck (2019, p. 12) suggests that Muhammadiyah's modernism is embedded in its decision to defend the right to do *ijtihad*, allowing it to open for renewal ideas continuously.

Ijtihad, which means effort, is "the independent or original interpretation of problems not precisely covered by the Quran, hadith (traditions concerning the Prophet Muhammad's life and utterances), and *ijma* (scholarly consensus)" (Britannica, 2021). The jurists or those who do *ijtihad* are called *mujtahids*. According to Quadri (2012), the definition of *ijtihad* has evolved from the medieval period through the 14th century to the modern days. He points out that during the medieval period, *ijtihad* was defined as "the jurist's exerting himself to the utmost of his capacities to arrive at a considered opinion concerning a legal judgment." In the 14th century, a second definition was offered by al-Jurjāni that the jurist's "sparing of no effort in seeking out an appropriate justification for a legal judgment" (as quoted in Quadri, 2012). However, according to Quadri, the term *ijtihad* in modern times has become more ambiguous and is often used by modernist Muslims to call for reform, putting forward religious opinions that are new or different from classical jurisprudence.

While Muhammadiyah uses *ijtihad* to advance its modernist and reformist point of view, the organisation also appears to adopt the definition of *ijtihad* from the medieval period. *Ijtihad* in Muhammadiyah, according to Abror (2019), is understood that the *mujtahid* exerts all their abilities to interpret theoretical religious problems until they can no longer exceed their efforts. Because it is an effort of interpretation, the results of *ijtihad* are relative. It means there are possibilities of different interpretations among the *mujtahid* of which such differences should be respected. Thus, the decision to defend the right to do *ijtihad* characterises Muhammadiyah's openness to other critical thinking and willingness to adjust to other convincing arguments for the benefit of the people (Beck, 2019, pp. 12-13). By practising *ijtihad*, Muhammadiyah acknowledges differing opinions among its members in forming collective organisational religious opinions. Therefore, tolerance and pluralism are core values of the organisation.

According to the 46th *tanfidz muktamar* (the declaration of the validity of the decisions of the national congress), the modernism of Muhammadiyah transcends beyond religious issues. This modernism aims to bring *tanwir* (enlightenment) and create a truly Islamic society by liberating, empowering, and advancing social life from all forms of backwardness, oppression, stagnation, and injustice (PP Muhammadiyah, 2010, p.15). For Muhammadiyah, the true Islamic society is one that is progressive, just, prosperous, democratic, independent, dignified, and sovereign, upholding *al-akhlaq al-karimah* (high moral standard) based on divinity values (p.16). To carry this mission, Muhammadiyah engages in social modernisation and produces an institutionalised tradition of *amaliah* (benevolence) manifested through various efforts such as renewing the religious understanding, reforming the Islamic education system, developing social service institutions and community empowerment, advancing the role of Muslim women in the public space, organising alms and pilgrim, pioneering library and publication, and developing Islamic intellectual propagation (pp. 11-12). Modernism in Muhammadiyah also aims at maintaining and advancing democratic life in Indonesia, respecting human rights, committing to pluralism, and being responsive and critical to the government (p.12).

The 46th *tanfidz muktamar* Muhammadiyah also affirms that Muhammadiyah is committed to cosmopolitanism, with which Muhammadiyah wishes to bridge the gap between Islamic and Western thought. Muhammadiyah defines cosmopolitanism as an awareness that all humans belong to a global community without being divided by ethnicity, nationality, religion, and other social groups/classes. Thus, cosmopolitanism morally implies universal solidarity and responsibility to fellow humans regardless of primordial and conventional differences and distances (PP Muhammadiyah, 2010, pp. 18-19). According to Burhani (2016b), Muhammadiyah's cosmopolitanism is intended as the organisational response to cultural globalisation where it opposes any cultural hegemony, including Arabisation and Westernisation. While Nashir (2016) suggests that Muhammadiyah distinguishes itself from the Islamic modernist movements in the Middle East and at the same time it also rejects secular-liberal thoughts from the West, Burhani (2016b) argues that Muhammadiyah is itself a product of the interaction between Islamic thought from the Middle East and Western secular-liberal thought which is transformed into something authentic Indonesian.

Muhammadiyah is the second largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia after NU, with the number of people affiliated/membership estimated to reach around 22 million. In addition to a large number of affiliates, Muhammadiyah also operates hundreds of charities spread throughout Indonesia. For example, as of 2021, Muhammadiyah operates as many as 162 higher education institutions and colleges (Nurhadi, 2012) and more than 110 hospitals nationwide (Jelang Muktamar, 2022).

1.3.2. Aisyiyah

Founded in 1917 in Yogyakarta, Aisyiyah is an autonomous women's organisation within the structure of Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Association). Prior to its integration into the *persyarikatan*, Aisyiyah had its origins in the forum of Sopo Tresno (which literally means 'who loves'), a forum established by Siti Walidah (wife of Ahmad Dahlan) for women from the *priyayi* (an aristocrat class) families of Kauman, an Islamic quarter in the Sultanate of

Yogyakarta, to study Islam. However, diverse perspectives exist regarding the historical background of Sopo Tresno. For example, Suratmin (2005) suggests that the establishment of Sopo Tresno in 1914 can be attributed to Siti Walidah's efforts to advocate for the education of female batik workers. Meanwhile, Darban (2011) suggests that Sopo Tresno was formed as a platform for Kauman women to assist PKO (*Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem*/Public Welfare Worker), a unit within Muhammadiyah that oversees social charity endeavours, primarily in providing assistance to orphaned girls. According to Darban, these Sopo Tresno activists took the initiative to establish Aisyiyah in 1917, an initiative that Ahmad Dahlan and other Muhammadiyah leaders welcomed and encouraged.

Divergent accounts also exist regarding when Aisyiyah officially became part of the *Persyarikatan* Muhammadiyah. According to Van Doorn-Harder (2006), the incorporation of Aisyiyah into the structure of the *persyarikatan* was not formalised until 1924. Meanwhile, Noer (1973) states that this amalgamation occurred in 1922, and Mu'arif & Setyowati (2020) suggest that Aisyiyah was integrated into the structure of *Persyarikatan* Muhammadiyah immediately after its establishment on the 19th of May, 1917. Despite disagreements over its historical record, it is widely acknowledged that Sopo Tresno played a pivotal role in the establishment of Aisyiyah and that Aisyiyah became a vital contributor to the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah.

Aisyiyah was named after Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisyah, who was known to be an intelligent and resourceful woman. If Muhammadiyah means followers of the Prophet Muhammad, Aisyiyah means followers of Aisyah. The choice of these names symbolises the partnership of the prophet with his wife in propagating Islam. Furthermore, it signifies that Aisyiyah intends to work alongside Muhammadiyah to establish an Islamic society.

Aisyiyah was founded as an organisational platform of the women's movement within Muhammadiyah. As the social constructs of the time confined women to the domestic sphere of the family and therefore discouraged them from pursuing formal education, Aisyiyah's fundamental aim was to change this

construct (Van Doorn-Harder, 2006; Noer, (1973); Mu'arif & Setyowati (2020). To achieve this aim, Aisyiyah built schools for girls and launched Islamic education schemes for women that followed Dahlan's principles: education at home, education at school, education in the community, and education in places of worship. In an effort to promote women's emancipation and gender equality in the public domain, Aisyiyah founded Indonesia's first kindergarten, Froebel, in 1919 to illustrate the necessity of commencing education for both boys and girls at an early stage in their lives. Additionally, in 1923, the organisation initiated an educational campaign aimed at eliminating women's illiteracy in both Arabic and Latin scripts. In 1926, Aisyiyah initiated the publication of its magazine, *Suara Aisyiyah*, which served as a medium for Muhammadiyah women to foster and propagate notions of gender liberation and gender equality. Aisyiyah also played a significant role in the Indonesian national movement, as it was among the organisations that spearheaded the establishment of Kowani (Indonesian Women's Congress) in 1928, facilitating the integrated efforts of the national campaign against colonialism.

Aisyiyah has the status of a special autonomous organisation within the *Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah*. It means that Muhammadiyah authorises Aisyiyah to manage its charities with certain restrictions, an authority that other autonomous organisations do not have. This special status allows Aisyiyah to operate hundreds of institutions throughout Indonesia, including kindergartens, schools, colleges, social centres, and health clinics.

1.3.3. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

Nahdlatul Ulama, which means 'awakening of the *ulama*,' was founded by Hasyim Asy'ari in 1926 in East Java. It was initiated primarily to defend traditionalist Islamic practices, which tolerate mixing local culture with religious practices. In other words, NU was formed in response to modern Islamic movements in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah, which opposed the incorporation of local Javanese cultural influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions into Islamic practices. Deliar Noer elucidates that NU was established because "the traditionalists in Java felt as if they had been attacked from two different directions:

in the cradle of Islam by a new regime that had come to power, imbued with ideas which they could not tolerate; at home by reformist ideas, which they considered to be similar to Wahabism and which had gained substantial ground” (Noer, 1973, p. 228).

According to Menchik (2016), NU felt far more threatened by the modernist Islamic movement than by the Dutch colonial government and Christian missionaries. As he elaborates, the relations between NU and Christians were respectful due to several characteristics of the Christians in East Java, such as the fact that these Christians were not colonialists whose policies frequently contradict those of the colonial government; they built their community outside the Muslim communities, and they also mixed their religious practices with local cultural beliefs. It contrasts with the characters of Christian missionaries in West and Central Java, who were colonialists in the sense that they collaborated with and were fully supported by the colonial government to pacify the Islamic movement (Menchik, 2016).

Unlike Muhammadiyah, which never turned into a political party, NU evolved into a political party in the 1950s and fought to establish Indonesia as an Islamic state in the parliament. As its political popularity waned, NU refocused on religious and social activities in 1982. NU’s membership is estimated to be more than 95 million people as of 2016, making it the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia and, most likely, the world (Ali, 2017).⁴ Like Muhammadiyah, NU is a social organisation that runs business charities in education and health. However, most NU members are geographically concentrated on Java (Ali, 2017).

Many have argued that NU and Muhammadiyah represent two different groups within Indonesian Islam. NU represents the traditionalist group that defends the acculturation between Islam and local cultural traditions, while Muhammadiyah represents the modernist and reformist groups who call for the puritanism of Islam (Sila, 2020; Suwarno, 2019; Hasbullah, 2014; Barton, 2014). However, both

⁴ As with Muhammadiyah, there is no exact data on NU membership. This number is only an estimate made by Alvara Research Centre.

organisations have quite fundamental similarities. Apart from the fact that they are social and intellectual movements driven by philanthropic ideas based around educational initiatives and networks of schools, NU and Muhammadiyah embrace values of moderation in Islam. They both have a paradoxical character, as they are “compatible with democracy as well as with a specific type of authoritarianism” (Menchik, 2019, p. 419). NU and Muhammadiyah continue to uphold Indonesia’s commitment to religious pluralism, reproduce the democratic norms, reject the notion of a monolithic Islamic state, and forge political compromises between religious liberalism and conservatism in Indonesia (Hefner, 2019; Menchik, 2019; Brown, 2019).

1.3.4. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)

The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) was formed in 1975 at the initiative of Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs in collaboration with the ulama, Muslim scholars, and Islamic activists from all over the country. Among those who participated were representatives from the central leaderships of Muhammadiyah and NU. According to Wahid Kozin (cited in Abdillah & Novianto, 2019), MUI was formed with several goals. First, it is to fill the strategic role of providing religious counsel to the state. Second, it acts as an institution representing Indonesian Muslims if there are meetings of international Muslim scholars or visitors from other countries who want to exchange ideas. Third, it serves as a bridge between the government and the Muslim communities in Indonesia.

The MUI is an independent institution. Since its membership comprises representatives from various religious organisations, MUI is not affiliated with any of Indonesia’s political streams or Islamic religious schools. In terms of religious discourse in Indonesia, in accordance with its *hurriyah* orientation, this institution serves an essential role as a fatwa-issuing organisation to Muslims and the government, whether requested or not. Furthermore, the MUI has functions in public policy, especially in the sharia economy (e.g., granting *halal* certification on consumer products). It is publicly funded but not under the authority of the government.

1.4. Literature review

I have conducted an extensive review of literature for my research. They encompass studies on gender, including those pertaining to Indonesia as a whole and Muhammadiyah specifically, as well as research on non-conforming gender and sexual orientation within the Indonesian context. Below, I summarize these studies and outline how my research complements or responds to them.

1.4.1. Gender studies on Muhammadiyah

As one of Indonesia's most influential Muslim organisations, Muhammadiyah piques the interest of many scholars, resulting in a plethora of research and publications. However, from all the literature I have reviewed, their scope is limited to heteronormative gender relations, ignoring non-normative gender issues (i.e., LGBT). Nonetheless, they provide insight into the existing gender norms in Muhammadiyah that I can use as a basis to analyse Muhammadiyah's perspective in responding to LGBT issues. Issues in gender studies on Muhammadiyah could be categorised into three highly debated issues: women's leadership in the family, women's leadership in public, and women's leadership in religious affairs. In relation to my research, I refer to two of the most relevant studies: "*Rezim gender Muhammadiyah: Kontestasi gender, identitas, dan eksistensi*" (Muhammadiyah's gender regime: Contestation of gender, identity, and existence) written by Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (2015) and "*Pergolakan putri Islam: Perkembangan wacana jender dalam Nasyyatul Aisyiyah 1965-2005*" (The struggle of Muslim young women: The development of gender discourse in Nasyyatul Aisyiyah 1965-2005) written by Siti Syamsiatun (2016).

Among many other gender studies on Muhammadiyah, the study conducted by Dzuhayatin (2015) is so far the most comprehensive in portraying the dynamics of gender relations within the organisation. In her research, Dzuhayatin used a qualitative method involving 43 interviewees (21 women and 22 men) who were the organisational elites within the Muhammadiyah association, which includes Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah, Nasyyatul Aisyiyah, Pemuda Muhammadiyah

(Muhammadiyah Youth), and Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Student Association).

In her introduction, Dzuhayatin claims that her research attempts to reveal how gender regimes operate systemically in religious social organisations, allowing gender to persist in society in the absence of a firm structure such as the state. Using the definition from Nuket Kardam, Dzuhayatin defines a gender regime as a set of formal principles, norms, legal regulations, and monitoring mechanisms that bind the members of a group and reinforce the development of a shared understanding of gender equality (p. 22). By examining the current contestation of gender regimes in Muhammadiyah, she theoretically addresses the three highly debated issues of female leadership in the family, public, and religious affairs.

Dzuhayatin identifies three groups within Muhammadiyah and their respective gender ideologies, all of which compete with one another. The emergence of these three ideological groups is inextricably linked to the gender discourse that exists outside of the organisation, both nationally and globally. The head-complement ideology belonging to the conservative group prescribes that the authority to make essential decisions belongs to the men as the sole economic contributors, while women only have limited authority in making decisions in practical problems. The senior-junior partnership ideology belonging to the moderate mainstream group recommends that women with limited social and economic activities should be allowed to deliberate with men even though men will make the final decision. Finally, the equal-partnership ideology of the progressive group endorses that the authority and social status of both men and women are equal and that this equality can be reached when access and participation of men and women in education, career, and economic contribution are equal.

According to Dzuhayatin, the ideology of senior-junior partnership has survived as the organisation's mainstream ideology for more than a century, and it has been considered the authentic Islamic teaching on gender within Muhammadiyah. She claims that this situation has led to the permanent doctrine of male leadership in Muhammadiyah, which restricts the expansion of women's

leadership in the organisation. The Muhammadiyah family model, *keluarga sakinah* (the harmonious family), exemplifies the pervasiveness of this senior-junior partnership ideology. In my research, I looked more closely at the *keluarga sakinah* as it is an essential foundation for Muhammadiyah in determining its position on LGBT issues in Indonesia.

Although the ideology of senior-junior partnership appears to be the permanent mainstream gender ideology in Muhammadiyah, Dzuhayatin identifies a dual reality that indicates a gap between the organisational normative-theological view and its practical-reality view. The normative-theological view rests on the gender ideology of head complement, which perpetuates the belief in the superiority of men over women. In contrast, the practical-reality view rests on the gender ideology of senior-junior partnerships, which encourages broader roles for women. Nonetheless, she argues that this dualism eliminates the assumption of a permanent subordination of women to men.

Amid this dual reality, Dzuhayatin also observes that the progressive group in Muhammadiyah tries to shift the pendulum of dualism towards the idea of an equal partnership. Although still in its early stages and meeting resistance, she claims, these shifts are beginning to appear marked by the decision in favour of an affirmative policy for the involvement of women within the leadership boards of Muhammadiyah and the controversial decision to allow women to become imams for mixed congregational prayer, although with certain preconditions.

Dzuhayatin's research reveals that the gender regime in Muhammadiyah is highly heteronormative. The separation between men and women in the organisational structure as a whole still reflects the traditional family paradigm, which places men as the head of the family and decision maker. In this context, non-normative gender issues are either disregarded or avoided. Nonetheless, the recent contentious LGBT discourse in Indonesia has become an inevitable topic that unsettles Muhammadiyah's gender regime.

Syamsiatun's (2016) ethnographic study, like Dzuhayatin, also discusses the contestation of gender in the Muhammadiyah association. Nevertheless, her focus

is more specifically on how the young women of *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* are creating new ideas of womanhood and gender within the socio-political context of contemporary Indonesia. *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* is an autonomous organisation within Muhammadiyah whose members are young women between the ages of 12 and 40. Syamsiatun's longitudinal analysis between 1965 and 2005 also asserted that gender discourse in *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* cannot be separated from the context of national and global gender discourse, including state gender policies, socio-economic changes, secular feminism, and Salafi gender discourse. However, according to her, *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* does not take sides in the struggle over gender ideology in Indonesia. She claims that *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*'s activists, who are relatively well educated both in Indonesia and abroad, demonstrate that moderation is an important consideration in negotiating and positioning the organisation amidst the clash of gender ideologies endorsed by the state, secular feminists, and Islamicists.

Two crucial findings of Syamsiatun's study that are most relevant to my research are *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*'s critique of Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah* and the duality of its gender discourse. She notes that while *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* members value wifhood and motherhood, they also envision more diverse roles for women. These young women argue that marriage is not the only way for women to achieve a meaningful life and that marriage must not prevent women from maximising their individual potential. In terms of the dualism of gender discourse, Syamsiatun showed that *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* is more aligned with the secular feminist perspective in terms of gender equality on subjects such as women's leadership, education, career, and property ownership. However, on issues of personal morality and the legitimacy of sexual relations, their views are closer to Islamists heteronormativity. Despite its heteronormative focus, Syamsiatun's work appears to have raised the problem of non-normative sexuality. In her conclusion, she anticipates that the topic of lesbianism would be a challenge for *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*. She anticipates that this subject will be promoted as part of human rights issues from a secular perspective.

Aside from the two publications above, there are also plenty of smaller studies on aspects of gender in Muhammadiyah. They all reflect the rigorous heteronormative character of the organisation. For example, regarding female leadership in the family, Syarif (2018) examines the perspective of Aisyiyah leaders. His findings suggest that despite the persistent asymmetric gender relations, those leaders firmly believe in an equal position of men and women in the family. The persistency of the asymmetric gender relation, according to Syarif, is primarily due to cultural perspective rather than religious. In terms of female leadership in public, Dewi (2008) studies female leadership within the organisational structure of Muhammadiyah. She particularly examines the contestation of female leadership during the 45th Muktamar, where she identifies that although the elite groups within the organisation are relatively advanced in demanding women's leadership, this effort was strongly resisted by the majority of the regional and local leaderships (see also Burhani, 2013, p. 115). This study shows that the progressiveness of Muhammadiyah in female leadership is elite-centred and not shared with those at the local and regional levels.

While women in Muhammadiyah enjoy significant acceptance in terms of public roles and leadership, they face more restrictions when it comes to religious leadership. Aryanti (2013), for instance, examines the contestation of a female imam in Muhammadiyah. She suggests that Muhammadiyah's decision to allow women to be the imam for mixed congregational prayer has more symbolic meaning rather than practical impact. She claims that this decision serves the organisation's position as a modern Islamic movement, yet the precondition that a woman may lead only in the absence of a capable man is a requirement that makes it almost impossible for a woman to lead a mixed prayer. Nonetheless, Aryanti observes that Muhammadiyah's women may not see this as an urgent issue because their religious authority as preachers in the teaching of Islam has been facilitated (see also van Doorn-Harder; 2006, pp. 93-97).

Regarding gender in education, Muhammadiyah has also become a subject of academic studies. For instance, Nurwanto (2012) examines the Islamic teaching textbook officially published for Muhammadiyah high schools. The study shows

that while the official textbook generally emphasises gender justice, it still holds bias and prejudice against women in some cases. For example, men's social roles in Muslim history are studied to a greater extent than that of women. However, investigating the reception from the teachers, Nurwanto claims that the textbook has been received positively, with most of the teachers agreeing with the notion of gender equality between men and women under the condition that women should not neglect their domestic roles.

Meanwhile, Hefner (2016) investigates the importance of Madrasah Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding school for girls) in Yogyakarta in preparing the future female leaders of Muhammadiyah. It is a school that combines modern education with a strong foundation of Islamic values according to Muhammadiyah's principles. In the study, Hefner identifies that the basis for women's authority in the Muslim community is not only determined by discourses and practices in the religious field but also by an entanglement of many other factors such as education, employment, respectability, family, courtship, and marriage. Thus, amid the decline in interest in Islamic studies, which may pose a problem for women leadership in Muhammadiyah, she claims that Madrasah Mu'allimaat has adjusted itself to fit the desires and educational demands of young women and their families. Hefner thus argues that this development is not necessarily negative because the history of Muhammadiyah has shown that education for young Muslim women is a powerful force for a change of gender roles.

From the various studies above, one topic appears to underpin the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah frequently, which is the term *Islam berkemajuan* (Islam with progress). The idea of progress has emerged since the early days of Muhammadiyah. In this context, progress is identical to the application of a modern management system in Muhammadiyah. This idea is also associated with Muhammadiyah's education system, which, from the beginning, reflected modern approaches, including curriculum and learning methods. The term progress is also supported by Muhammadiyah's model of da'wah, which uses multiple methods, including social services such as hospitals, orphanages, and publishing media.

These approaches are seen as a novelty within the context of the emergence of Islamic movements in Indonesia in the early 20th century. In the current context, *Islam berkemajuan* is understood as a *tajdid* that must be carried out continuously in accordance with the times and technological developments. Nashir (2016) elucidates that Muhammadiyah's *Islam berkemajuan* aims to produce theological enlightenment through *ijtihad*, which reflects the values of transcendence, liberation, emancipation, and humanisation as taught in the Quran (3:104-110).

However, according to Dzuhayatin (2015), the concept of *Islam berkemajuan* is one of the least developed when it comes to gender issues. She points out that this reality becomes one of the key reasons why, for more than a century, the idea of a senior-junior partnership has been the most robust and most consistent principle in Muhammadiyah. The concept of gender justice in Muhammadiyah still perpetuates the distinctions between men and women, as well as the segregation of their roles and responsibilities. In this case, the stagnation of Muhammadiyah's *Islam berkemajuan* on the gender discourse results in a lack of critical discussion of non-normative gender and sexuality issues, including LGBT.

1.4.2. Gender studies on Indonesia

As a Muslim-majority country, Islam, which is frequently represented through religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, is an important factor in Indonesian public discourses. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that gender discourse in Indonesia is an intertwining of the state's political discourse and Islam. In this light, gender studies on Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from gender studies on Indonesia in general. Therefore, to complement my insight on the discourse of gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah, I expand my exploration of the literature that discusses gender in a broader scope, that is, Indonesia. Some studies and publications that show the explicit intertwining of political and Islamic gender discourses in Indonesian are “Islamizing intimacies: Youth, sexuality, and gender in contemporary Indonesia” written by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner (2019), “Indonesian women and local politics: Islam, gender, and network in post-Suharto Indonesia” written by Kurnia Hastuti Dewi (2015), “Gender and Islam in Southeast

Asia: Women's rights movements, religious resurgence, and local tradition" edited by Susanne Schröter (2013), "Sex and sexualities in contemporary Indonesia: Sexual politics, health, diversity, and representations" edited by Linda Rae Bennett and Shary Graham Davies (2015).

Nancy J. Smith-Hefner's book documents changes in the field of family, gender, and interpersonal relationships among urban Indonesian Muslim youth. The book is based on a longitudinal ethnographic study conducted between 1999 and 2015 in Yogyakarta. The data was gathered through observation and in-depth interviews with students primarily affiliated with Gadjah Mada University (UGM) or Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN). Even though Smith-Hefner includes both men and women in her analysis, she focuses on the perspective and experience of women. Because her focus lays on heterosexuality, she excludes the discourse on non-normative gender and sexuality in Indonesia.

Smith-Hefner places her analysis within the context of Indonesia's *reformasi* era, where democratisation, mass education, and the revitalisation of Islam have influenced new understandings among Indonesian youth about what it means to be both modern and Muslim. Responding to the interplay between education, career, family, intimacy, and religion, she claims that the youth struggled to balance Islamic piety, which led to 'marital imperative' (p. 145) and strict boundaries in the interactions between the opposite sexes, with the desire for greater self-expression education, career, and the new style of urban romantic relationships. This struggle, according to her, indicates that plurality, fluidity, and ambivalence characterise young people's accounts of negotiating religious and social concerns. It also shows that, as she argues, while Islam is a significant influence in the lives of these young people, it is not the only one. Hence, the young people's struggle signifies diversity and pluralism among Muslims, which also highlights the diversity within Islam and Indonesia itself, Smith-Hefner observes.

Without dismissing the concern about women's 'redomestication' due to the resurgence of political Islam, Smith-Hefner claims that young Indonesian urban Muslim women are more interested than previous generations in empowering

themselves through higher education and professional careers while also becoming more pious. In terms of gender differentiation, this, according to her, creates an ambivalent situation where the empowerment of Indonesian middle-class Muslim women is accompanied by the strengthening of the gender binary. This trend is also seen among Muhammadiyah women, as illustrated by Dzuhayatin (2015) and Syamsiatun (2016).

In her book, Dewi (2015, p. 1) attempts to argue against the widespread perception “that Islam is a source of discrimination and oppression against women.” To support this argument, she investigates the direct elections of local government heads (*bupati*) in Indonesia during the *reformasi* era by following the political careers of three women, Rustriningsih, Siti Qomariyah, and Ratna Ani Lestari, who were elected as *Bupati* of Kebumen, Pekalongan, and Banyuwangi respectively, after 2005.

One factor that Dewi identified as common to the success of these three women was their ability to use religion, gender, and family ties in their political campaigns. According to her, presenting an image as a pious Muslim woman, reinforcing gender stereotypes relating to women's greater moral capital, and positioning their husbands as the head of the family have all contributed to their electoral success. This was evident in the case of Rustriningsih and Siti Qomariyah, who used their credentials as pious Muslim women to gain political support from local ulama. Meanwhile, Ratna Ani Lestari used religious symbols during her campaign and started wearing an Islamic headscarf, Dewi shows.

Based on the success of these three female politicians, Dewi contends that Islam does not prevent women from advancing in politics. Instead, the intersection of gender and religious identity, she argues, has proven critical to their electoral success. She also argues that the success of female politicians is also linked to the attitudes of Indonesia's two mainstream Islamic organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, toward women's leadership, which “provides a strong religious foundation for Javanese Muslim women politicians to become local political leaders.” (p. 194). If there is anything to criticise, it is the study's focus, in which

Dewi chose to examine only successful candidates while ignoring the unsuccessful ones. Nonetheless, her study shows how Islamic gender discourse influences and becomes an essential factor in Indonesian politics. This reality is also a significant consideration in my analysis of the political discourse on LGBT in Indonesia.

Different from the previous two books, Susanne Schröter's book is an edited volume that brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to investigate the growing debate on Islam, gender, sexuality, women's rights, and the feminist movement through case studies from Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand) as well as transnational piety movements. Despite the volume's multidisciplinary and multi-geographic contributions, its authors share a common theme: the rediscovery of Muslim women's agency amid the Islamic resurgence in Southeast Asian countries.

In her introduction of the volume, Schröter (2013, p. 7) establishes a framework that, while Islam in Southeast Asia has traditionally been "moderate, especially with regard to its gender orders", the recent rise of conservatism poses a threat to women's rights. She presents Islamisation in Southeast Asia as a process in which orthodox Muslims, often tied with transnational movements, have threatened the moderate and liberal characters of Islam in the region.

In Indonesia's section, building on Schröter's framework, van Doorn-Harder (2013, pp. 55-72), in her chapter "Polygamy and harmonious families: Indonesian debates on gender and marriage" investigates Aisyiyah's *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious family) as "a tool to transmit reformist views on gender, sexuality, and women's position within marriage" (p. 56). She contends that while Aisyiyah rejected polygamy in favour of monogamous partnership based on mutual respect between husband and wife, it still accepts female subordination in the family and within the Muhammadiyah movement. Meanwhile, Arnez's (2013, pp. 73-94) chapter "A Dialogue with God? Islam and lesbian relationships in two post-Suharto narratives" examines the narrative of same-sex relationships in the post-Suharto era by closely reading two novels: "*Garis tepi seorang lesbian*" (A lesbian on the margins) authored by Herlinatiens and "*Suara perih seorang perempuan; Lesbian*

dan kawin bule” (A pained woman's voice: Being a lesbian and marrying a white man) authored by Putri Kartini. She analyses how some Indonesian Muslim women negotiate their inner struggle of being lesbian with heteronormativity and Islam. Arnez specifically contrasts the efforts of the two protagonists in the two novels, with one protagonist reconciling lesbian love with her Islamic piety while the other considers ‘lesbianism’ as nothing more than the psychological aftermath of sexual violence. Overall, the Indonesia section of the edited volume highlights how the New Order and Islamic gender ideology have shaped the discourse on gender and sexuality in Indonesia today.

In my research, I will further explore how orthodox, moderate, and liberal Islamic gender ideologies, as well as state gender ideologies, colour Muhammadiyah’s position on LGBT issues in Indonesia. Here, the competing gender ideologies are reflected in different positions among Muhammadiyah elites, resulting in an ambivalent position for the organisation.

An award-winning book, Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies’ edited volume also involves dozens of scholars, approaching the subject of gender and sexuality from a multidisciplinary perspective. Unlike Schröter’s book, which discusses gender issues in several Southeast Asian countries, Bennett and Davies’ edited volume focuses on Indonesia, but still with a broad geographical scope covering cities across the archipelago (Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Denpasar, Lombok, Medan, and Makassar). Four broad themes emerged from the discussion and are used to organise the volume’s chapters: sexual politics, sexual health, sexual diversity, and sexual representations. These chapters concentrate on the period of the *reformasi* era that witnessed the shift of Indonesia’s political power from a highly centralised state to a more decentralised regional authority. As Bennett and Davies make clear, it is also an era that has seen the rise of diverse social movements that compete against each other, “some progressive, some conservative, and many in between” (p.10). As stated previously, I also use such a spectrum to identify different perspectives on gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah and how they impact their position on LGBT.

In her chapter “Masculinity, sexuality and Islam: the gender politics of regime change in Indonesia,” Robinson (2015, pp. 51-68) traces the relationship between Islam and gender politics in Indonesia since the New Order regime, which provides the necessary context to understand gender politics in Indonesia today. She notes that both New Order ideology and Islamist discourses have promoted a patriarchal and heteronormative gender order that is reflected in several key debates during the *reformasi*, including the election of Megawati Sukarnoputri, Indonesia’s first female president, the new visibility of polygyny, the passage of a law outlawing pornography, and the growing anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia. According to Robinson, even though Islamic political parties have not been successful in elections, radical Islamic groups have pushed conservative agendas by mobilising public opinion. This was possible because the democratic space created by *reformasi* allowed radical Islamist discourses to flourish, she points out. However, simultaneously, the same democratic space has also allowed progressive ideas to gain traction, most notably with the passage of a new law prohibiting domestic violence and marital rape in 2006.

On the issue of non-normative sexuality, Bennet and Davies’ edited volume contains two chapters that specifically address homosexuality. McNally et al. (2015, pp. 203-2019), in their chapter “Belonging, community and identity: gay men in Indonesia,” discuss the terms *gay* and *biseks* that are widely used to refer to sexual practices rather than stable identities. In my research, I also look for this tendency, but from the perspective of heterosexuals, who also see homosexuality as a sexual practice rather than an identity. Meanwhile, Blackwood (2015, pp. 220-234), in her chapter “Lesbian subjectivities: Butch, femme, and andro from the New Order to *reformasi* era Indonesia,” observes the gender norms among Indonesian lesbians where the binary gender model retains its appeal. In this model, according to Blackwood, a lesbian relationship is built on the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, as reflected in the relationship between *butchi* (masculine women) and their *femme* partner (feminine women). Similarly, my research investigates the heteronormative viewpoint that sees the gender binary as the default model in intimate relationships.

Heteronormativity is prevalent in Indonesia. It prescribes rigid norms governing the appropriate practice of gender and sexuality. To ensure compliance with these norms, there are control mechanisms in place within the community. To understand such control mechanisms in Indonesia, the chapter “Surveilling sexuality in Indonesia” by Davies (2015, pp. 29-50) provides essential insight. Davies coined the term ‘kinships of shame’ by drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Susie Scott. As she points out, ‘shame’ is a central aspect of sexual morality in the country, making it one of the powerful tools in controlling sexual behaviours in Indonesia. Kinships of shame are effective because, rather than focusing solely on the transgressive person, shame targets the entire family. In this chapter, Davies also argues that morality is increasingly being surveilled in Indonesia, although this surveillance can also be productive: as shame coerces subjects into compliance, it also inspires agency and subversion.

The studies mentioned above shed light on the relationship between Islam and gender in Indonesia. Islam has frequently served as one of the powerful domains to which men have privileged access in gender relations. At the same time, Islam teaches that men and women are equal in the eyes of God. Meanwhile, when it comes to sexuality, Islam frequently operates with a very rigid heteronormativity perspective. With a few exceptions, discussions in the aforementioned literature about Islamic resurgence, gender, sexuality, marriage, and family are contained within the heteronormative framework. In my research, I further explore these topics by breaking out of the heteronormative perspective and focusing more on the discourse of homosexuality in Indonesian Islam. To do so, I examine how the intersection of state gender ideology and Islam (as discussed in Smith-Hefner, 2019; Dewi, 2015; and Schröter, 2013, influences gender and sexuality perspectives in Muhammadiyah. I also use the spectrum of ‘conservative, progressive, and many in between’ (as discussed in Bennet & Davies, 2015) to see the different views on LGBT issues in Muhammadiyah. Informed by Davies’ ‘kinship of shame,’ I observe that the Muhammadiyah *keluarga sakinah* also acts as a model that regulates and controls appropriate and legitimate sexual relationships between men and women.

1.4.3. Non-normative gender studies on Indonesia

Heteronormativity is highly prevalent in Indonesia, and it is seen as the ‘Islamic norm.’ Thus, it comes as no surprise that the LGBT issues attract so much controversy as it is easily identified as a transgression. In this light, gender studies in Indonesia have increasingly addressed non-heteronormative issues, particularly the study of homosexuality and transgender subjectivity and their socio-political features. These studies facilitate me in situating the LGBT discourse in Muhammadiyah within the context of Indonesia’s national gender ideology, Islam, and culture. I reviewed three ground-breaking studies for this purpose: “The gay archipelago: Sexuality and nation in Indonesia” written by Tom Boellstorff (2005), “Falling into the *lesbi* world: Desire and difference in Indonesia” written by Evelyn Blackwood (2010), “Gender diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam and queer selves” written by Sharyn Graham Davies (2010). These studies explore the subjectivity of people who do not conform to heteronormativity, in which Islam significantly inspires the formation of that subjectivity. They also equally argue that the term LGBT, understood in the Western discourse, cannot be adequately aligned with the reality of people with non-normative gender and sexuality in Indonesia.

Boellstorff’s (2005) extensive ethnographic research delves into the experiences of homosexual and transgender individuals within the societal framework of Indonesia. The author conducts an inquiry into the historical aspects of homosexuality in Indonesia, followed by an examination of the ways in which Indonesian individuals who identify as *gay* or *lesbi* navigate their sexual identities in their daily lives, including aspects such as romantic relationships, desires, and meeting locations. The author conducts an analysis of the various roles played by the media, the state, nationalism, and marriage in shaping modern *gay* and *lesbi* identities in Indonesia.

Boellstorff explains that Western homosexual culture and identity cannot be used to interpret the terms *gay* and *lesbi* in Indonesia, which is why he always writes both terms in italics. He writes, “(...) while *gay* and *lesbi* Indonesians reterritorialize the concepts ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian,’ the terms have their history and

dynamics: they are not just ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ with a foreign accent” (2005, p. 5). Thus, to understand the subject position of *gay* and *lesbi* in Indonesia, Boellstorff develops a framework of dubbing culture. He suggests that although the *gay* and *lesbi* discourses in Indonesia may bear resemblances with and be connected to the Western discourse, they do not originate from it because there is a distinct cultural logic around it.

Unlike Western gay culture and ideology that emphasises individual identity, Boellstorff observes that most Indonesian *gays* and *lesbis* aspire to belong to the nation by becoming good citizens through heterosexual marriage and family. He elucidates that this aspiration is inextricably linked to the ideology of heteronormative family promoted by the state as the pillars of good citizenship. As a result, many Indonesian homosexuals marry, opting for traditional heterosexual family life as a way of adhering to the modern Indonesian nationalist project while continuing to live homosexuality outside their marriage. Boellstorff (2007) addresses this reality in his other book, “A coincidence of desires: Anthropology, queer studies, Indonesia,” by referring to the entanglement of nationalist and Islamic gender ideas that enforce the heterosexual family as the norm, resulting in what he calls the ‘marriage imperative’ which situates heterosexual marriage and producing offspring as “a foundational unit of the nation, piety, and proper citizen selfhood” (p. 114). Thus, for many Indonesian Muslim *gays* and *lesbis*, heterosexual marriage has become a parameter for being a good citizen and a good Muslim. For them, Boellstorff observes, building a nuclear family through heterosexual marriage embodies Indonesian values and Islamic morality.

In chapter two, “Historical Temptation,” Boellstorff (2005) dismisses a clear-cut connection of the modern Indonesian *gay* and *lesbi* with ‘indigenous’ traditional homosexuality. He shows that, while various gendered and sexual practices were ubiquitous in many traditional communities, they have little in common with contemporary Indonesian *gay* and *lesbi* identity. By exploring the perception of his informants, Boellstorff suggests that Indonesian modern *gay* and *lesbi* are quite different from the well-known transvestism of Javanese *waria* or Buginese *bissu*, both of which have biological assumptions, ethnic particularity, and professional

specialisation. In this sense, Boellstorff suggests that being *waria* and *bissu* are occupational rather than identities.

Evelyn Blackwood's fascinating ethnographic research unsettles Western conventional notions of traditional and modern sexualities and normative gender. While she focuses her study on Padang, West Sumatra, by observing the daily life of 16 participants, she contextualises her findings within a broader Indonesian, Southeast Asian, and global context. Eight of Blackwood's interviewees are *tombois*, who are biologically female but generally identify themselves as men, wearing masculine clothing and working in masculine occupations. However, they are neither identifying themselves as lesbian, in the sense of Western identity of woman-loving women, nor transgender men. The other eight interviewees are the *femme* (or girlfriends), who in many ways conform to the normative gender role as women but nonetheless find themselves in relationships with *tomboi*, although not always exclusively. With this context, Blackwood deals with globalising sexualities carefully by avoiding English terms such as lesbian and transgender to define the subject of her study. She also argues that applying the Western model of sexuality that comes along with those terms does not fit into the local model of gender and sexual identity.

Blackwood describes gender standards for men and women in Indonesia and finds connections between them and the actions of *tomboi* and their girlfriends, illustrating the societal influence. *Tomboi*, for example, have far more freedom to engage in social activities than their girlfriends, like going out whenever they want, smoking, and doing fewer house tasks. They are also more inclined to be unfaithful. However, when *tomboi* return to their family, the fluidity of their subject position becomes apparent. While in public spaces, *tomboi* identify with dominant notions of masculinity, within the family, they assume different subject positions, engaging with and reproducing a version of femininity. On the other hand, girlfriends tend to reproduce the stereotype of the normative gender role of women. For example, they act in certain ways to protect their reputation by doing more housework, not going too far away from home, not smoking, and being more faithful. Nevertheless, as Blackwood notes, either *tomboi* or their girlfriends are subject to the same family

pressure to get into heterosexual marriages and have children. She points out that though *tomboi* are often treated as men by their family, the knowledge that they have a female body keeps their family pressuring them into heterosexual marriage with a male (p. 154).

This subject position of *tomboi* and their girlfriends, according to Blackwood, is the consequence of a knowledge production process arising from their negotiations with modern Indonesian gender discourses influenced by the state, Islamic clerics, and the media. In this light, then, Blackwood demonstrates the lives of the *lesbi* she studies, both *tomboi* and their girlfriends, unsettling global LGBT identity discourse.

Sharyn Graham Davies's rich ethnographic study addresses the traditional norms of gender diversity beyond the heteronormative framework in a Bugis community in South Sulawesi by exploring the life of *calalai* (transgender men), *calabai* (transgender women), and *bissu* (androgynous shamans). She analyses how Buginese gender diversity emerges in dynamic relation to local history, national gender ideologies, and Islamic gender orthodoxy in Indonesia. Through the life experiences of her subjects of study, Davies meticulously discusses the intersections of Islam with Bugis gender diversity while paying close attention to the multiple and often contested categories of gender and sexuality in Indonesia.

In her first chapter, she challenges any assumptions of uniform Islamic heteronormativity by telling the story of a Muslim fashion show for *calabai* returning from the *Hajj* (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca). She uses such anecdotes throughout the book, and as such, Davies demonstrates that Indonesian Islam is not monolithic. Instead, she suggests, it regulates and encourages gender and sexual diversity, thus allowing transgender Buginese to claim Islamic selfhood.

Nonetheless, as Davies observes, Buginese transgenders also struggle to reconcile themselves with Islamic norms on marriage and reproduction, as well as the creative cultural work they engage in as they draw inspiration for their own subjectivities from Islamic discourses on piety, propriety, pleasure, and fate. By citing the 2008 anti-pornography law, which regulates immorality and public

decency, Davies expresses her concern with the rise of conservative movements that want to purify Indonesian Islam. However, she also acknowledges strong local opposition within the Buginese community to such attempts to limit the diversity of Buginese gender and sexuality.

Aside from the three studies above, I also investigate the study of Wijaya (2020), which sheds light on the nature of queer activism from the New Order Regime to the recent ‘moral panic’ period in 2016, and the study of Wieringa (2016), which investigates the life of three categories of women, of whom lesbian is one of the categories, who live their life beyond heteronormativity in Jakarta and Delhi. Together with the study of Boellstorff (2005, 2007), Blackwood (2010), and Davies (2010), they suggest that Islamic gender discourse dictates the construction of gender and sexual identity among non-heterosexual people, which leads to the reproduction of heteronormative relationship model among them. One specific key point that these studies highlight is the social pressure and expectation for heterosexual marriage as the conclusion of all relationships. The state and religious institutions strongly promote this ideality of heterosexual marriage, and it becomes a social pressure imposed on every Indonesian citizen since childhood. In other words, the aforementioned studies indicate that the negative attitudes of the Indonesian populace towards non-conforming gender and sexuality can be attributed to the influence of religion (specifically Islam) and traditional gender beliefs.

While these studies have identified Islam as an important factor in shaping LGBT subjectivities, they have not exhaustively explored the position and role of Muslim organisations in Indonesia’s LGBT discourse. My research seeks to fill this gap. Muslim organisations are the most powerful authority in Indonesia in interpreting Islamic teachings, which many LGBT people use to construct their subjectivities. By looking at Muhammadiyah, my research explores their position in terms of whether they tolerate, accommodate, or suppress discourses on non-normative gender and sexuality.

1.4.4. Studies on ‘LGBT’

In 2022, the online newspaper Kompas published its investigation titled “*LGBT: Diskriminasi, miskonsepsi, dan misinformasi tentangnya dalam makalah komunitas ilmiah Indonesia*” (LGBT: Discrimination, misconceptions, and misinformation in Indonesian scientific community papers) (Utomo, 2022). The researchers gathered their data from scholarly articles uploaded to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's portal, Garuda. Using the keyword ‘LGBT,’ they found a total of 434 articles that were published between 2012 and 2022, of which 145 could be classified as research articles (Utomo, 2022). In general, this investigation sheds light on the misconception and narrative propagated amongst the Indonesian academic community on LGBT. In my research, these two findings become important as I also identify similar misconceptions and narratives among my interlocutors in Muhammadiyah.

The analysis of the 145 papers reveals that many members of the scientific community promoted discrimination and criminalisation of LGBT in their writings. Overall, the analysis reveals that the language employed in those papers was biased. Keywords including “*mencegah LGBT*” (LGBT prevention), “*perilaku seksual menyimpang*” (deviant sexual behaviour), “*perilaku LGBT*” (LGBT behaviour), “*pelaku LGBT*” (LGBT perpetrators) and “*masalah sosial*” (social problems) illustrate the biased normative aspects of those research.

The investigation of Kompas determines at least two grand narratives disseminated through those scholarly papers. The first narrative is the “*lokalisasi hak asasi*” (localisation of rights). This concept is frequently interpreted as an endeavour to adapt the application of human rights to local values. Numerous articles argue that Indonesia is a religious nation with local implementation of human rights. Hence, the United Nations' concept of human rights should not be used to justify the existence of LGBT in the country. The second narrative is positioning LGBT in direct opposition to Pancasila. The prevalent belief among the Indonesian academic community is that Indonesia is a Pancasila-based nation

whose first principle is believing in one God. Hence, being LGBT is unlawful in Indonesia because religion is viewed as prohibiting homosexuality.

Complementing Kompas' analysis, I delved into several writings from the Garuda portal (see, for example, Rahmah, 2018; Andina, 2016; Santoso, 2016) to find misconceptions about the acronym LGBT. In general, the authors of these articles misunderstood the term by confusing identity with behaviour by oversimplifying the subjectivity of LGBT people as mere sexual deviance. Andina (2016) provides an example of this oversimplification. She writes, "when we talk about LGBT, it all boils down to same-sex activity because whatever sexual identity the perpetrators have, they will end up having sexual relations with people of the same sex, not with normal people" (p. 175). In similar vein, Rahmah (2018, p. 6) also employs this oversimplification when she writes "in simpler terms, people who have non-heterosexual sexual orientations and identities such as homosexuals, bisexuals, or others can be referred to as LGBT."

This oversimplification may be the result of inaccurate localisation of English terms. In his book "Living out Islam: voices of gay, lesbian, and transgender Muslims," Kugle (2014) observes that Muslim communities frequently conflate sexual orientation and gender identity by viewing sexual orientation as a matter of gendered behaviour. He argues that such confusion may occur because of limitations in the translation of cross-cultural terminology. Although the terms sexual orientation and gender identity are relatively new, Kugle notes, the behavioural patterns they denote are not. Islamic history recognises at least three categories of gender-ambiguous individuals: *khasi* (the castrated man), *mukhannath* (the effeminate man), and *hijra* (the non-man), notes Kugle. Also present in the Indonesian context is this translational limitation. In Indonesian, the categories gender and sex are represented by the same word, "*jenis kelamin*," and can therefore be interchanged and confused. However, Indonesian cultures also have classifications for gender non-conforming individuals, such as *banci* (a derogatory Indonesian term for transgender women), *wandu* (a Javanese term for transgender women), *waria* (an Indonesian term for transgender women), *calalai* (a Buginese

term for transgender men), *calabai* (a Buginese term for transgender women), and *tomboi* (an Indonesian term for male women).

These cross-cultural translation issues require me to clarify key terms used in my research: gender, sex, sexuality, and sexual orientation. According to Kugle (2014), sexuality refers to one's awareness of sexual desire and the expression of intimacy and pleasure, of which sexual orientation is an essential element. He explains that sexual orientation categorises people according to whom they are sexually attracted. People who are attracted to the same sexes are homosexual, and they can be either gay or lesbian, and those attracted to the opposite sexes are heterosexual. Bisexuals are attracted to both sexes, whereas asexuals are not attracted to either. Meanwhile, Kugle notes that the term transgender is used as a self-identification for individuals who do not conform to the social gender assigned to them because they experience an inner sense of belonging to a different gender. Therefore, transgender refers to a person who transitions from the gender with which they were socialised to the gender with which they identify. If transgender persons modify their physical appearance, hormone balance, or sex organs to match their inner gender identity, they become transsexual, moving from the sex organs with which they were born to the sex organs with which they feel most comfortable because those organs express their gender identity.

Kugle argues that sex, gender, and sexual orientation define significant aspects of an individual's personality but have no bearing on specific actions. Therefore, it should never be presumed that a homosexual person engages in specific sexual acts or any sexual acts at all. For instance, a gay man may never engage in same-sex sexual activity, while a man who engages in same-sex sexual activity need not be a gay man since the sexual activity may be out of compulsion or necessity rather than emotional gratification.

In Indonesia, the misconception of LGBT occurs because not only is the acronym a foreign term that has only recently become recognised in Indonesia, but an open and fair discourse on LGBT is also restricted. Kompas' investigation suggests that scholarly references on LGBT topics are scarce in Indonesia. Hence,

many studies rely on popular books and untrustworthy online sources. Furthermore, Indonesian universities censor and restrict academic freedom to explore LGBT issues from various perspectives. LGBT discussions, for example, were banned at Diponegoro University (Dyantoro, 2015) and cancelled at the Bandung Institute of Technology in 2016 (Saputra, 2016). On top of that, the investigation by Kompas also reveals that in narrating LGBT, religious leaders' perspectives are valued more than those of gender experts themselves. In my research, I further explore this finding where my interlocutors in Muhammadiyah are religious leaders who have credentials in gender issues.

As a foreign term, LGBT is also perceived suspiciously and considered as an embodiment of an external threat from 'the West.' As Boellstorff (2005, p. 9) has noted, in Indonesia, "West should be read as if always within scare quotes." For many Indonesians, the West is not only understood as a mere geographical location but rather as a representation of coercive power for domination. It is associated with colonialism and imperialism. Hartanto (2016, p. 39), for example, expresses such perception when he argues that the advocacy for the LGBT community in Indonesia constitutes a movement to perpetuate Western hegemony over Indonesian socio-culture. Santoso (2016) makes a similar argument that the narrative of human rights to promote equal rights for the LGBT people in Indonesia comes from the ideas of Western modernity, whereas Indonesia has its own cultural values and philosophy of life.

While misconceptions about LGBT in Indonesia confuse identity with behaviour and political movements, stigmatisation of LGBT people continues. In many cases, being labelled as LGBT is enough for individuals to be discriminated against. Recently, activists have been using different nomenclature, such as queer and SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression), to circumvent the negative connotation of LGBT (Wijaya, 2022). However, I must wonder if such a change of expression will improve the situation of people with non-normative gender and sexualities in Indonesia. Because as I see it, nomenclature as foreign and Western as queer and SOGIE would easily invite another distortion of meaning. Nonetheless, I use the term LGBT in this study because it is still the most commonly

used term in Indonesian public discourse, including among my interlocutors. This term refers to the group of persons in Indonesia who are often discriminated against and persecuted because of their non-normative gender expression and sexuality.

1.4.5. Concluding remark

My research attempts to fill the gap in the literature on Muslim organisations' perspectives on non-normative gender and sexuality in Indonesia by exploring Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT discourse. On the one hand, gender studies in Indonesia are increasingly addressing non-normative issues despite the prevalence of heteronormativity in the country. Numerous studies have specifically explored homosexuality and transgender identity along with their socio-political aspects. Most of these studies predominantly use the subject position of homosexuals and transgender people, highlighting how their subjectivities intersect with local culture, state gender ideology, and Islam. On the other hand, studies analysing the position and role of Islam as represented by Indonesian Muslim organisations in non-normative gender and sexuality discourse remain limited.

As one of the most influential Muslim organisations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah's perspective on gender and sexuality has been the subject of numerous studies. However, these studies have primarily been conducted from a heteronormative perspective, reflecting the dominant assumption of gender binarism within the organisation. As such, they have overlooked the discourse of non-normative gender and sexuality. Up to the time of writing, I have been unable to locate any research that specifically explores Muhammadiyah's views in this discourse.

The democratisation of the reform era in Indonesia has revitalised the growth of gender and sexuality studies in the country. These studies examine a variety of topics from a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective standpoint. Nonetheless, as a Muslim-majority country, the entanglement between the state's gender ideology and Islam is a crucial element that accentuates and connects these studies. As stated previously, there are two streams of LGBT-related knowledge production: one that

promotes empathy and compassion and the other that promotes discrimination and criminalisation.

In a conversation with Dédé Oetomo, an esteemed Indonesian gay and human rights activist, Tom Boellstorff (in Bennet and Davies, 2015, p. 312) describes contemporary Indonesia as “a steaming pot with the lid lifted off, and the steam goes every which way,” where conservative voices, progressive voices, and everything else in between competes, making it challenging to identify a linear “push forward.” In this sense, all the gender and sexuality research in Indonesia that I have reviewed is an attempt to reflect and interpret this context. This suggests that new and better questions, rather than the application of ready-made theories, are needed to understand gender and sexuality in Indonesia.

Building on those studies, my research focuses on the perspectives of heterosexual Muslims represented in Muhammadiyah on LGBT and comprehensively analysed the discourse contained therein. In addition, I intend to explore the impact of gender norms derived from the intertwining of the state gender ideology and that of Islam on this perspective, as well as the organisation’s construction of LGBT narratives both externally and internally. In general, my research seeks to contribute to the growing body of empirical gender studies on Muhammadiyah by addressing the previously unexplored topic of LGBT. In a broader sense, my research also seeks to address the complex issues that scholars have debated regarding the relationship between the Indonesian Muslim community and non-normative gender and sexual orientation.

1.5. Methodology

This present study is a qualitative study with an interpretive and constructivist approach. These approaches assume that social reality is not singular or objective, but human experiences actively shape it through languages and actions within specific social contexts. Thus, as researchers, we attempt to document and interpret how social realities are constructed, managed, and sustained. Thus, examining social realities is best conducted by studying the subjective interpretation of its various participants. Schwandt (1998) argues that to understand social realities,

researchers must interpret them. In doing so, he argues that “the inquirers must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors” (p. 222). He further claims that the constructivist and interpretive approaches present the researchers’ constructions of the constructions of meanings they are researching because “to prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings” (p. 222). Meanwhile, Hughes and Sharrock (1997) state that meaning is intersubjectively shared through the ‘stock of knowledge’ with which humans interpret things and actions. The stock of knowledge is a collective tradition learned, lived, and contested by its members. According to Holstein (as cited by Dzuhayatin (2015, p. 29), it is a collection of values, ideology, gender actions, and meanings that are lived and experienced in a particular collectivity, such as communities, religious groups, and even families.

Based on these approaches, this study assumes that knowledge and the meaning of truth concerning the ideas of gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah is a result of construction expressed through languages and actions among its members. Thus, to examine the position of Muhammadiyah in LGBT discourse in Indonesia is to describe the construction of meanings among its members and interpret how those meanings are embodied in their language and actions. As a collective, Muhammadiyah provides a stock of knowledge for its members. It offers a platform for its members to share and exchange meanings, to produce and reproduce norms, values, and ideology, and to construct mutual truths expressed through various symbols and languages and stretched and shaped to fit its intentions and purposeful acts.

1.5.1. Data collection

The present study relies on a set of empirical data and data from written and visual sources. The empirical data is in the form of the opinion of the gender narrative makers in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah. This data was obtained via in-depth guideline-based interviews with selected experts, wherein questions were modified and adapted as necessary to facilitate a more thorough investigation and ensure that

the interview aligned with the requirements of the analysis. The selected experts in this study were the organisation's prominent figures and representatives of the central and regional leadership boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiah, wherein the central leadership board provides policies, and the regional leadership board translates those policies into actions. The individuals chosen for the interview possess valuable expertise and can serve as formative and representative agents within their respective organisations. Their insights and knowledge pertaining to gender and sexuality issues, as well as their practical experience and high-level competence, make them well-suited for this role.

The number of selected experts I interviewed was 14 participants. Five of them were members and former members of the Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid at the central board of Muhammadiyah, with a composition of three men and two women. The two women were also members of the central board of Aisiyiah. All these five participants have published books or academic journals focusing on gender and feminism. The remaining nine participants consisted of two members of the central board of Aisiyiah and seven of the regional boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiah from three different regions, namely Yogyakarta, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi. In the subsequent chapters, I employ the Indonesian honorifics *Bapak/Pak* or *Ibu/Bu* to prefix the names of male and female interlocutors, respectively, when citing or referencing their viewpoints. It should be noted that some of these individuals have chosen to remain anonymous.

I started data collection from the central leadership board before the regional leadership boards. To initiate data collection, I scheduled a meeting with Prof. Dr. Hilman Latief, my colleague at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, who holds an active position on the central leadership board of Muhammadiyah. Following an extensive discussion regarding my research topic, he provided me with invaluable recommendations on whom to interview. Initially, I planned to collect my data from three councils within Muhammadiyah's central leadership board, specifically *Majelis Hukum dan HAM* (the Council of Law and Human Rights), *Majelis Pelayanan Sosial* (the Council of Social Services), and *Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengembangan* (the Research and Development Unit). However, Prof. Dr. Latief

suggested that I should prioritise the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, as it is responsible for the development of Islamic thought within the organisation. Given that my research topic pertains to Islamic ethics, the *majelis* is particularly relevant. Furthermore, he suggested that I extend my reach to Aisyiyah due to its specific emphasis on matters pertaining to gender, sexuality, and family. After considering these suggestions, I revised my research plan to concentrate on data collection from the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah central leadership while also incorporating Aisyiyah's perspective into my study. I was lucky because he also gave me specific names of the individuals to interview.

To gather data from the regional leaderships of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, I have selected three locations: Yogyakarta, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi. These locations represent the varied geographical and cultural backgrounds of the members of the Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah, which could potentially impact their perception of gender and sexual diversity. I conducted interviews with the regional chairpersons and or leaders who possess a thorough understanding of the organisation's programs and initiatives within their respective regions.

The regional boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah of Yogyakarta were chosen due to their proximity to the headquarters of the central board of Muhammadiyah. It is worth noting that the Muhammadiyah movement originated in Yogyakarta and that the city is also home to Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah, the only Islamic boarding school for transgender people in Indonesia. The selection of the regional boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah of Sulawesi Selatan was based on the fact that Makassar, the capital city of South Sulawesi, is the largest city in the eastern part of Indonesia with a solid presence of Muhammadiyah. Moreover, Sulawesi Selatan is also home to the Bugis ethnic community, which has been extensively researched in the context of gender and sexual diversity in Indonesia. The decision to select the regional boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah of East Kalimantan was based on the significant presence of Muhammadiyah in the area. It is worth noting that the largest Muhammadiyah university in Kalimantan is in Samarinda, East Kalimantan.

Table 1. Interlocutors in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah

Name	Organisation	Date	Location
Period I			
Alimatul Qibtiyah	Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah	08.01.2019	Yogyakarta
Ari (pseudonym)	Aisyiyah	07.01.2019	Unspecified
Gita Danupranata	Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	19.12.2018	Yogyakarta
Hikam (pseudonym)	Muhammadiyah	16.01.2019	Unspecified
Susi (pseudonym)	Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah	07.12.2018	Unspecified
Syamsul Anwar	Muhammadiyah	12.12.2018	Yogyakarta
Yunahar Ilyas ⁵	Muhammadiyah	27.12.2018	Yogyakarta
Period II			
Alimatul Qibtiyah	Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah	11.10.2019	Yogyakarta
Akhsan (pseudonym)	Muhammadiyah South Sulawesi	17.10.2019	Unspecified
Atiyatul Ulya	Aisyiyah	05.11.2019	Jakarta
Nurhayati	Aisyiyah South Sulawesi	15.10.2019	Makassar
Nurul (pseudonym)	Aisyiyah East Kalimantan	23.10.2019	Unspecified
Rahmah (pseudonym)	Aisyiyah South Sulawesi	16.10.2019	Unspecified
Sugiyono (pseudonym)	Muhammadiyah East Kalimantan	22.10.2019	Unspecified
Susi (pseudonym)	Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah	18.09.2019	Unspecified
Zulaikha Ajron	Aisyiyah Yogyakarta	07.10.2019	Yogyakarta

In-depth interviews were also conducted with other relevant participants selected beyond the Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah. The purpose of these interviews was to gather insights from human rights activists, scholars working on LGBT issues, and individuals who identify as part of the LGBT community regarding Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT. As part of this endeavour, I conducted interviews with activists and members of the LGBT community residing in Yogyakarta, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi. These individuals include the co-founder of the Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah Yogyakarta and one of its *imams*, as well as a board member of People Like Us Satu Hati (PLUSH), a local organisation

⁵ Pak Yunahar was a Professor of Islamic studies at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta and the Chairman of Muhammadiyah of Tarjih and Tajdid at the time of this interview. He passed away in January 2020.

for equal rights in Yogyakarta. Two staff members from Victory Plus Yogyakarta, an NGO working on HIV/AIDS prevention, and a former staff member from Social Advocacy and Rehabilitation Centre (LARAS) Samarinda, an NGO working on social rehabilitation for individuals who use illicit drugs, were also involved. Moreover, I had the opportunity to interview a former commissioner of Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) in Jakarta, as well as a human rights activist and the founder of Indonesia's gay organisation GAYa Nusantara in Surabaya. I should note that some of these individuals have chosen to remain anonymous.

Table 2. Interlocutors from activists, scholars, and LGBT individuals

Name	Organisation	Date	Location
Period I			
Arif Nuh Safri	Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah	08.01.2019	Yogyakarta
Dilan (Pseudonym)	PLUSH Yogyakarta	20.12.2018	Yogyakarta
Kamala Chandrakirana	Komnas Perempuan (former)	23.01.2019	Jakarta
Shinta Ratri ⁶	Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah	12.12.2018	Yogyakarta
Period II			
Akram (pseudonym)	LGBT individual	16.10.2019	Makassar
Dédé Oetomo	GAYa Nusantara	01.11.2019	Surabaya
Herliati Rahmi	LARAS (former)	23.10.2019	Samarinda
Irfan (pseudonym)	LGBT individual	26.10.2019	Yogyakarta
Jiwo (pseudonym)	Victory Plus Yogyakarta	28.10.2019	Yogyakarta
Kurnia (pseudonym)	LGBT individual	22.10.2019	Samarinda
Yan Michael	Victory Plus Yogyakarta	29.20.2019	Yogyakarta

I carried out in-depth interviews for data collection in two periods. The first period was between October 2018 and January 2019, and the second was between September 2019 and December 2019. During these two periods, I contacted 41 potential participants, and 25 of them were willing to participate in the composition, as detailed above. In the first period, I focused my data collection on Yogyakarta,

⁶ Ibu Shinta Ratri was the co-founder and headmistress of Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah. She passed away in February 2023.

while in the second period, I moved from one city to another. Interviews were primarily conducted in Indonesian, except some respondents in Yogyakarta sometimes used Javanese words to explain something difficult for them to express in the Indonesian language. The guideline-based interviews took between 30 to 90 minutes, with an average duration of about 45 minutes. In addition to the recorded interviews, I also took notes on the interview situation, such as the atmosphere, emotions, and mood of the interviewees, to help me interpret their opinions in a more nuanced way.

There were three different sets of guiding questions for the interviews. First, the interviews with the central board members of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah focused on exploring their perspectives and opinions on the LGBT issue in Indonesia. The interviews with the members of the regional boards of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah focused on exploring whether the discourse at the central board had reached the regions and had concrete effects. Finally, interviews with respondents outside Muhammadiyah focused on exploring the extent to which the discourse within Muhammadiyah had an impact outside the organisation.

Ethnography provides tools to observe and understand the individual's motives and behaviours as well as organisational culture. As a person socialized within Muhammadiyah, I have been observing the organisation for as long as I can remember. I was born into a Muhammadiyah family and spent many years studying in a Muhammadiyah school and university. In researching this topic, however, I have not been able to personally attend key meetings such as the *muktamar* (national congress) of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah or the *musyawarah nasional* (national meeting) of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid due to financial and protocol constraints. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic further hampered field observation due to travel restrictions. Nevertheless, I replaced ethnographic fieldwork with digital ethnography. Kaur-Gill and Dutta (2017, p. 1) define digital ethnography as a research method for answering social questions through observation in digital space. In other words, digital ethnography is a method to represent real life through digital technology features by using text, graphics, video, audio, and digital interactions as empirical data. The Muhammadiyah television channel (tvMU) on

YouTube provides important videos of discussions, interviews, and sermons. In addition, I also observed Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah's Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts.

In-depth interviews and observations constitute the most critical qualitative data of this dissertation. However, supporting data is also collected through a review of written sources. These data include academic publications, official documents (policies, activity reports, public statements), and articles published in the Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah magazines, i.e., Suara Muhammadiyah and Suara Aisyiyah, that focus on LGBT and its related themes such as human rights, equality, social justice, diversity, and sexual ethics.

1.5.2. Analysis

The analysis technique used in this research is inductive analysis. The analysis began by importing the interview recordings into MAXQDA for transcription and coding. The function of this software was to help organise the data. Before coding, the first step was to transcribe the interview verbatim, which was then edited so that the transcription was fluent and easy to read while ensuring that the core message from the respondents was clear. Following the transcription process, the narrative was constructed through a synthesis of the gathered data, informed by the research question and objectives. Once the storyline was established, the coding process began by breaking down the gathered data into smaller, more manageable units before being reconstructed to narrate a coherent story. The creation of the codes was emergent. This means that the codes were concepts, actions, or meanings that emerged from the data (Stuckey, 2015, p. 8), and the construction of the overall story is the result of a progressive process of coding from the collected data (Williams & Moser, 2019, p.46). Therefore, this coding process requires continuous adaptation until the data codes correspond properly to the research question and objectives.

The coding process in this study followed the three steps of the coding process prescribed by Williams and Moser (2019), i.e., open, axial, and selective coding. In the first step, I sifted through my interlocutors' responses to organising similar

words and phrases, concept indicators, into broad initial thematic groups for data assemblage. In this open coding, I identified distinct concepts and themes for categorisation (e.g., gender, sexuality, LGBT, marriage, human rights, heterosexuality, violence, sin, and deviant behaviour). From this step, I then proceeded to axial coding, where I explored the relationships between numerous open codes in order to reduce and subcategorise them to arrive at the core codes. This phase seeks to refine further, align, and classify the themes that emerged in the previous step. At this stage, I also began to triangulate the interview data with other data sources. The third step was selective coding, where I carefully selected and organised data from axial coding categories to establish cohesive and meaning-filled expressions. This stage involved the conceptualisation of the collected data to construct meanings.

The transcripts of the interviews are not published in this manuscript for privacy reasons. They are available on request. From the full interview transcripts, only the selected excerpts that are used as direct quotations in this dissertation are translated into English. Citation and referencing in this study follow the APA referencing style 7th edition.

1.6. Structure of the study

The thesis comprises six chapters. Following the introduction in chapter one, chapter two outlines the theoretical framework employed to examine the case of the study. This chapter begins by exploring Muhammadiyah as a product of the intersection of religious, cultural, and political discourses. This means that all products of Muhammadiyah's social thought, including the organisation's knowledge production on gender and sexuality, must also be examined by considering the intersection of these three discourses. Subsequently, in order to approach Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT in the aftermath of the 2016 controversy, this chapter explores the notion of heteronormativity to investigate the construction of gender norms in Muhammadiyah. Apart from that, the chapter also highlights the analytical concept of toleration to examine the practical dimension of the organisation's position on the LGBT controversy. This analytical concept is

not only helpful in categorising Muhammadiyah's position but also for situating it within the broader discourse of Indonesia's social diversity. Since Muhammadiyah employs the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining right, forbidding evil) as a fundamental guideline in carrying out its *dakwah* mission, this chapter also situates this principle within the discussion of heteronormativity and toleration to facilitate an exploration of how the organisation responds to diversity that goes against its religious beliefs.

Chapter three explores the construction of gender norms in Muhammadiyah. A historical approach is used to examine three key issues: the evolution of Muhammadiyah gender discourse, the position of Muhammadiyah gender discourse in relation to the Indonesian state, and the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in the construction of Muhammadiyah's gender norm. The chapter begins with the historical exploration of Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse in the first subchapter and the investigation of numerous factors that influenced it in the second subchapter. The third subchapter subsequently delineates the evolution of gender discourse within Muhammadiyah following the era of Ahmad Dahlan. By analysing the various social and political transformations in Indonesia, it explores the emergence of three competing gender narrative constructions within the organisation. The fourth subchapter examines the deployment of gender in Muhammadiyah, highlighting that despite the differences in the deployment of gender narratives in Muhammadiyah, they are designed to reinforce heteronormativity by creating proper men and women according to their reproductive roles. The final subchapter then situates LGBT discourse within the construction of heteronormative gender in Muhammadiyah, setting the scene for the following chapters.

Building on the analysis in the previous chapter, chapter four examines the construction of Muhammadiyah's public narrative on LGBT. The chapter begins by highlighting discrimination against minorities in Indonesia, which includes gender and sexual minorities. The following subchapter describes the sexual moral panic of 2016, which was characterised by a dramatic increase in stigma, violence, and discrimination against the LGBT community. The third subchapter presents the

grand narrative in Indonesia's LGBT discourse that portrays the LGBT community as being in opposition to Islam, Indonesia, and public health. Although not on such a large scale, an alternative perspective that counters the grand narrative is also emerging and discussed in the fourth subchapter. Subchapter five presents a comparative analysis of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT with that of NU and MUI, followed by a comprehensive investigation of Muhammadiyah's ambivalent position on LGBT and its practices in the next two subchapters. The last subchapter examines the role of Islam as a moral standard in Indonesia and how it inspires the public perception of LGBT in Indonesia.

Chapter five explores the debate in the LGBT discourse by investigating two main points. First, it explores the perspectives and opinions among Muhammadiyah's and Aisyiyah's prominent figures on LGBT. Second, it explores the response from human rights activists and individual members of the LGBT community on the discourse taking place in Muhammadiyah. The chapter begins by examining the most fundamental discourse within Muhammadiyah that juxtaposes LGBT with Islam. The following subchapter then examines the construction of a complementary discourse within Muhammadiyah that situates LGBT within the cultural and political discourse. A fundamental perspective circulating within Muhammadiyah emphasises that although same-sex relationships and transgender expression are considered wrong, violence should not be used against LGBT people. This perspective is discussed in subchapter three. The next subchapter presents the perspective of human rights activists and the representation of the LGBT community in the discourse constructed by Muhammadiyah. The final subchapter wraps up the chapter by highlighting that the juxtaposition of LGBT with Muhammadiyah's *dakwah* principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* has transformed LGBT as a challenge to social diversity in Indonesia.

The final chapter presents the conclusion of this study. It summarises Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT discourse in the aftermath of the 2016 controversy. It shows that Muhammadiyah's position projects an ambiguity between tolerance and intolerance at the same time. This ambiguity can be traced back to two main factors, i.e., belief in the traditional gender system and Islam. In particular,

the interpretations of Islamic values have become the source of inspiration for the ambiguity of Muhammadiyah's position. On the one hand, it justifies the rejection of same-sex relationships and transgender expressions, but on the other, it also justifies the perspective that LGBT people should be treated with dignity. However, in Muhammadiyah's public discourse, this ambiguity is lost when unofficial opinions from prominent figures dominate its public discourse and signal a loud and clear perspective of intolerance.

“Part of pluralism is measured by openness to engage sources of compassion and wisdom, no matter where they originate.”

(Safi, 2003, p. 14)

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

Muhammadiyah is an organisation that follows, to use Rubin’s (1975) phrase, the sex/gender system. This phrase refers to the interconnections between sexed bodies (in the sense of biological attributes) and gender (in the sense of social attributes). The sex/gender system is evident in the organisational structure of the association, which is predicated upon the segregation of men and women. Muhammadiyah, which is generally perceived as an organisation for men, has a subsidiary organisation known as Aisyiyah that caters specifically to women. In addition, Muhammadiyah comprises other gender-specific autonomous organisations, such as the Pemuda Muhammadiyah, designated for young men, and Nasyyatul Aisyiyah, for young women.

Apart from the organisational structure, the sex/gender system can also be observed to some extent in the programming divisions of the association. Aisyiyah frequently manages programs pertaining to children and family by, for instance, spearheading one of the organisation’s major programs, the *keluarga sakinah*, which seeks to empower families bound by legal heterosexual marriage to reach

their potential based on equality, justice, and affection.⁷ The sex/gender system also shapes the gender discourse within organisations, wherein prevailing gender discussions and narratives centre around power dynamics between men and women that are rooted in reproductive functions. This includes the exercise of male and female authority in domains such as religion, family, organisations, and politics. Consequently, gender-related matters that fall beyond the scope of this conventional framework are omitted from productive discussions within organisations.

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that draws on the insights of Islamic studies, queer studies, and political studies to investigate the subject matter at hand. Given that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organisation, I believe it is necessary to engage in theoretical analysis of the religious discourse produced by Islamic studies in order to examine Muhammadiyah's perspective on gender and sexuality. In addition, as the central issue under investigation pertains to the discourse on non-normative gender and sexuality, it is my contention that an appropriate analytical framework can be derived from the intersection of queer studies and Islamic studies. This amalgamation will additionally facilitate my ability to apprehend and scrutinise the perspective of Muhammadiyah in addressing societal circumstances pertaining to non-conforming gender and sexuality. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah, being a prominent Islamic organisation in Indonesia, exerts significant influence on the political landscape of the country. Thus, in order to examine the dynamics of internal discourse and how Muhammadiyah projects this discourse to the public, ideas from political studies will provide me with a framework for examining Muhammadiyah's efforts in fulfilling its organisational mission. Finally, I believe this interdisciplinary approach is appropriate because gender and sexuality are cross-cutting issues. Therefore, it is not only an issue of religion but also an issue of politics and culture.

⁷ This definition of program *keluarga sakinah* is based on the interview between Lutfi Effendi from Suara Muhammadiyah with the Head of Aisyiyah's Central Leadership Board Shoimah Kastolani. The interview is published on Suara Muhammadiyah (2020).

2.1. Religion, culture, and politics

Religion is a fundamental aspect of human life. It has been present and deeply internalised by human civilisations for thousands of years, so deep that “religion entwined with the basic dynamics of men and women, states and nations” (Hehir, 2012, p.15). It is, then, almost impossible to isolate religion as an entity separated from culture (Schmidt in Schreiber, 2015, p. 36). Religion, being an integral aspect of human societies, assumes a complex role that encompasses both inclusion and exclusion, as well as liberation and domination. History has witnessed that religions have been a source of peace and fraternity, but at the same time, they provide boundaries that define otherness, sow divisions, and foster conflicts. Religion has fostered colonisation and domination, but it has also become a driving force in the fight for freedom. Hehir (2012, p. 15) writes that the role of religion has never been one-dimensional in the sense that “religious beliefs and convictions have moved societies to cooperate and to collide.”

Despite its inherent presence in the human experience, the definition of religion remains a highly contested subject. While some scholars may have generally argued that religion can be seen as a divine instrument used by humankind to understand the world (Effendy, 2003, p. 3), up until today, there is still no universally accepted definition capable of describing its complexities. Consequently, the scholarly discourse has shown a continued interest in debates surrounding the conceptualisation of religion. One of the renowned and contested definitions of religion, for example, comes from Clifford Geertz, who defines religion as:

(i) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of actuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz, 2017, p. 103)

Geertz’s definition of religion was informed by his anthropological research on religious communities in Indonesia, as well as his engagement with Max Weber’s problem of meaning. He posits that the study of religion involves interpretive

analysis in the search for meaning. He writes, “believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be, therefore (...) an interpretive one in search of meaning” (p. 16).

Although both scholars believe that religion exists to provide the meaning of human experiences, they have different emphases. For Weber (1993), rational religions must explain and justify human experiences, particularly those of suffering and death. Whereas, for Geertz, every religion, whether rational or not, must only explain human experiences (see also Segal, 1999). Both scholars also disagree regarding the relationship between religion and culture. While Weber only aims at describing religion’s influence on individuals’ behaviour in society, Geertz aims to develop a cultural theory. This difference is then reflected in their different views toward religions. For Geertz, religion serves the same functions as culture because religion is a cultural system. In contrast, Weber considers religion as only a facet of culture, which, despite having a significant impact on the lives of individuals in society, remains a concept independent from culture.

Besides Weber, Geertz’s understanding of religion is often juxtaposed with that of Emilé Durkheim. However, the two scholars exhibit contrasting methodologies in their approach to the matter. Durkheim (2008) focused on society as a whole rather than individuals’ motivation and actions within that said society. Thus, in terms of religion, he was more concerned about what religion does to society. Meanwhile, Geertz (2017), and also Weber (1993), was more concerned about what religion does for individuals (see also Segal, 1988). Durkheim argues that to make sense of life is not the need of individuals, but it is the need of society to inculcate its collective meaning in its individual members. For Durkheim, individuals are very much dependent on society as it provides not only religion but also morality, language, tools, ideas, and concepts (p. 159). He believes that religion is essentially a social institution functioning as a means of socialisation. It generates a sense of collective consciousness to which the loyalty of individuals to their society is bound and united. It is somewhat different from Geertz’s ideas, which consider that individuals’ need to make sense of lives is innate. To satisfy this need

is the role of religion by providing a comprehensive explanation of the world and a way of life. Although Geertz shares Durkheim's argument that religion is a social product, he believes that individuals are more independent of society because the need to make sense of lives is on individuals. In contrast, however, Durkheim went further by theorising that religion is not only created by society, but it is the manifestation of the power of the society over the individual that is being sacred and worshipped. Thus, Durkheim argues that to be loyal to God is to be loyal to society.

Geertz's theorisation of religion strongly influenced the study of religion in the 20th century. It does not, however, circulate without disapproval. In a scathing criticism, for example, Talal Asad attacked the dualism of Geertz's theorisation of religion that separates external symbol and internal disposition. Asad (1983) argues that the conceptualisation of symbols, which Geertz ties into something extrinsic to the individual, is problematic because it reduces symbols into mere "meaning-carrying objects external to social conditions and mental states" (p. 241), which then inspire a set of distinctive dispositions to the worshipers. However, as pointed out by Asad, Geertz did not provide any bridge to connect these two elements. Instead of trying to confine the meaning of religion into a set of external symbols, Asad calls for a bigger picture, arguing that "religious 'symbols' (...) cannot be understood independently of their relations with non-religious 'symbols' or of their articulation of social life in whose work and power are always crucial" (p. 251). In other words, Asad suggests that social and political institutions also play essential roles in shaping religious symbols and dispositions. Moreover, he argues that certain historical conditions, such as movements, classes, and ideologies, create particular religious practices and discourse. Thus, a universal definition of religion may be counterproductive as those historical conditions constantly shift.

Asad's proposition of intertwining religion and historical conditions presents an additional criticism of Geertz's definition. He argues that not only is Geertz's definition of religion too simple, but in formulating the definition, Geertz used a particular historical perspective of the power struggle within the European Christian society. Such a particular perspective, for Asad, risks marginalising other 'religions'

that do not share historical experiences with Western Christianity. This criticism resonates with Edward Said's orientalism, a framework used by the European colonial powers to understand the life of the people of their distant colonies in the East. For Said (2019), orientalism is a system of self-projection where the East provides a portrayal for the West to establish its superiority and simultaneously justifies its domination. Said argues that while this framework may be helpful for the West to make sense of the life of the East, it draws a line by putting the unfamiliar East into a confined category that is inferior, savage, irrational, backward, and frightening. To use this framework, as suggested by Said, is to perpetuate stereotypes and fears of others and the unfamiliar. Therefore, Asad insists that applying Western ideas of religion to understand the religions of non-Western societies is not only inapplicable but also potentially misleading. In this context, then, we can also borrow a term from Kaplan (1997), 'the imperial gaze', where observing social realities in formerly colonised countries through the lens of a Western set of values risks trivialising and subjugating the lived experiences of the observed.

While Asad was against the idea of a universal definition of religion, the current situation is, I believe, quite the opposite. According to Roy (2013), we are currently witnessing a reality where the understanding of religion is becoming universal. He draws this claim from the case of the worldwide spread of Islam and Christianity that drove the growth of the religious market. Roy argues that globalisation and technological advancements, such as the internet and social media, have eroded the traditional links between a specific religion and its locality. Instead, the understanding of religion becomes universalised, and its practices become standardised. In other words, religion separates itself from its local culture. Roy writes, "globalization standardizes and formats religion; it results in religions being pigeonholed according to common categories imposed on their follower" (pp. 25-26). The standardisation and formatting of religion, according to Roy, is reinforced by the State through legislation that either consolidates a religious monopoly or guarantees religious freedom, in which such legislation often defines religion merely based on its form, that is, transcendence, revelation, and faith (p. 25).

Despite the difficulty in conceptualising the complexity of religion, it is still necessary to have a definition, as social science is about conceptualisation. The following broad characterisation offered by Jack D. Eller (as quoted in Schreiber 2015, p. 37) may provide this present study with the necessary description despite the contestation: “Every religion makes a (more or less integrated) system of claims about the “supernatural” world and its relationship with the natural, human, and societal worlds.” While I agree with Asad’s criticism of Geertz, I also resonate with Roy’s argumentation about the effect of globalisation on the understanding and practices of religion. I view that the growing interaction and integration of the global community leads to the increasing interdependence of the world’s culture and population. Globalisation, thus, blurs the boundaries of locality and standardises the religious experiences of its people.

Like religion, culture is also a contentious scholarly concept subject to debate. For example, Hecker and Johansen (2017) highlight the ‘confusion about culture’ by pointing to the problems surrounding the interchangeable usage of the term to classify humankind based on ethnicity, nationality, and or religion with the term to describe art. To clarify such confusion, one may refer to Said’s (1994) thoughts on culture, which posit that culture can be approached from two perspectives: one that considers culture as “practices that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic form, one of whose principal aims is pleasure” (p. xii), and the other that considers culture as “a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought” (p. xiii). For Said, the perspective that considers culture as a refining and elevating element in society also views culture as a source of identity that differentiates ‘us from them.’ In this sense, culture serves as a means of empowerment to resist foreign influences by establishing rigorous standards of intellectual and moral behaviour. According to Said, however, this perspective of culture has produced an attitude that opposes liberal philosophies, i.e., multiculturalism and hybridism, and often leads to religious and nationalist fundamentalism in the formerly colonised world. Moreover, he argues that perceiving culture in this sense leads to chauvinist thinking that divorces people from the everyday world.

Said's understanding of culture is also shared by Hecker and Johansen (2017), who argue that culture is something dynamic and fragmented because it is "closely linked to communication, the crafting of practices, the ritualization of community life, and the institutionalization of normative orders as well as the resistance towards them" (p. 11). In this sense, according to Hecker and Johansen, culture is a domain that is closely related to the questions of power and domination because "culture represents a terrain of political and ideological struggle in which social conventions, norms, and values are constantly being contested and (re)negotiated" (p. 11). The preservation and perpetuation of cultural traditions is, therefore, frequently invoked as an excuse to resist external influences deemed harmful.

If the definitions of religion and culture are already contentious, then the relationship between the two is an even more complicated and controversial topic. Drawing from a broad scholarly discussion, Hecker and Johansen (2017) outline how culture is often muddled with religion. They, for example, dismiss Samuel Huntington's and von Grunebaum's claims on the notion that religion constitutes cultural entities that set the rules of life and determine human behaviour in all spheres of the social world, on a personal and communal level. As pointed out by Hecker and Johansen, these claims have created and perpetuated cultural classification, such as the classification of Western culture vs. Islamic culture, that is prone to ideological abuse. In this sense, the attempts to conceptualise the ties between religion and culture hold political motivation and consequences.

So, how does religion interact with culture? Roy (2013) gives several explanations to shed some light on this issue. He identifies four relations between religion and culture by defining culture as "the production of symbolic systems, imaginative representations, and institutions specific to a society" (p. 26). He writes:

Religion deculturates when it attempts to eradicate paganism; it acculturates when it adapts to the mainstream culture; it inculturates when it tries to establish itself at the centre of a given culture; and it exculturates when it thinks of itself as standing back from a mainstream culture of which it was part, but which suddenly or gradually took on a

negative, “pagan,” or irreligious -and therefore destructive- aspect.
(Roy, 2013. p. 33)

Furthermore, according to Roy, religion may become quasi-ethnic because religion may manufacture specific cultures that could be associated and identified with particular communities. In such cases, religion can go so far as to lose its substantial dimension and be reduced to its external appearance to be a mere identity maker.

The interplay between religion, politics, and culture has been a significant topic throughout human history that connects human communities into a global network. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the comprehension of this interplay is currently predominantly influenced by Western sources. By referring to Said's concept of orientalism, my aim is to circumvent the potential pitfalls of a Western-centric perspective when examining the social landscape of Indonesia. Yet, Said also observes that in formerly colonised countries, there exists a proclivity towards religious and nationalist fundamentalism that impedes their receptiveness toward liberal philosophies of multiculturalism and pluralism, as such concepts are frequently regarded as Western constructs of thought.

Undoubtedly, colonialism has left destructive legacies for the intercultural dynamics between the West and their former colonies. A profound lack of trust between the two has created apprehension: the West feels the need to protect itself from the infiltration of the unruly East constantly; meanwhile, the East feels the need to resist the hegemony of the immoral West. Accordingly, I believe it is essential to consider these biases when analysing non-normative gender and sexuality because this issue has intricately and intertwined historical backgrounds involving sharp differences that are often used as a representation of the tension between the West and the East. By illustrating discussions and contestations regarding the interpretation and interconnection of religion, culture, and politics, my objective is to establish a theoretical framework that provides circumspection.

2.1.1. The nexus of religion, politics, and culture in the Indonesian context

Indonesia acknowledges religious plurality, albeit within the confines of recognising only six traditions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism,

Buddhism, and Confucianism. According to the recent data presented on the Indonesian government portal, the percentage of the Muslim population in Indonesia is 87.2% of the total population of 272.23 million. In comparison, the percentage of other religions is Protestantism 6.9%, Catholicism 2.9%, Hinduism 1.7%, Buddhism 0.7%, and Confucianism 0.05%; meanwhile, the percentage of indigenous beliefs is not recorded.⁸ Due to the predominantly Muslim population in Indonesia, it becomes straightforward to associate Indonesia with Islam. In this light, while acknowledging the presence and contributions of other religious communities to Indonesia's progress, I will concentrate solely on Islam to exemplify this nexus of religion, culture, and politics.

Islam's relationship with culture and politics has been a salient and contentious topic in Indonesia since its colonial era up to the present time. It permeates the political and cultural landscape with a robust presence in the media (van Wichelsen, 2010). In many ways, Islam manufactures and shapes social life, becoming a source of national identity and belonging among Indonesian people. Not only are Islamic religious practices and symbols such as *adzan* (call for prayer), Quran recital, and *hijab* (Islamic dress code for women) immensely present in daily life across the country, but the social norms from a simple greeting in meetings to sexuality and marriage are also profoundly linked to Islam. Such a situation was possible to emerge because of the belief in Islam's characteristic of being omnipresence, meaning Islam shall provide "the right moral attitude for human actions" wherever it is (Effendy, 2003, p. 3).

The discussions on Islam, politics, and culture are often linked to and measured against the pursuit of a liberal and democratic society in the country (Hefner, 2019 & 2021; Burhanuddin & van Dijk, 2013; Menchik, 2016 & 2019; Bourchier, 2019; Hadiz, 2016 & 2017; Amal 2020; van Bruinessen; 2008 & 2013). From this perspective, the nexus of religion, culture, and politics in Indonesia is not a story of linear transitions but progress and regress. To illustrate these transitions, I focus on the development of political Islam, particularly in Java, which may be

⁸ The data was acquired on 5 November 2021 from <https://indonesia.go.id/profil/agama>

divided into four periods: the consolidation of Islamic movements during the colonial period, the ideological struggle for the new republic against the nationalists in early independence, the suppression of political Islam during the New Order, and the return of political Islam after the 1998 political reform.

During colonisation, Islam was an essential factor in the struggle of Indonesia (East Indies) for emancipation and liberation from colonial rule. Ali (2016, pp. 3-4) identified that this struggle was centred around adopting modernity. If the term modern is associated with qualities such as innovation, dynamism, openness in conscience and technology (see also Hodgson, 1977; Cooper 2005), Ali argues that such qualities were not new to the Southeast Asian cultures nor were they to Islam, thanks to international trade and trans-ethnic movements. However, as pointed out by Ali, European colonialism from the late 19th century onward has defined modernity according to European standards heavily influenced by Christianity. This European modernity was manifested in administration, politics, law, education, trade, economy, and others, making it the sole indicator of progress and often understood as uniquely originating from the West.

According to Burhani (2016a), modernisation (Westernisation), particularly in Java, was a strategy by the Dutch government to maintain its colonial rule. Islam was already widespread in Java and well acculturated with the local culture, forming syncretised beliefs (often called *kebatinan*), yet at the same time providing a fertile ground for the emergence of a political Islam that led to various resistances in Java. Upon realising this situation, the Dutch government applied a strategy to weaken those resistances by alienating the Javanese from Islam. The strategy to disassociate Islam from Javanese culture would then lead to the trichotomy of Javanese society into *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi*, popularised by Geertz (1976) in his book “The religion of Java” (Burhani, 2016a, p. 24). In addition to conflicting Islam with Javanese customs, the modernisation of local affairs such as bureaucracy, education, and legal system further served the Dutch a strategy to maintain their power in Java. Nevertheless, modernisation did not work one way because the same modernisation carried out by the Dutch inspired the emergence of organised Muslim movements.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the influence of the Dutch modernisation project in local affairs was getting more robust thanks to the implementation of ethical policy.⁹ The increasing number of young people who received a Western education, coupled with the influence of Islamic reform from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, had encouraged the emergence of various Islamic movements. Deliar Noer divided these movements based on their strategy (the educational-social movements and political movements) and characteristics (the modernist movements and the traditionalist movements) (Noer, 1973). According to Noer, the modernist movements sought to purify Islamic teachings from the influence of the religious practices of local culture. In doing so, they synthesised the methods and techniques from the Dutch colonial government and Christian missionaries.

During the colonial period, advancing the lives of the native people could primarily be achieved by collaborating with the colonial government. Thus, the relation between the modern Islamic movements and the colonial government was not always confrontational, and often, the relationship was characterised by coexistence and collaboration (Ali, 2016). However, clashes also frequently happened, particularly on the question of the Christian missionary. Because colonialisation was often linked to Christianity, the emergence of these Islamic movements was also to counteract the Christianisation of the native communities. Despite the collaboration in some respects, Western colonial modernisation tended to destroy Islam and local customs, and colonial education tended to eliminate native history and culture (Ali, 2016; Said, 1994).

Meanwhile, as Noer (1973) explained, the traditionalist movement emerged as a reaction to the modernist movements. The traditionalists sought to maintain the authority of the past's religious teachings and to protect the practices of local

⁹ Ethical policy was “aimed at promoting the welfare of the indigenous Indonesians (Javanese). Toward the end of the 19th century, leaders of the ethical movement argued that the Netherlands had acquired huge revenues from Indonesians by means of compulsory labour under the *Cultuurstelsel*, or Culture System, and that the time had come for the Dutch to pay “the debt of honour” to the Indonesian people by promoting reforms in education and agriculture and by decentralizing the Indies administration, providing more autonomy for Indonesian officials. This policy led to the development of a Dutch school system in the Indies and a further penetration of the Western economic system in the rural areas.” (Britannica, 2022)

customs from the intrusion of the puritans. In the beginning, the traditionalists were wary of adopting the methods and techniques brought by the colonial government because they saw them as heretics. The traditionalists believed that modern methods and techniques, such as in education and administration, were Christian ways of organising life.

Within the framework of modernist and traditionalist Islam during the colonial era, two Islamic organisations were founded: Muhammadiyah as the modernist and NU as the traditionalist. In this sense, I argue that the contestation between the modernist and traditionalist, to use Roy's (2013) phrase, is a showcase of acculturation versus exculturation. Even though the modernists and traditionalists interpreted 'progress' and 'modern' differently, they both shared the same goal, and they sought to emancipate their community from the Dutch colonial government, ensuring the dignity of the natives by improving their lives, especially in the areas of education, health, and social welfare.

These Islamic movements' dynamic continued to influence Indonesia's development after colonial times. In addition to the competition between the modernist and traditionalist Muslims, there was another group in the equation during the colonial period: the nationalists. They are a group that, according to Noer (1973, p. 216), consisted of "the 'emancipated' Indonesians who were generally Muslims but adopted a neutral, indifferent, or even hostile attitude towards Islam in their struggle for independence." The competition between the Islamicists and the nationalists grew stronger during the post-independence period, especially in the contestation in forming the State. This contestation is summed up in the formulation of Pancasila as the State's foundational philosophy.¹⁰ Because of the

¹⁰ As suggested by its name, comprised of two old Javanese words derived from Sanskrit '*panca*' and '*sila*' meaning five principles, Pancasila contains of five principles. Those principles are: 1. Belief in one God; 2. Just and civilized humanity; 3. The unity of Indonesia; 4. Democracy under the wise guidance of representative consultations; 5. Social justice for all the people of Indonesia. Pancasila was officially agreed as the foundational philosophy of the State through the Jakarta Charter which was formulated by the BPUPKI (Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) on 22 June 1945. The first principle of Pancasila in the Jakarta Charter, however, was quite different than the first principle of Pancasila as we know today. The difference was on the 'seven words' that was specifically intended for Indonesian Muslims: *Ketuhanan 'dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya'* (the believe in God 'with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents'). Due to the objection of the

dominant role of Muslims in the independence struggle, the Islamic leaders felt that Indonesia should be an Islamic state or at least Islam should be privileged as the dominant religion of the State. On the other hand, the nationalists insisted that Indonesia should be secular or at least ensure equal rights to all religions.

Pancasila sums up moral values broadly shared by the country's numerous cultural traditions into five principles (van Bruinessen, 2018, p. 5). It holds Indonesia's political virtues of being an intensely religious and heterogenous society (Stepan, 2010, p. 29). Pancasila listed the belief in God as one of its principles, yet it does not refer to any specific religion. This principle became a highly debated point between the Islamicists and the nationalists. While the Islamicists accepted Pancasila, they wished to add a few words, entailing the obligation for Muslims to live following Islamic law (*shariah*). After heavy discouragement from the nationalists and objection from the Christian groups, the Islamicists refrained from pressing for their demands. However, since the ratification of the Indonesian Constitution in 1945, Pancasila's principle on the belief in God has been the source of considerable political controversy between nationalists and Islamicists until today. In this vein, we can view Pancasila as a compromise that resulted from the ideological struggles at the early stage of Indonesian independence in 1945. Although throughout the history of Indonesia, Pancasila has become a political tool used differently by each political interest, it plays a vital role as a unifying identity for Indonesia.

Among the Indonesian Islamicists, the elimination of the reference to Islamic law, the so-called seven words, in Pancasila marked the beginning of the split of

nationalist groups from eastern Indonesia, who would prefer to establish their own state if those seven words were not omitted, those "seven words" were eventually removed from the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution 1945. The PPKI (the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence), the body tasked with ratifying the 1945 Constitution, removed those seven words on 18 August 1945, a day after Indonesian independence was declared. Since then, the first principle was simply reads '*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*' (belief in one God). This principle indicates that Indonesia does not favour any particular religion in its political affairs. However, this principle also sparks a scholarly discussion with scholars claimed that Indonesia, according to Western standard, does not qualify as a secular state (Morfit, 1981), while some other argues that Indonesia can be categorised a secular state (Stepan, 2010).

political Islam into moderate and radical groups (Nubowo, 2015). While the moderates could finally accept the removal of the seven words, the radicals still harbour deep dissatisfaction. In the post-independence period, the radical group continued its effort to establish an Islamic state through the political struggle of the Masyumi Party, whose membership consisted mainly of followers of NU and Muhammadiyah. However, due to sharp disagreement with the modernist stream in Masyumi, NU decided to secede in 1952 and form its own political party (Fealy, 2009). Following the ideas of Western liberal democracy, Masyumi became a solid opposition to the increasingly authoritarian government of Soekarno. In the mid-1950s, the PRRI/Permesta¹¹ rebellion occurred in Sumatra and Sulawesi, which involved many elite members of the Masyumi. Sukarno took advantage of this event by disbanding Masyumi and imprisoning its leaders.

After Soeharto took over the presidency from Soekarno in 1966, the New Order regime began. Former members of Masyumi used this regime change to try to rehabilitate the political party by approaching the new president. However, not only did these efforts fail, but they also received a heavy blow. Fearing political Islam would bring instability to his presidency, Soeharto strictly prohibited Islamic political movements. In 1985, he took a political step to control the political Islam movements by implementing Pancasila as the single principle (*asas tunggal*), which required Pancasila as the sole foundation of every social organisation and political party.

Masyumi's goal had always been the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia. To reach this goal, the former members of Masyumi changed their strategy from a political approach through political parties to a socio-cultural

¹¹ Although frequently referred to PRRI/Permesta, they were two different movements. PRRI (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* / the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) was set up in 1958 in Sumatra. While Permesta (*Piagam Perjuangan Semesta* / the Universal Struggle Charter) was born in South Sulawesi in 1957. In February 1958, Permesta joined forces with the PRRI. The PRRI/Permesta rebellion happened due to multiple reasons including the dissatisfaction with the central government that was hampering the local economies and the animosity towards Javanese ethnic group who dominated the central government (source: Wikipedia).

approach. In 1967, Muhammad Natsir, the former leader of Mayumi, founded DDII to further Islamise Indonesian Muslims. On this strategy change, van Bruinessen (2008, pp. 3-4) notes that as long as Islamising the state was not possible, they would attempt to further Islamise the country's Muslim population through *dakwah*, which includes a purification of Islam from influences of local cultures. In close collaboration with the Middle Eastern Islamist movements, DDII became the gateway for various radical Islamic groups to enter Indonesia in the 1980s (Nubowo, 2015).

The tight control over political Islam during Soeharto's presidency may have significantly shaped the image of 'Islam with a smiling face' in Indonesia (Azra, 2006). It supported the growth of moderate Islam that is embracing Pancasila, favouring harmonious and equal relations with the country's non-Muslim minorities while rejecting the idea of an Islamic state. However, behind this smiling face, some terrible realities were hidden, notably the mass killings of alleged communists during 1965–1966 orchestrated by Soeharto's military with the involvement of Muslim organisations in the execution, a subversive fundamentalist Islamic thought and activism, and a broad fear of Christianisation within Muslim communities (van Bruinessen, 2013, pp. 2-3). Moreover, under Soeharto's presidency, harmonious and equal relationships were nurtured only among the recognised religions, while hundreds of indigenous beliefs and atheism were banned (Hefner, 2021, p. 3).

Corresponding to the first principle of Pancasila, Indonesia enacted a legislative product that reinforces what Roy (2013) terms 'standardisation and formatting of religion.' Under Soekarno's presidency, the enactment of the Presidential Decree Number 01/1965 concerning the Prevention of Religion Abuse and Blasphemy had set the country to limit its acknowledgement of religions to only six religions: Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucian. The presidential decree was aimed to control the *kebatinan* (indigenous beliefs) on the political assumption that it is not a religion deserving institutional protection but "a source of social disorder, national disintegration and religious 'confusion' in society" (Ismatu Ropi in Hefner, 2021, p.10). The decree gained much support from Muslim leaders due to their fear of *kebatinan* (indigenous beliefs) that

might derail the Islamisation of the country's diverse populace (Hefner, 2021, p. 11). This fear was not unjustified as the *kebatinan* tried to advance the narrative that the first principle of Pancasila was inspired by *kebatinan* as the original religion of Indonesia and not Islam, which was imported from Arabia (Raillon, 2011; Mutaqin, 2014, p. 9; Hefner, 2021, p.10).

Under Soeharto's presidency, the aforementioned presidential decree was elevated to become a law with the issuance of Law Number 05/1969 concerning the Statements of Various Presidential Decrees as Law. This blasphemy law thus became "a legal foundation for the defence of what the mainstream Muslim community regarded as religious orthodoxy and the prosecution of all deemed heterodox" (Hefner, 2021, p. 12). With the regulation, the government defined and standardised what was considered a religion or not, categorised it as part of the state-building policy, and tied it with the citizenship status regarding the eligibility for legal and societal protections (Hefner, 2021; Bowen, 2005). The enactment of the blasphemy law excluded those who embraced indigenous beliefs and faiths socially, politically, and culturally.¹²

While the blasphemy law enabled state persecution or criminalisation of religious minorities under the pretence of religious blasphemy, the regulation served a greater purpose. Hefner (2021, p.12) argues that the blasphemy law controls "the way both government and society in Indonesia imagine, regulate, and practice religion." In short, while the new order restricted political Islam, which may have helped the moderate and progressive voices to dominate the Islamic discourse in Indonesia, at the same time, it helped Islam orthodoxy to thrive.

The reform that ousted Soeharto's presidency in 1998 brought renewed freedom for political Islam. President Habibie's political liberalisation caused a wave of 'political euphoria' with the emergence of more than forty Islamic parties in the 1999 general election. Nevertheless, these Islamic parties failed to gain

¹² For instance, religion is an item declared on the Indonesian ID card. Without embracing, or at least professing to embrace, one of the six religions, citizens may not acquire their ID card. Consequently, they are barred from participating in governmental programs. Many Indonesians who follow indigenous beliefs and faiths are forced to choose and convert to one of those officially recognised religions.

popularity (Azra, 2006, p.18). In addition to the failure of those Islamic political parties, two efforts in the parliament to reinstate the reference to the Islamic State into the Constitution in 2001 and 2002 also failed (van Bruinessen, 2013; Hefner, 2021; Hosen, 2007). Besides facing a broad-based party coalition, the effort to amend the constitution faced fierce and decisive opposition from the leadership of the Muhammadiyah and NU (Hefner, 2021, p. 15). However, along with this renewed freedom came also an unpleasant reality: an Islamic fundamentalism that worked in a different new way. On the extreme way, although only temporary, religious-based conflicts, jihad movements, and terrorist attacks captured Indonesia's headline news for several years. However, on the more elusive way with a long-lasting impact was the growing and resurfacing of the undercurrent fundamentalist Islamic thought and activism suppressed during the New Order.

By 2005, the progressive voices were losing their defining power to the conservatives and fundamentalists in dominating the discourse, a situation termed by van Bruinessen (2013) as the 'conservative turn.' Several controversial *fatwas* were issued by the MUI (Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars), of which one of the *fatwas* declared secularism, pluralism, and religious liberalism incompatible with Islam, according to van Bruinessen (2013, p. 3), the most evident hint of the conservative turn. The cause of this turn to Islamic conservatism cannot only be attributed to the change in the power balance after the reform but also a mix of numerous factors, including political crisis, social injustice, and economic inequality (Amal, 2020; Hadiz, 2016 & 2017). Thus, conservatism did not only emerge from transnational Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Indonesian chapter of Hizbut Tahrir but increasingly so from within Muhammadiyah and NU, reducing their importance in defining a moderate mainstream (van Bruinessen, 2013). By 2016, Islamic populism gained its track and materialised into a massive movement called the 212 movements. It successfully pressured the Indonesian justice system to imprison the governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, utilising the blasphemy law. The increasing of Islamic conservatism and populism, according to Hadiz (2016), is a descent into illiberalism, detrimental to Indonesian democracy, particularly to the protection of the rights of minorities and of the vulnerable, because it promotes a narrow

interpretation of Islamic morality and exclusionary positions on issues in the public sphere (Hadiz, 2016, p. 327).

From the illustration above, at some point, it is challenging to differentiate religion, politics, and culture as they intersect and influence each other. Asad (1983) is correct that the definition of religion depends on the political and historical condition that a universal definition is problematic as it risks marginalising 'religions' that do not fit. However, Roy (2013) is also correct that globalisation impacts how religion is standardised and formatted. For example, the contestation between Islam and Javanese *kebatinan*, cultivated since the colonial period, demonstrates Asad's and Roy's ideas. *Kebatinan* is marginalised because it does not fit into the definition of religion in Indonesia, but at the same time, globalisation is another driver of this marginalisation. The ideas of purification inspired by Middle Eastern Islamic thoughts have driven Indonesian Islam to disassociate itself from the country's local customs. It is a story of how religion exculturates from the local customs deemed as impure. On the other hand, there was also a narrative that the 'indigenous' beliefs should be privileged over the 'imported' ones. Within such contestation, politics comes into play. The issuance of the defamation law, for instance, shows how politics tries to maintain order by regulating religions. At the same time, religions use the law to strengthen their own position within society.

The recent development of Indonesian Islam appears regressive. On the other side, a look at the history of the Islamic movements in Indonesia comes to a different result. As Azra (2006) has pointed out, the dynamics of Islamic movements in Indonesia have typically been moderate and tolerant, and radicalism arises from a literal interpretation of Islam combined with political and economic instability. From Muhammadiyah and NU, the country's two mass Islamic organisations with critical networks of higher education, continue to produce public intellectuals who exert significant influence on the country's Islamic discourse in favour of pluralism and democracy. Their networks of higher education develop modern curricula, including liberal philosophies of gender equality, pluralism, and human rights, to promote democracy and an inclusive society. Moderation and pluralism thus have real social roots in Indonesian Islam.

2.1.2. The spectrum of perspectives in Muhammadiyah

As pointed out by many scholars, there is a tendency to see Islam as a monolithic religion when, in fact, it has been a source of diverse interpretation, providing a fertile ground for intellectual and historical discourses (Syamsiatun, 2016; Effendy, 2003; Ali, 2016; Rahemtulla, 2017; Bauer, 2021). In general, the emergence of diversity in Islamic thoughts and discourses results from dialectical relationships between various interpretations of Islam and the interaction between Islam and other cultures (Boy ZTF, 2016, p. 23). This diversity indicates that no single individual or group of Muslims can claim that they represent the Muslim community as a whole. In the Indonesian context, as I have illustrated above, the diversity of thoughts and interpretations in Islam is reflected in the emergence and development of various Islamic organisations that actively influence social and political life. Often, these organisations are at odds with each other, indicating the complexity of the Muslim community in Indonesia. Thus, while it is easy to associate Indonesia with Islam, it is essential to clarify that there are diverse thoughts and practices within the Muslim community.

In reading the contemporary Islamic political thinking in Indonesia, for example, Effendy (2003) shows how Islam has generated diverse points of view among its followers. He categorises two major intellectual streams with two opposite ends of the spectrum. His categorisation of Islamic political thoughts was based on interpreting both streams of Islamic principles, their congeniality to the modern situation, and their applicability in the real world. At the first end of the spectrum, as Effendy has identified, are those who argue that Islam should be the basis of the State, and the modern (Western) State and political system is contradictory to Islamic teachings. At the other end are those who argue that while Islam provides ethical values on human-political activities, it does not provide specific political theories. With this in mind, viewing Islam as a spectrum of diverse thoughts and practices, I approach Muhammadiyah as an object of study.

Based on the above categorisation, Muhammadiyah, as shown by the organisation's attitude towards Pancasila, falls into the second stream. In 1985, the

New Order Government enforced Law number 03/1985 concerning Political Parties and Golongan Karya and Law number 08/1985 concerning Civil Organisations. These two regulations oblige every Indonesian political and social organisation to adopt Pancasila as the sole organisational ideology (*asas tunggal*). However, despite compulsion and internal conflicts, Muhammadiyah came to the agreement to acknowledge Pancasila as the sole principle of the organisation. This decision was officiated in the *muktamar* in 1985, replacing the clause on its statute (*Anggaran Dasar/Anggaran Rumah Tangga*) that designated Islam as the organisation's principle along with Pancasila. Even though this decision was reversed in 2000, changing back from Pancasila to Islam, Muhammadiyah continues to support Pancasila as the principle of the State.¹³

From these historical events, we should note Muhammadiyah's perspective on politics and the state. On the one hand, Muhammadiyah's decision to acknowledge Pancasila as the sole ideology of the organisation was a political move to accommodate the government's political pressure. To avoid direct conflict with the government, Muhammadiyah had to bend to government regulations even though it meant that Muhammadiyah had to change the written stipulation of its organisational principle. On the other hand, this move can also be interpreted in a different way: Muhammadiyah viewed Pancasila as being in harmony with Islamic principles (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p 68). In this light, Muhammadiyah considered confrontation with the state unnecessary because Pancasila was also formulated under the participation of Muhammadiyah's elites, who were members of the BPUPKI in the early days of Indonesia's independence.¹⁴ Thus, Muhammadiyah's acceptance of Pancasila as the sole principle of the organisation reflected an acceptance of Indonesia as a *darul ahdi wasyahadah* (a state of agreement and testament) (PP Muhammadiyah, p. 67). According to Haedar Nashir (as cited in Kusumawati, 2019, p. 271), the *darul ahdi* means that Indonesia was established as a result of a national consensus in which all the plurality of nations,

¹³ This support has been reaffirmed many times, including in the general assembly in 2015 in Makassar (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015).

¹⁴ There were three members of BPUPKI from Muhammadiyah: Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (chairman of Muhammadiyah 1944-1953), Kasman Singodimedjo, and Abdoel Kahar Moezakir.

groups, regions, and political powers agreed to establish the State of Indonesia. Meanwhile, the *darul syahadah* understands Indonesia as a place where Muslims must be ready to compete to fill and advance the nation's life with all the best creations and innovations (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 68).

The proposition that Islam is not monolithic also applies to Muhammadiyah. In addition to being intertwined with local culture and traditions, Islamic practices become diverse because they are always in dialogue and knotted with personal experiences and expectations (Syamsiatun, 2016, p.8). It highly suggests that Muhammadiyah in itself represents a spectrum of manifold ideas and beliefs among its members on how Islam should be practised. Several studies have attempted to capture the heterogeneity within the organisation and categorise them into groups. For example, Boy ZTF (2016) distinguishes between conservative, moderate, and progressive groups. Meanwhile, Dzuhayatin (2015) and Qibtiyah (2019) categorise them into literalist/textualist, moderate, and progressive/contextualist groups.

The categorisation of Islamic thoughts within Muhammadiyah, as carried out in the three studies above, is based on the attitudes of each group towards the interpretation of religious texts (the Quran and hadith) and their relationship to social issues, politics, and culture.¹⁵ The textualist/literalist group, being on the one end of the spectrum, believes Islam is a perfect religion; hence, its religious texts must not be reinterpreted (Qibtiyah, 2019, p. 105). This group approaches contextual and contemporary issues by using the literal understanding of the texts (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 269).

The moderates, the dominant group, and a bumper between the literalist and progressive groups believe that Islam as a movement is characterised by practical actions where texts are used to legitimise them. This understanding impacts their theological views, in which they employ a rational approach to defining a normative basis (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 261). The moderates believe that Islam can coexist with modern thoughts under the condition that these thoughts do not conflict with what

¹⁵ It is important to note that Muhammadiyah does not follow certain school of thoughts (madhab) of traditional *fiqh*.

they consider fundamental Islamic values (Qibtiyah 2019, p. 106). As a dominant group within Muhammadiyah, the moderates reflect the official opinions and standings of the organisation in all aspects (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 262).

On the other end of the spectrum is the progressive group. In religious accounts, the progressives have many similarities with the moderates except for their critical and evaluative view of modernity. The progressive group argues that modernity is a permanent transition, meaning that Islamic thoughts must evolve and get updated continuously in line with the ever-changing contemporary issues (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 266). In this sense, the religious objective of the progressives is aimed at creating responsive and critical discourses, shifting the classical theme of Islamic thought of the binary mindset of *haram* and *halal*, Islamic and un-Islamic, into a constructive and more complex mindset for contemporary problem-solving that meets the complexity of modernity (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 266).

Boy ZTF (2016) analyses the differences of thoughts among conservative, moderate, and progressive thinkers in Muhammadiyah with regard to their attitude toward four issues, namely Islamic tradition, social justice, gender justice, and pluralism. These four issues were proposed by Safi (2003) to characterise progressive Muslims. While the engagement with the Islamic tradition may be considered an internal challenge within the Muslim communities, the engagement with social justice, gender justice, and pluralism are often viewed as a vis-a-vis between Islam and other traditions, particularly the Western ones (Boy ZTF, 2016, p. 115). In other words, these issues represent the dialectical relationship between Islam and the world and the positionality of Muslims within the global communities. To see how the three groups within Muhammadiyah differ from each other, we may, as my study focuses on this issue, look at their attitude toward gender justice. Dzuhayatin (2015) and Qibtiyah (2019) show that the differences in ideas among the three groups within Muhammadiyah are clearly visible. While the progressives are open to the ideas of global feminism, which are oriented towards equal partnership between men and women, the moderate group accepts feminism selectively, depending on how those ideas may fit with their understanding of certain basic Islamic norms. The textualists are dismissive towards feminism

because they consider feminism a Western idea that will infiltrate and pollute the virtue of Muslim communities. Nevertheless, these two studies completely ignore the issue of non-normative gender.

2.2. The construction of contemporary gender and sexuality in Indonesia

Gender is a social construction of the nature, role, and status of sexes that are formed and disciplined collectively and systematically to achieve a particular state of affairs, such as norms and beliefs (Nükhet Kardam as cited in Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 10). In other words, gender is a social system that refers to the power relations between the sexes. However, it does not stop there. As a system, gender creates meaning, norms, and symbolic forces to sustain those power relations. Using a gender system depends on the community to which this system makes sense. Gender profoundly regulates individuals' existence, not only by dictating one's positionality within society but also by affecting the formation of one's identity and the meaning of selfhood. Gender is a crucial feature in organising society, but at the same time, it is also a key feature used by society to regulate individuality. Butler (2007, p. 10) writes, "gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (juridical conception), gender must also designate the very apparatus production whereby the sexes themselves are established." Because various factors contribute to sexed/gendered identifications, the allocation of gendered categories and their consequences are opened-ended and negotiable (Lennon & Alsop, 2020, p. 199).

Unlike sex, which is a biological activity with no history, sexuality is more like gender. It is a product of cultural construction, which "represents the appropriation of the human body and its physiological capacities by an ideological discourse" (Halperin, 1989, p.257). Sexuality is generally perceived as a personal and private matter, but, especially in Indonesia, sexuality becomes an integral subject of gender norms, which pull sexuality into the public domain with wide-ranging social and political implications. Therefore, gender and sexuality are very political because they deal with moral, cultural, and political codes in which individuals and families are linked to the nations (Boellstorff, 2005 & 2007;

Wieringa, 2016). They are at the core of the process of nation-building, which is embedded in various aspects of people's lives in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, and national identity (Wieringa, 2016, p. 24).

Upon analytical examination of the terms sex, gender, and sexuality, it is evident that most societies conform to heteronormative standards. This makes, then, heteronormativity the global and most dominant form of gender and sexual politics. Especially in Indonesia, the prevalence of heteronormativity, where every fabric of social life is based on normative boundaries of male-female relationships, has been shared by many studies. However, how has this form of gender and sexual politics been evolving? This question is vital because heteronormativity is an intersectional issue involving politics, culture, and religion. To unpack this question, I refer to the work of Blackwood (2010) on gender deployment in Indonesia. By developing Foucault's thoughts on the deployment of sexuality, Blackwood describes how the discursive explosion dictates the production of sexuality through the gender attributed to the subject.¹⁶ She asserts that in the case of Indonesia, Foucault's deployment of sexuality was equally a deployment of gender, in which the modern characterisation of man and woman was established along with the prescription of form and perversions of sexuality. Henceforth, I use the terms gender and sexuality simultaneously because, for Indonesians, as suggested by Boellstorff (2005, p. 11), both terms are 'mutually defining.'

To construct her idea on gender deployment, Blackwood (2010) analyses the discursive explosion of gender in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia. As she argues, the deployment that occurred in colonial Indonesia was one of gender as much as sexuality, producing women and men confined in sex-dichotomised bodies separated by strict normative boundaries. She points out that the spread of Christianity and, mainly, Islam across the region has brought along the two

¹⁶ Foucault's deployment of sexuality is an examination on how sexuality was constructed in the West through the production of knowledge. This production of knowledge combines social practices, power relations, and forms of subjectivity. The produced knowledge then constitutes the 'truth.' This production of knowledge is what Foucault called as the 'discourse.' Modern sexuality was created through the discourse on sex science culminated in the 19th century which transformed sex from being an act into a form of identity.

fundamental beliefs that influence the modern Indonesian understanding of gender. First, the two religions propagated a doctrine that men and women are objects of God's creation with innate differences. Hence, gender differences are also God-given. Because it is God-given features, gender attributes and practices are believed to be both natural and unchangeable. Therefore, Blackwood points out that under this new ideological regime, gender was naturalised and stabilised, and thereby, no legitimate way exists to mix masculinity and femininity. Women and men who acted and dressed like the other sex were then considered to be violating their gender and transgressing the boundaries God gave. As the consequences, as Blackwood showed, the Christian and Islamic missionary and propagation have brought a striking transformation across the region. As a result, she writes, "certain gendered practices that had been coded and understood as legitimate and powerful ("ritual transvestism") were recoded as illegitimate, destructive, and unnatural ("acting like men")" (p.36).

To study gender deployment in post-colonial Indonesia, Blackwood (2010) focuses on the discursive explosion during the New Order regime. She suggests that the knowledge about normative gender produced in this particular period is deeply rooted in the lives of Indonesian people, even up until today. To describe the production of the normative gender, Blackwood traces three lines of knowledge production that are interconnected and collaborative, namely the discourse of the State, Islamicist leaders, and the media. She identifies that the discourses during the New Order were not directly aimed at the issue of sexuality but rather at creating appropriately gendered reproductive citizens within heterosexual nuclear families. She argues that the deployment of gender was also an act to control sexuality by making heterosexual marriage the sole legitimate sexual relationship. Blackwood writes, "this deployment entailed a consistent and comprehensive discourse about the proper position and attribute of women and men in the Indonesian state" (p. 43). This explosion of discourse, which was operated through wide-ranging networks of social, political, and cultural institutions, has, according to Blackwood, created a generally accepted model of normative genders within the framework of heterosexuality.

Nevertheless, while the state discourse during the New Order had comprehensively promoted heteronormativity, the views on homosexuality and transgender had been politically relatively neutral (Blackwood, 2010, p. 60). It is indicated by the lack of legal prohibition of homosexuality and transgender in Indonesia.¹⁷ However, from the early 1990s onwards, Indonesia began to witness a shift in how the state formulated its response concerning non-normative genders and sexualities (Oetomo, 2003). The international pressure on the issue of same-sex marriage and the increasing visibility of local gay and lesbian groups have widened the gap between the ideal gender and sexual norms with the actual practices. This situation forced the state to deal with the issue directly, abandoning the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ practice in dealing with homosexuality. State officials constantly emphasise heterosexual marriage as the norm through official and personal statements. In doing so, the discursive explosion of normative gender worked by designating the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity as a perversion and cataloguing them into deviant, unnatural, and foreign behaviours. On a similar trajectory to the state, Islamic leaders also began to address the issue of homosexuality and transgender identity, personified by LGBT people, more directly and firmly from the 1990s onward (Oetomo, 2003).

Like the state, Islamicist doctrine in Indonesia also draws strict normative boundaries between men and women. This doctrine, which is based on the interpretations of the Quran, hadith, and *fiqh*, generally views men and women as the creation of God with innate differences entailing that there are some natural differences in characters and attributes. Therefore, along with the state discourse, Islamicist discourse plays an essential role in producing and perpetuating gender binarism. Davies (2010), for instance, observes that Islam is often used to persecute or justify non-normative gender variance in Indonesia. However, the mainstream gender discourse has been dominated by positioning Islam ultimately against non-

¹⁷ The penal code (KUHP) did not stipulate any prohibition for homosexual acts and transgendered practices except for same sex relationship with a person who is not yet an adult. Although this fact is, as Blackwood (2010) pointed out, at odd with the history of other post-colonial states who embraced the sexual and moral codes of the colonizers. Recent development, however, shows a shift toward a stricter regulation on sexuality with the attempt to widen the definition of adultery, which will directly target homosexual acts as well.

normative gender and sexuality practices. For example, Engchuan (2020) observes that within the Indonesian Muslim community, LGBT is framed as an enemy of Islam. The fact that LGBT rights are currently being used to measure ‘progress’ by some International (Western) NGOs (Rahman & Valiani, 2016) also further complicates the situation because it strengthens the idea that non-normative gender and sexuality is a product of Western culture being imposed to Indonesia.

Nevertheless, as noted by Blackwood and other scholars, Indonesia has no consistent Islamic view on gender and sexuality, even though there are agreements on certain positions. Among these agreements is the notion that men and women were created to complement each other, whether in reproduction or social-cultural functions (Blackwood, 2010). Thus, emerging debates primarily concern the technicalities of the specific interpretation and their application to everyday life, such as in terms of women’s emancipation and equal rights between the two sexes (Blackwood, 2010). Nonetheless, this is not to say that the question of non-normative gender and sexuality is entirely out of the equation.

The diversity of Islamic views on gender and sexuality, even beyond the normative margin, is inevitable because, in most cases, the Quran, as the primary source of Islamic norms and ethics, does not explicitly define the laws governing this matter. Syamsiyatun (2016, p. 22) identified that the number of verses in the Quran that explicitly prescribe laws to govern social life is less than 10% out of the total 6236 verses. Furthermore, differences in interpretation are still possible from these few explicit rules. For instance, Wadud (1999) illustrates such possibility in her book “Quran and Woman.” She utilises hermeneutic analysis and historical context in her reading of the Quran to criticise the established interpretations that result in gender injustice within the Muslim community, such as polygamy, inheritance, and men’s guardianship over women. She examines that the Quran never makes any categorical claims of men's superiority over women, presupposing a marital arrangement in which the husband has a higher position than the wife (p. 74-78).

Specifically, in the case of homosexuality, the Quran does not provide precise rules, so Islamic jurisprudence on same-sex relationships is based on hadith (Siraj, 2016). The problem, however, is that hadiths are often disputed as to their authenticity. As a result, until today, Islamic scholars have been unable to agree on the legal rules for same-sex relationships due to different interpretations and perspectives of the Islamic canonical texts. For example, Kugle (2010) performs a sexually sensitive reading on the Quran, hadith, and *fiqh*. He suggests that the Quran views diversity as an integral part of God's will, of which this diversity is not just in appearance but also in subtler hues of human personalities where sexuality is established. Thus, in Quran's view, as Kugle argues, diversity is inherently optimistic. With such a fundamental point of view, it is justified if one assumes that homosexuality, as part of diversity in sexuality, should also be legitimised within Islamic jurisprudence. Kugle's attempts to set a framework for homosexual-friendly *fiqh* are, however, criticised by Esack and Mahomed (2011). They accused him of attempting to stabilise and universalise sexuality according to Western colonial ideas, in which sexuality is seen as a loving, monogamous relationship between two parties. For Esack and Mahomed, such an attempt undermines sexuality's fluid, complex, and acutely unstable characters, especially in non-Western societies. At the same time, both scholars have argued that there is a need to transform the existing Islamic environment to be more tolerant of homosexuality, for sexual justice is an integral part of gender justice, but without pushing it into positive legal law. While these Muslim scholars may have called for a renewed engagement with the sharia, another Muslim scholar, Asma Barlas, dismisses the Islamic legal tradition, arguing that it is too patriarchal to sustain serious reform (as cited in Rahemtulla, 2017, p. 221). However, despite the variations and nuances in the interpretation of its religious texts, 'Islam' is often referred to as a consistent, singular source of authority (Reinhart, 2003; Ali, 2016).

In Indonesia, as shown by multiple studies, heteronormativity has prescribed heterosexual marriage as the only legitimate way for any sexual relationship.¹⁸ The

¹⁸ Beside the study by Boellstorff (2005 & 2007) and Backwood (2010), other studies that show the importance of the formation of nuclear families through heterosexual marriage in Indonesia

State promotes it upon the ideology of traditional family values, and the Islamic leaders support it upon the Islamic moral codes. Boellstorff (2007, p.144) observed that the heteronormative nuclear family household is “the foundational unit of nation, piety and proper citizen selfhood.” Heterosexual marriage, thus, poses a double meaning: it is the only way to justify a sexual relationship legitimately; therefore, any sexual relationship outside of heterosexual marriage is morally and ethically unacceptable, and it is an expression of individuals’ responsibility to society and the nation. Under this discourse, homosexuality is stigmatised. This widespread attitude could not have been established without the vital role of the media. As observed by Blackwood (2010), not only do the media proliferate the discourse of the state and Islamic leaders, but they also often play into the area of moral panic and homophobia, portraying homosexuality and transgender as deviant behaviour, crime, and disease.

According to Blackwood (2010), the unison discourse between the State, Islamic leaders, and the media is ironic. While the discourse on gender and sexuality has brought empowerment for gays and lesbians elsewhere, the same discourse is backfiring in Indonesia. Blackwood (p. 63) writes, “the potential power of the gay right discourse to normalize homosexuality has, in turn, produced a ‘reverse discourse’ (...) in which the State has been forced to use the same vocabulary and the same categories of meaning to substantiate its own position.” The ‘reverse discourse’ has effectively produced a knowledge that situates homosexuality in direct opposition to heterosexuality. It affirms the notion that homosexuality is in contrast with religious and moral codes and against the Indonesian family values, thereby endangering the stability of the nation.

2.2.1. Heteronormativity

The essence of heteronormativity is formed on the basic assumption that gender binary. According to this categorisation, humanity consists of two opposite biological sexes (female and male) with two complementary genders (man and

include for example Wieringa (2015), Maimunah (2010), Davies (2015), Wijaya (2020), and Platt et al. (2018).

woman) and a sexuality (heterosexuality) that are assigned to those sexed bodies. Individuals tend to align themselves with their socially assigned gender and usually attempt to fulfil their sexual desires through heterosexual relationships. Within this frame, members of each category must conform to their designated characteristics at the risk of social exclusion. The construct supports the imposition of heterosexuality on society. The idea of two oppositional and complementary genders (men and women) is a prerequisite to maintaining the belief that heterosexuality is a fact of nature. Thus, the gender binary concept supports a perception that sex, gender, and sexuality are inextricably linked, a perception that Butler (2007) called the heterosexual matrix. To simplify this concept, we may look at how a person identified as a male at birth is expected to be masculine and to experience sexual attraction towards women. When this perception that understands sex, gender, and sexuality as inextricably linked with one another is reproduced continuously, it becomes a cultural norm and creates normative boundaries. The matrix shapes all aspects of people's lives.

In maintaining its hegemonic power, heteronormativity reinforces gender binarism through the operation of social institutions and dictates that gender binarism exists to fulfil reproductive roles (Vilakazi & Mkhize, 2020, p. 8). Thereby, heteronormativity does not operate only on those who live within the frame of gender binary thinking but also imposes itself on those who live beyond that frame. Wieringa (2016, p. 27) writes, "heteronormativity refers to erotic, heterosexual, and affective practices, the norms governing those practices, the institutions that uphold them, and the effect produced by those norms on heterosexuals and those living non-normative sex live." Because of the hegemonic power, any deviation becomes unacceptable, and variations, if any, are forcefully corrected to fit in the binary frame of male and female.

Nevertheless, heteronormativity cannot be reduced to heterosexuality. According to Wieringa (2016, p. 28), such a reduction is inappropriate due to three reasons.¹⁹ First, heterosexual relations may empower many people even though

¹⁹ In defining these three argumentations, Wieringa refers to the works of Stevi Jackson (2006), Sue Wilkinson & Celia Kitzinger (1993), Seidman (2005), and Gayle Rubin (1989)

heterosexuality is not always a ‘conscious choice.’ Second, however, as a political concept, heteronormativity seeks to extend its influence not only on those who live actual heterosexual lives but on everyone, including those living non-heterosexual lives and without any forms of sexual relationship. Consequently, heteronormativity radically mainstreams heterosexuality and stigmatises all other options. Third, for Wieringa, heterosexuality is not in itself oppressive but the field of power that enforces it. Such a gender regime, she suggests, is a form of symbolic oppression as it contains a mechanism that regulates hegemonic power relations between the sexes.

Wieringa (2016) notes that while gender binarism as the core of heteronormativity establishes categories of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal,’ it does not necessarily translate into a rigid classification of acts and behaviour. She points out that “as long as the gender binary is presented as coherent, contradictions are glossed over” (p. 30). This observation is also shared by Blackwood (2010) and Boellstorff (2007). For instance, Blackwood shows that some *tomboi* compromise their personhood by suppressing their masculinity and, to some extent, showing femininity at home when surrounded by families. She observes that doing ‘feminine duties’ around the house, or as they call it, being ‘women at home,’ is an effort of *tomboi* to respect and preserve their good relationship with their families. Likewise, Boellstorff observes how gay men in Indonesia demonstrate their effort to position themselves within society through heterosexual marriage. He notes that many Indonesian gay men marry women to fulfil the expectations of their families and society without abandoning their homosexual practices. This example is indicative that as long as one can fulfil the expectation posed by society through practices and acts that coherently project their gender, their non-normative identity may be overlooked, and their position within society is more or less accepted. Butler (2007, p. 34) writes, “gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.”

Despite the prevalence of heteronormativity in global sexual politics, there exist individuals who do not conform to this paradigm. They are consistently

present within any given population despite being a minority. The statement posits that the existence of a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations is a phenomenon that exists within society. Certain societies acknowledge and place importance on these individuals, whereas others attach a negative social stigma to them.

2.2.2. Towards diversity of gender and sexuality

In the simplest definition, diversity means plurality. It is the condition where differences among people exist within a society. Therefore, the understanding of diversity should not be limited only to selected issues. Balint (2017) suggests that diversity should be understood as broadly as possible because diversity reaches the deepest level of the lives of each individual in society. Due to this depth, he argues that there is no wrong kind of diversity for “the reason people want to do different things (...) do not fall neatly into the chosen/unchosen, the autonomous/adaptive preference, the ascriptive/non-ascriptive, the alterable/non-alterable, or the deeply held/just trying it out” (p. 7). However, the discussion about diversity in Indonesia is often framed under the category of culture, ethnicity, and religion, alas limiting it to these topics. These categories are plausible because Indonesia consists of many different groups regarding culture, ethnicity, and religion, but the limitation of discussion to them leads to ignorance towards a wide range of human diversity and its political implications.

Immanent to diversity is that all differences should be equally considered. Diversity should also not be understood from a binary perspective or in the context of an agenda to label as ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ However, reality often says otherwise in that not all social differences are considered. A construction of normative hierarchy designates specific differences as ‘normal’ and others as ‘abnormal’, and specific differences are more important than others. For example, being Muslim and heterosexual in Indonesia is not considered a category to describe diversity. It is simply considered as default and normal. As the majority group in society, heterosexual Muslims have the power to define what is considered normal and abnormal and to define what is essential. A set of requirements for belonging within

the social community is established by defining these two things. Thus, to be identified as 'different' is not only to receive an identity enforced by those who have the power to do so but also to be possibly excluded from the greater social community. To be excluded from a political and social community determines people's capability of being complete or second-rate citizens (Galeotti, 1997). The issue of diversity is thus closely related to a political issue.

In all its forms, diversity may lead to discrimination and social exclusion. Nonetheless, social diversity is an inevitable reality in every society. To deal with diversity, Balint (2017) argues that the practice of toleration is the most sensible answer in today's democratic societies. A similar argument also comes from Madung (2017). He justifies toleration as the most logical step to respond to an increasingly complex society due to globalisation, which makes encountering various cultures more likely and more intense. Toleration may not solve all diversity problems, but it still provides the broadest and most practical framework to live with differences. The purpose of toleration is to accommodate differences within a society, and toleration is needed to avoid social clashes that may eventually destroy the society itself.

Toleration is a concept well-lived within the tradition of liberalism. It generally refers to the conditional acceptance or non-interference with beliefs, actions, or practices considered wrong but still 'tolerable;' thus, they do not get banned or restricted. Parents tolerating particular behaviour of their children, a community tolerating homosexuality, a state tolerating religious minorities, and a society tolerating unconventional behaviours are examples of different contexts of toleration. These contexts must be considered in any analysis of the motives and reasons for toleration.

While the definition of toleration has been broadened nowadays, it was historically limited. Before it evolved into the concept of religious liberty, toleration was associated with religious persecution in Western societies in the sense that toleration was practised selectively: tolerant for some and intolerant for others. Felix Cross once wrote:

Development of the contemporary meaning of toleration took centuries. It is rather paradoxical that the term and policy of toleration are associated with long periods of persecution. Since toleration was selective and was applied, as was mentioned, to some creeds, while others suffered discrimination, the dividing line between tolerance and intolerance is not necessarily always clear and sharp, to the contrary, the dividing line is frequently blurred. (Cross, 1985, p. 190)

Nevertheless, I will focus on toleration as applied in the present, where it has been defined in the broadest possible way.

John Stuart Mill indicates the transition to a modern conception of toleration (Mill, 2001). By no longer preoccupying the concept with issues of religious difference and harmony, he broadened its understanding. In Mill's opinion, toleration is required in modern societies to deal with other forms of irreconcilable cultural, social, and political plurality. According to his "harm principle," the exercise of political or social power is only legitimate if it is necessary to prevent serious harm being done to one person by another. Illegitimate is to enforce a conception of the good in an authoritarian manner. This practical consideration justifies toleration, in which both true and false opinions lead to productive social learning processes.

According to Cesari (2022, para. 1), the concept of toleration pertains to "the modern institutionalized protection of religious, ethnic, and gender differences through the rule of law." She distinguishes it from the term tolerance, which she defines as "organic mechanisms of specific to communities to accommodate differences" (Cesari 2022, para. 1). Meanwhile, Balint (2017) argues that the fundament of toleration lies in the freedom of each member of society. For toleration is to accommodate the negative freedom of others, toleration is valuable to the extent that those negative freedoms are also valuable (Balint, 2017, p. 146). This general description of toleration, he elucidates, permits three broad possibilities: indifference, forbearance tolerance, and respect for difference. Similar to these degrees of toleration, Madung (2017) suggests two levels of toleration, namely passive toleration and active toleration. He expounds that passive toleration is when one person is forced to let others live amidst existing pluralities, while

active toleration can be understood as respect towards the rights of others to live and flourish freely.

Toleration literally means permissiveness; thus, “the more toleration that is practiced, the more permissive a society is, and with it the more freedom its citizens enjoy” (Balint, 2017, p. 6). The ultimate goal of the practice of toleration is to accommodate diversity to allow various ways of living to coexist. In this light, toleration can only be applied if there are differences people reject. A person is said to be tolerant if she objects or disagrees with a different belief or action, but she still refrains from interfering negatively with that belief or action. Thus, a tolerant society is not a society that is only tolerant of forms of diversity that are considered acceptable but tolerant of various heterogeneities that exist in it (Balint, 2017, p. 8). However, this does not mean toleration can be unlimited. In such a case of unreasonable differences, Balint (2017, p. 143) argues that “it is possible to be both tolerant and intolerant at the same time, and it would seem that this is the way to deal with many of the unreasonable.”

In responding to the increasingly complex contemporary diversity, Galeotti (1997) offers a reconceptualising of toleration through symbolic meaning to tackle prejudice and stigmatisation against minorities. The underlying issue, she highlights, is the identity attributed by the majority to the minorities as the ‘other.’ Two issues emerge from this identity attribution. First, it becomes a source of discrimination. Second, it results in the demands on the minorities to hide their different characteristics and behaviours so that they remain invisible from the public in the name of creating social harmony. According to Galeotti, both issues put minorities in an inescapable social trap that will keep them in a disadvantageous position and deprive them of opportunities to participate fully socially and politically as citizens. She argues that toleration could be an excellent response to this problem if “it is considered in its symbolic meaning of a public gesture legitimising the public presence of differences and of the correspondent identities, on the same footing as the majoritarian traits, practices, and identities” (Galeotti, 1997, p. 231)

Nevertheless, in a similar manner to Balint, Galeotti (1997) also argues that toleration is not unlimited. She suggests that the symbolic meaning of public recognition of toleration can only be practised for those who are “striving for inclusion on an equal footing with other citizens, and whose differences are still publicly excluded though they do not infringe anyone’s right” (p 233). She further argues that this kind of toleration is to fight inequalities in citizen status experienced by minorities. Toleration cannot be practised if the purpose of the issue is exclusion from the larger society.

Toleration becomes a relevant social and political concept in the context of diversity, where diversity cannot exist in harmony. According to Balint (2017, p. 7), we often do not know the absolute truth about diversity, so there is no reason not to tolerate it. He suggests that even if there are factors that require limiting toleration, these restrictions must be justified with genuine and essential reasons. In other words, it is the decision on acts of intolerance that requires proper justification and not the practice of toleration. In terms of limiting the practice of toleration, Galeotti (2021) also argues that toleration should be practised as long as it does not cause harm to oneself or harm others.

The concept of toleration, as it originated from the liberal tradition of Western society, may face complex challenges in Indonesian Muslim society. The history of colonialism has made ideas associated with the West suspicious. However, diversity and the concern of toleration has been a fundamental and critical topic in Islamic studies. Diversity is a central topic in the story of human creation in the Quran. To respond to human diversity, the Quran provides broad and accommodating moral precepts such as humane, merciful, compassionate, and generous. For instance, Khaled Abou El-Fadl, a prominent Islamic scholar, identifies a baseline of human diversity in the Quran. He writes:

The Quranic discourse, for instance, can readily support an ethic of diversity and tolerance. The Quran not only expects but even accepts the reality of differences and diversity within human society (...) (Quran 49:13). Elsewhere, the Quran asserts that diversity is part of the divine intent and purpose in creation (...) (Quran 11:118-9). The classical commentators on the Quran did not fully explore the

implications of this sanctioning of diversity or the role of peaceful conflict resolution in perpetuating the type of social interaction that could result in people "knowing each other." Nor does the Quran provide specific rules or instructions about how "diverse nations and tribes" are to acquire such knowledge. In fact, the existence of diversity as a primary purpose of creation, as suggested by the verse above, remained underdeveloped in Islamic theology. (Abou El-Fadl 2003, pp. 27-28)

With this baseline, Abou El-Fadl criticises the puritan Muslims who read the Quran without understanding it within its historical and moral context. He asserts that the puritans' way of reading the Quran turns the text into "a long list of morally noncommittal legal commands" (p. 27). For him, this way of reading the Quran does not necessarily reject diversity or entirely dismiss the concern about toleration. However, it does assert a hierarchy of importance in viewing diversity and thereby makes the commitment to toleration fragile and provisional. Instead, he suggests that the Quran refers to general moral imperatives without clearly defining any of those categories. This generality, combined with the contextual reading of particular sociological understanding and practice, should be the moral compass for reading and reacting to diversity.

So, how do we situate the issue of non-normative gender and sexuality within this context? Non-normative gender and sexuality proved to be a highly controversial issue within Indonesian Muslim communities. The unison of political and religious discourse has established and strongly maintained heteronormativity as the social order. Within this framework, heterosexual relationships are considered the default and normal while leaving non-heterosexual ones as abnormal. Even so, we cannot deny that issues related to gender inequality, especially those related to women's rights, are still often overlooked within the Indonesian Muslim community. Seeing this reality, we can only imagine how the issues related to the rights of the LGBT people, which is considered a violation in the eyes of a heteronormative society, are being treated. A lot of empirical evidence, which I outline in the following chapter, shows that the country's negative attitudes toward non-normative gender and sexuality are pervasive. This attitude contributes to the stigmatisation, violence, and discrimination experienced among LGBT people. Such outcomes often occur because the punishment against transgression

manifests hopes to build a healthy community or demonstrate ambition to create a hierarchy of power to assert some moral order (Kugel, 2010, p. 44).

While it is arguably evident that heteronormativity is prevalent in Indonesia, an important issue that I am analysing here is how the society upholds its heteronormative ideas. It is not heterosexuality itself that is oppressive but the power that enforces it (Wieringa, 2016). The consequences of such enforcement bear concrete consequences for individuals' lived opportunities within society because people position themselves and others within this normative framework to understand themselves and signal possibilities for intersubjective relations (Lennon & Alsop (2020, p. 199). Based on this assumption, to what extent does Muhammadiyah enforce its heteronormative ideas? While Muhammadiyah did not release any official statement regarding the moral panic against LGBT in 2016, Muhammadiyah elites have been critical of the issue of homosexuality even far before. For instance, in 1997, through the media, Lukman Harun, a member of the central board of Muhammadiyah, strongly objected to two television shows. He argued that they "were against the nation's culture and religion" and "exaggerating topics that were merely excesses of life, including homosexuality, infidelity, and free sex" (as cited in Oetomo, 2003, p. 139). While this may be a personal opinion, Muhammadiyah elites are Islamic figures who have specific authority among Indonesian Muslims, whereby their opinions bring broad impact into the discourse and, to some extent, could be viewed by the public as the representation of the organisation's perspective.

The issue of homosexuality and transgender identity faces a complicated challenge in Indonesia in that it is confronted with hostility and invisibility simultaneously. Particularly, homosexuality is unimaginable, which Boellstorff (2007) uses for this situation the term 'incommensurability.' He writes, "male homosexuality, however, is not just false but ungrammatical" (p. 142). He points out that despite the public character of Islam in Indonesia, it is rare that homosexuality is even debated in Indonesian Islam, and if it is debated, it is debated with stigma and prejudice. He observes that on rare occasions, Indonesian Islamic figures typically reject homosexuality in an absolute manner. The national

controversy against LGBT in 2016 perhaps still fits with this observation. Even though the controversy was nationwide with severe social consequences for the LGBT community, it was concentrated over a limited period. Most Islamic figures who spoke publicly on the issue rejected homosexuality by typically referring to it as a social illness, morally wrong, or Western propaganda.

The absolute rejection of homosexuality also occurs in Muslim communities elsewhere. It is, however, not to dismiss that other mainstream faith groups do not create a challenging political environment for homosexuality, as illustrated by the survey of all major faiths and their reaction to same-sex marriage in North America (Rayside & Wilcox, 2011). The denunciation of most Indonesian Muslims against homosexuality is thereby not an isolated case, but it can be linked to the broader global context. For instance, the influential Tunisian scholar Abdel Wahab notes that “Islam remains violently hostile to all other ways of realizing sexual desire, which is regarded as unnatural purely and simply because they run counter to the antithetical harmony of sexes (...) in Islam, male homosexuality stands for all the perversions and constitutes in a sense the depravity of depravities” (as quoted in Boellstorff, 2007, p. 141). Another Islamic jurist, Yusuf Qaradawi, also emphasises the prohibition of homosexuality in Islam, stating that homosexuality is a perversion that disrupts the natural order, a corruption of man’s sexuality, and a crime against the rights of females (as cited by Esack & Mahomed, 2011, pp. 46-47). For these Islamic figures, homosexuality is viewed as the antithesis of good and right and a crime against divine nature and values.

Nonetheless, there have been calls for more tolerance of diversity of gender and sexuality within Muslim communities. For instance, Kugel (2010) identifies the potential of Islam in tolerating and or accepting homosexuality by referencing the writing of Abou El-Fadl, which I have quoted before. For Kugel, Abou El-Fadl’s reading of the Quran on diversity and toleration provides a baseline to address the hostility toward homosexuality within Muslim communities. He suggests that homosexuality should be approached from the broader perspective of diverse sexualities. He notes that diversity is inherent to human society because people are different, even if they belong to the same culture, religion, community, or family.

In this sense, difference based on sexual orientation and gender identity is the most basic form of diversity because it relates to individual identities. If the Quran expects and accepts diversity in the creation of human beings, Kugel writes that this positivity “might include diversity in sexuality as one more dimension of the creation of humanity” (p. 194). He suggests that tolerance of homosexuality should also be a code of Islamic ethics because homosexuality is a form of diversity. This argument is in line with Balint’s proposition that toleration in contemporary society will only work if we broaden the understanding of diversity to the maximum.

However, practising such a liberal tradition of toleration may find significant opposition within Muslim communities. While Indonesian Muslims generally are suspicious of the term liberal and anything considered Western, there is also a principle of *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining the right, forbidding evil). Especially for Muhammadiyah, this principle is the underlying code of the organisation’s *dakwah* movement. Muhammadiyah manifests *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* through its strategic roles in influencing government policies, particularly on nationhood and universal humanity. In his speech at the Muhammadiyah's 47th general assembly in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Din Syamsudin, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah 2010-2015, translated the principle of *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* into a politically practical definition. He stated:

“Muhammadiyah akan berada di garda terdepan mendukung dan membela program-program pemerintah yang pro rakyat yang mendatangkan kemaslahatan dan kemakmuran bagi rakyat Indonesia. Namun, Muhammadiyah juga tidak segan-segan jika ada kebijakan pemerintah, kebijakan negara yang menyimpang dari konstitusi bahkan menyimpang dari nilai-nilai agama, maka Muhammadiyah tidak akan segan-segan untuk menjadi kekuatan pengkritik, itulah amar ma’ruf dan nahi munkar.” (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p.140)

Muhammadiyah will be at the forefront of supporting and defending government policies and programs that bring benefit and prosperity to the people of Indonesia. However, Muhammadiyah will not hesitate to be the force of critique if there are government policies that deviate from the constitution and or religious values. That is what we call as *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar*.

Thus, for Muhammadiyah, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is not only a question of religious practices but also politics. It becomes the organisational identity and the driving motivation of Muhammadiyah in its activities. All the organisation's social, cultural, economic, and political activities are carried out to fulfil this identity. Within this framework, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* becomes a critical concept to discuss because it is an Islamic practice that is not only confined to the private domain but has entered the public sphere.

As Itsuzu (2002) explains, *ma'ruf* and *munkar* are terminologies adopted by the Quran from the Arab tribes. He clarifies that in its literal sense, *ma'ruf* means 'known,' which implies that something is socially approved because it is known and familiar, whereas *munkar*, as its antithesis, implies that something is disapproved because it is unknown and foreign (Itsuzu, 2002, p. 213). In the Quran exegeses, *ma'ruf* is interpreted as any acts arising and following the true belief, and *munkar* as any acts that conflict with God's commandments. Thus, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is a very general but comprehensive idea of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. If in the tradition of tribal Arab society, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* was based on tradition (traditionally known and approved and traditionally foreign and disapproved), in the Quranic conception, it is based on the will of God. The problem that we have is that humans can only interpret God's will; therefore, when there are differences in interpretation, it is not uncommon for people to return to existing social norms to decide whether something is right or wrong, good or evil. As a result, changes, new things, or things that appear foreign are often rejected.

The principles of *amar ma'ruf* and *nahi munkar* may carry more significant and complicated challenges in practising toleration because the views of what is wrong and right according to religious norms are very subjective. The liberal tradition would suggest that toleration should be practised as an independent virtue separated from morality and religion. However, such a requirement would be difficult to accept by religious communities. Menchik (2016) has noted that even though Indonesian Islamic organisations value diversity and tolerance, they reject liberalism because they do not want to separate the public sphere from religion, as

religion is seen as an integral part of peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, as Abou El-Fadl (2003) suggested, the Quran encourages Muslims to search for moral standards that should be universally accountable, applicable, and recognisable. For Islam to thrive on being a religion of *rahmatan lil-alamin* (a mercy to all creations), Muslims should search for moral standards that could serve as shared and common goals for all humanity. In this light, the Quran prescribes universal values such as justice, compassion, truth, kindness, and generosity.

“I have often used the analogy that if I am holding someone down, I am not free to be myself. I can’t grow, I can’t enjoy the sun, I just can’t *be*.”

(Farid Esack in Rahemtulla, 2017, p. 34)

Chapter 3. Gender in Muhammadiyah

This chapter explores the construction of gender in Muhammadiyah. Gender construction is a social practice that includes imaging, roles, status, and relations between men and women in specific socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts (Nuket Kardam in Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 8). As construction is a process that evolves over time, I utilise a historical timeline to present the topic of gender discourse in Muhammadiyah, highlighting its emergence and development. This historical timeline can be traced back to the beginning of Muhammadiyah when its founder, Ahmad Dahlan, encountered ‘modernity’ in the early 20th century. This encounter inspired Dahlan to form his gender discourse, wherein he assimilated external global and local influences to ‘reappraise the tradition’ within his milieu ‘without devaluing them.’²⁰ Dahlan’s gender discourse has provided the basis for the development of Muhammadiyah’s understanding of gender, which continues to hold significance in contemporary times.

²⁰ In using this phrase, I refer to Michael Rhum as cited in Andaya (1997, p.406)

The modernity that Dahlan encountered was the European and Islamic modernity of the early 20th century.²¹ It was a time when secular education and feminism spread globally, mainly through Western colonialism, which was then adapted into Islamic modernism in the Middle East. However, European and Islamic gender discourses also brought a stricter binary system of sex and gender to the Muslim communities in Southeast Asia (Peletz, 2009; Rinaldo, 2013, p. 34). Undoubtedly, Dahlan was exposed to and impacted by these events, as evidenced by the gender discourse prevalent during the formative years of Muhammadiyah. While fulfilling women's rights and improving women's capacities were the main topics, the emphasis of Muhammadiyah's gender discourse was heavily based on the segregation of men and women.

The gender discourse within Muhammadiyah has continued to adhere to the binary gender system, even long after the era of Ahmad Dahlan, and has been instrumental in comprehending sexuality. If Blackwood (2010, pp. 33-65) observes that the Indonesian state's deployment of gender during the New Order also served as a deployment of sexuality, the same assessment is also valid for Muhammadiyah. Over time, the development of gender in Muhammadiyah has given rise to a comprehensive and consistent discourse that produces normative men and women who are restricted by their biological sex and establishes strict definitions of acceptable behaviours and violations in the interaction between the two sexes. Thereby, after more than a century, the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah continues to follow the binary system strictly, leading to challenges and difficulties in dealing positively with LGBT people.

3.1. Ahmad Dahlan and the beginning of Muhammadiyah

Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah in 1912, in Yogyakarta. Dahlan was born Muhammad Darwisy in 1868 in Kauman, the Muslim quarter of the sultanate palace of Yogyakarta. Changing names was a common social practice among Javanese

²¹ I see modernity as a journey within the framework of relativism. It is a permanent social transition that is influenced by the interaction of various elements in society, which are also constantly changing. Modernity should not be understood as a social product that exclusively come from a particular culture.

people after performing the pilgrimage to Mecca. Indeed, as a member of the Javanese nobility, Dahlan had the privilege of visiting Mecca.²² It also allowed him to study Islam and meet scholars and students from all over the East Indies (Indonesia) and other Muslim countries.

Dahlan came from a long-line Javanese *kyai* (Islamic leader) family. His father, Kyai Haji Abu Bakar, was the *katib* (a clerical position at the Palace responsible for religious affairs) of the Yogyakarta Sultanate Mosque. Meanwhile, his mother, Siti Aminah, was the daughter of Kyai Haji Ibrahim, also an *abdi dalem* (royal cleric) at the sultanate palace. In 1889, Dahlan's father married him to Siti Walidah, later known as Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, who would be associated with the establishment of Aisyiyah. Siti Walidah was the daughter of Kyai Haji Muhammad Fadhil, a *penghulu* (religious leader) in Yogyakarta.

Looking at his family background, it is obvious that Dahlan was born and raised in an Islamic household belonging to the *priyayi* class, with corresponding social practices. In terms of education, Dahlan obtained his primary religious education from his father and pursued further education in Islamic studies and Arabic at local Islamic boarding schools in Yogyakarta and its surrounding regions. Meanwhile, he received non-religious education from his friends and family rather than from formal education institutions.²³ Professionally, Dahlan's future had been predetermined, wherein the passing down of the clerical position to their children was a customary practice among *abdi dalem*. Thus, when his father died in 1896, Dahlan inherited his position as *Katib* at the Sultanate Mosque of Yogyakarta. One of his duties as *katib* was to lead the Palace's religious affairs, including ceremonies such as *Garebeg Mulud* and *Garebeg Besar*. This paved the way for Dahlan to establish close relations with the Sultan of Yogyakarta (Darban, 2011; Burhani, 2016a, p. 51).

²² According to Burhani (2016a) Ahmad Dahlan went to Mecca at least twice during his lifetime. The first was sent by his father and the second by the Sultan of Yogyakarta.

²³ For the list of Ahmad Dahlan's teachers see for example Siswandari & Suwarno (2010, pp. 48-49).

Besides the tradition of inheriting social status and authority, polygyny was a common practice among Javanese *priyayi* at the time. Therefore, it was not surprising that Dahlan also engaged in this social practice. After his first marriage to Siti Walidah, he would marry four other women later. According to Suratmin (2005, p. 38), Dahlan practised polygamy for strategic reasons to help Muhammadiyah spread its *dakwah* and influence within the palace and society. For instance, he mentioned that Dahlan's second wife, Raden Ayu Soetidjah Windyaningrum, was a young widow given to him by the Sultan. As an *abdi dalem*, Dahlan could not refuse but accept because this marriage indicated that the Sultan started to approve of his ideas of Islamic modernism (Mengapa KH Ahmad Dahlan, 2016). Today, polygamy remains a controversial issue in Muhammadiyah. Some believe that the practice should be banned because it no longer fits the current state of society, while others insist that a ban is impossible because polygyny is regulated in the Quran (4:3).²⁴

Although Dahlan practised polygamy, he facilitated an environment conducive to the advancement of the women's emancipation movement. For example, Dahlan allowed women in his family to learn to ride a bicycle. It sounds trivial, but this decision was controversial because it was considered inappropriate in Dahlan's social environment. Aside from cycling being considered a masculine colonial culture, the ability to ride a bicycle meant women became more independent by obtaining greater freedom of mobility. This went against societal norms that expected women to stay indoors or to venture outside only with chaperones. Moreover, this decision was a component of a broader resolution in which Dahlan encouraged the female members of his family to pursue education. The ability to ride a bicycle meant that these women were able to move more conveniently, including going to school.

²⁴ This verse reads "if you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three, or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s): that is more likely to make you avoid bias" (The Quran, 2004, p.50).

Dahlan may not have been able to entirely distance himself from the social practices of the Javanese aristocracy, nor was it probably necessary, but he had clear ideas to reform and modernise his community. Although the origin of Dahlan's Islamic reform ideas remains unclear, as it is uncertain whether they were self-generated or influenced by other scholars, Dahlan promptly introduced his reform ideas upon his return to Yogyakarta from his first pilgrimage to Mecca (Noer, 1973). One of Dahlan's controversial reforms was his effort to correct the *Qibla* direction of the sultanate mosques. Drawing from his studies in astronomy in Mecca, Dahlan argued that the Qibla direction of the mosque was imprecise. This effort faced significant opposition from many conservative Ulama in the Palace, leading the Sultan of Yogyakarta to send Dahlan to Mecca in 1903 in an attempt to mitigate the conflict (Burhani, 2016a, p. 52). This event, nonetheless, gave Dahlan more opportunities to enhance his comprehension of Islamic modernism, thereby reinforcing his reformist concepts.

During the second pilgrimage, Dahlan resided in Mecca for a duration of approximately two years and used the time to study with several Ulama originating from Nusantara (now Indonesia). One of his teachers was Sheikh Ahmad Khatib from Minangkabau, who was renowned for his opposition to unorthodox Sufi practices and *adat* (customary practices), as well as to Dutch colonialism and the expansion of Christian influence. He was also a teacher to Hasyim Asyari, the founder of NU. Dahlan's quest for Islamic reform and modernisation was not limited to the teachings of Nusantara's *ulama*, but he also engaged with the works and ideas of other Islamic scholars, which proved to be a valuable source of reference for his mission. Some of these scholars were Ibn Taimiyah, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, and Muhammad Abduh.²⁵

Ibn Taimiyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab are Wahhabi figures who believed in Islamic puritanism and might have inspired Dahlan with the puritan ideas to cleanse Islam from the influence of Javanese syncretism. Islamic puritanism compels Muslims to return to the Quran and Sunnah and reject later

²⁵ See Alfian (1989) and Noer (1973) for a list of Islamic thinkers and the possibilities of how these thinkers influenced Dahlan's idea on Islamic modernism/reform.

innovations. In this way, puritanism is a response to the challenge of modernity because it emphasises the absoluteness of one particular faith without compromise. However, Dahlan did not adopt Wahhabi's viewpoint and their aggressive and punitive strategy. In fact, he practised toleration and cooperation in implementing his reform ideas. Like other movements that aimed at prompting social change, Dahlan received much opposition and sometimes hostilities, particularly from conservative clerics (see Alfian, 1989; Burhani, 2016a; Noer, 1973). However, in most cases, he did not react to such agitations but followed the principle of self-restraint. This strategy allowed him to continue to work quietly and peacefully. As a result, Muhammadiyah could not only concentrate on building its strong foundation but also avoid the possibility of prolonged tension and conflict among Muslims themselves (Alfian, 1989, p. 164).

Meanwhile, Al-Afghani and Abduh provided Dahlan with the inspiration of Islamic modernism. Both of them shared the view that the adoption of Western modernity, which emphasised human rationality, was a necessity if the Muslim communities wanted to progress. The difference was that if Al-Afghani emphasised reform in the political field, Abduh emphasised modernisation in education and organisation. Abduh believed education to be the best tool for social and religious reform. While Al-Afghani offered Dahlan a reference to modernism through peaceful pan-Islamism, prioritised solidarity among Muslims, and encouraged the adoption of Western sciences, Abduh provided a connection between a rational religious attitude and the establishment of modern education and organisation.

Although this is difficult to substantiate, Abduh's ideas on Islamic modernism, especially rational religious attitudes and social awareness, might have influenced Dahlan the most.²⁶ An Egyptian thinker and reformer, Abduh was very critical of *taqlid* (uncritical acceptance of religious teachings) as it kept Muslim

²⁶ Alfian (1989, pp. 149-152) suggested several arguments why it is difficult to substantiate how big the influence of Abduh to Dahlan was. Notably, this difficulty is because unlike Abduh who recorded his ideas through writings, Dahlan almost did not leave writing notes of his ideas. Therefore, many suggest that Dahlan was more of an activist/practitioner than a writer, or at least he did not have the opportunity to crystalize his activism into a written manifesto before he passed away.

communities from progressing. Like most Muslim reformers in the 19th century, Abduh lamented that most of his Muslim contemporaries did not share the rationalist Islam he advocated (Wild, 2006). Most of them, in his opinion, had devolved into *taqlid*. He held the belief that the genuine form of Islam, which is often disregarded by the majority of Muslims, is a religion rooted in rationality. Therefore, for Abduh, it is imperative to reinstate this genuine essence for the good of Muslims themselves. To resolve this issue, he necessitated *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning) be revived to enable Islamic thought to address the emerging social priorities and problems. Specifically, Abduh advocated the advancement of the sciences as well as educational and social reform, including Islamic feminism and pluralism (Khreegi, 2014).

Abduh's Islamic modernism sought to revitalise the Arabic language and the Islamic sciences. In pursuit of this objective, he co-established the periodical *al-Manar* alongside Rashid Rida²⁷, which subsequently gained eminence and wielded significant impact during the era of early Islamic modernism. *Al-Manar* was a significant feature of the Egyptian reform movement, which sought to demonstrate to the Muslim community that there was no contradiction between the Islamic faith and human reason and modern science, which were then predominantly influenced by the West (Wild, 2006). Thereby, Abduh's efforts to modernise Islam involved advocating for a critical examination of Western society in order to extract valuable insights that could be applied to the Muslim world. Abduh proposed that Muslim communities should incorporate contemporary Western paradigms of education and structure while avoiding uncritical emulation.

Like Abduh, Dahlan prioritised *ijtihad*, which has remained the core principle of Muhammadiyah's identity until today. He believed that understanding God's message to improve society was an intellectual endeavour; thus, all religious teachings must be tested by reason (Mulkham, 2000; Burhani, 2016a, p. 63). In so doing, Dahlan viewed social problems through the rational interpretation of the

²⁷ Rashid Rida, a disciple of Muhammad Abduh, played a pivotal role in causing a division among Abduh's followers. This division resulted in one faction embracing modernism and secularism, while the other faction focused on the revival of Islam.

Quran and hadith without first relying on traditional schools of jurisprudence, which he only used as comparisons (Noer, 1973; Ali, 2016). However, in matters of belief and worship, Dahlan emphasised that adherence to the Quran and hadith is imperative, as he argued that the human intellect is limited in its capacity to grasp the fundamental essence of divinity (Ali, 2016, p. 40).

In contrast to Abduh, Dahlan placed less emphasis on the revival of the Arabic language despite sharing a similar emphasis on modern scientific education. As a Javanese, he was more concerned with the insidious nature of feudalism, illiteracy, poverty, and the lack of understanding among Javanese Muslims of fundamental Islamic teachings, such as helping the poor and orphans. In this regard, to fight the problem he was facing, Dahlan implemented Abduh's strategy by establishing a modern system of education and social organisation. After returning from his second trip to Mecca, he established schools that combined a Western education model with components of Islamic teachings. He then founded Muhammadiyah as a modern platform for his schools and his application of Islamic modernism in general.²⁸

Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah with at least two significant goals. Firstly, Muhammadiyah served as a vehicle for his *dakwah* activities, which aimed to resurrect the true orthodox teachings of Islam amidst religious practices infused with Javanese mysticism. According to Dahlan, the dominant influence of Javanese mysticism created a barrier for the Javanese Muslim community to embrace modernity, preventing them from flourishing. Secondly, Muhammadiyah also served as a platform for Dahlan to modernise the Javanese Muslim community in his milieu, primarily through modern education and social services. It is important to note that Muhammadiyah was formed during the Dutch colonial period, a time

²⁸ In establishing Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Dahlan received encouragement and facilitation from Budi Utomo - the first native political society in the Dutch East Indies which was instrumental for the Indonesian National Awakening. Several members of Budi Utomo suggested Dahlan to establish his own school so that he could actualize his ideas in Islamic modernism. They suggested Dahlan to get the support of an organisation with a permanent character so that the school he built could continue in the long term. Unlike traditional *pesantren*, which often must close when the *Kyai* died. It was with this suggestion that Muhammadiyah was born. Muhammadiyah obtained a license to operate through a decree from the colonial government dated on 22 August 1914.

when most of the Javanese Muslim community declined modernisation due to its association with colonialism and Christian principles, which were deemed to be in contravention of Islamic doctrines. Nonetheless, Dahlan introduced an innovative educational approach that integrates Islamic teachings and secular subjects to the Muslim community.

Despite his reformist agenda, Dahlan adhered to the principle of not alienating the Javanese from their own culture. This principle then became a guiding force for Muhammadiyah's pursuit of modernity during his life. As argued by Nakamura (2017), Muhammadiyah was not the antithesis of Javanese culture but an integral part of it. In this regard, Burhani (2016a, p.109) demonstrates how Muhammadiyah appreciated the Javanese surface culture, such as the way of dressing, language, names, and other symbols, but rationalised and modernised the deep Javanese culture, such as changing the habit of romanticising the past with ideas of progress, replacing mysticism and submission with rationality and activism, and liberating Javanese people from the rigid social class etiquette.

Along the way, Muhammadiyah's religious practices and discourses have rendered the organisation various characterisations such as reformist Islam, modernist Islam, puritanical Islam, moderate Islam, and progressive Islam (see, for example, Beck, 2019; Burhani, 2016b; Nashir, 2016). Characterisation is a crucial aspect of the identity construction process that enables organisations to differentiate themselves from others and establish similarities. In this process, founders are often utilised as 'identity referents' who embody positive attributes, thereby creating a legitimate identity claim that organisational members can share as a distinctive organisational feature (Whetten, 2006; Boers & Ljungkvist, 2019). Therefore, the figure of Ahmad Dahlan cannot be separated from the characterisation of Muhammadiyah. Thus, it is not surprising that the construction of a Muhammadiyah identity is, until today, deeply connected to Ahmad Dahlan as its founder.²⁹ Therefore, it is essential to know him to understand Muhammadiyah.

²⁹ Studies which discuss the identity of Muhammadiyah almost always refer back to Ahmad Dahlan and his ideas of Islamic modernism/reform. See for example Fanani (2017), Nashir (2016), Nakamura (2017), Burhani (2016a), Latief (2017), Dzuhayatin (2015), Beck (2019).

As such, the construction of gender in Muhammadiyah has always been referred to as Dahlan's gender discourse. To this day, his ideas on gender relations have become the primary reference in Muhammadiyah. As Dzuhayatin (2015) notes, the majority's voice in the organisation wants to maintain and preserve the gender discourse from Dahlan's time. She suggests that this voice considers Dahlan's gender ideas to be the final gender ideology for Muhammadiyah. The following section discusses Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse.

3.2. Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse

Gender is a socially embedded, all-encompassing system that defines what it means to be a man or a woman. In practice, this leads to differences in expectations, values, and behaviours that, if achieved, appear natural and thus justify inequalities in everyday life and interactions at home and in public spaces. Thereby, according to Connell (1987), gender constrains individual agency, which operates at both institutional and structural levels, through three main structures of gender relations: labour, power, and cathexis, the latter of which pertains to emotional relationships, including sexuality. The constant interplay of these three structures creates the 'gender order' or the overall structure of gender relations in a given society at a given time in history. Because it is an outcome of human practices and agency, Connell argues, gender relations are subject to resistance and conformity, thus open to disruptions and changes. In this regard, Connell identifies the presence of 'crisis tendencies' in the gender order of industrialised societies that also leads to a 'crisis of sexuality.' The emergence of movements that aim to challenge the existing patriarchal gender order is indicative of these crisis tendencies. The women's liberation movement and the LGBT movement, for instance, have exerted pressure on forms of heterosexuality that confer advantages to men at the expense of women.

The establishment of gender order within Muhammadiyah is a manifestation of both agency and practices that simultaneously illustrate resistance and conformity. This establishment was started and subsequently has been developed since the era of Ahmad Dahlan. As identified by Dzuhayatin (2015), three gender orders influenced the development of Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse, namely, the gender order of the *priyayi*, the gender order of the *saudagar* (merchants), and

the gender order of the Dutch colonial government. Dahlan was temporally, culturally, and locally embedded in these environments. In this regard, Dahlan's discourse on gender exhibited a dynamic interplay between resistance against and conformity to the prevailing gender practises of his surroundings. Therefore, the current gender order observed in Muhammadiyah can be attributed to the 'crisis tendencies' that arose from the disruptions and changes introduced by Dahlan.

3.2.1. Gender in Javanese *priyayi* society³⁰

During the era of Ahmad Dahlan, the gender construction prevalent in the *priyayi* community was based on the domestication of women who were seen as submissive and subordinate beings. They were restricted from participating in public activities, and their lives depended entirely on men. Women's existence was controlled by men through familial norms and practices, wherein their primary purpose was to marry, submit to their husbands, and have children. One form of control over women can be seen in the traditional practices of *pingitan* (seclusion) enforced on girls upon entering adulthood. *Pingitan* restricts young women from public spaces while waiting for a prospective husband of their parent's choice. The primary purpose of such practices is to create obedient women to their husbands. As stated by Dzuhayatin (2015), family and women became the last locus of Javanese elite men in exercising their power because, at that time, the Dutch government already controlled political power in Java.

Various doctrines legitimise the mechanism of control over women in Javanese cosmology. An example of such doctrine is that a wife is called *konco wingking*, which translates as 'companion at the back.' This phrase defines that the status and roles of a wife are limited to domestic affairs, where she is only expected

³⁰ *Priyayi* is a group of Javanese society that comes from the aristocratic class and the bureaucratic elite. The traditional *priyayi* consisted of hereditary aristocrats and others who served either the court or, in the colonial period, the Dutch government. However, in late colonial Java, the term *priyayi* gradually came to include other Javanese who were not necessarily associated with the aristocracy or the government but were considered to belong to the professional, clerical, or managerial elite classes such as doctors, teachers, and other white-collar occupations. Anderson (1990) observes that the *priyayi* community in Java differentiated themselves from the broader Javanese population through various means, including their social status, occupation, lifestyle, and a deliberate embrace of a complex and distorted ethical and philosophical framework.

to be a homemaker and provide offspring for her husband. In terms of spirituality, Javanese doctrine says that a woman's spiritual life is supposedly determined by her husband through the phrase *swarga nunut, neroko katut*, which translates as 'follow to heaven, join in hell.' This phrase presents a narrative in which a woman is required to comply with her husband's directives due to the implications it holds for her spiritual destiny. Whether a woman goes to heaven or hell in the afterlife, her destiny is determined by her husband's approval and blessing.

3.2.2. Gender in Javanese *saudagar* society³¹

At the time of Ahmad Dahlan, two groups of Javanese society, the *priyayi* and *saudagar* communities, had distinctive gender orders that conflicted with each other. In contrast with the submissive and subordinate role of *priyayi* women, *saudagar* women had a more open and egalitarian role in a setting where they were business partners of their husbands (Geertz, 1983). Unlike the *priyayi* community that restricted women's activities to the home, *saudagar* women had both roles and power in public spaces. They had the autonomy that came with their economic independence and freedom. *Saudagar* women had a central role in economic activities, while men generally played a supporting role (Brenner, 1998). If in the *priyayi* gender order, women were evaluated based on their domestic duties, including their sexuality and fertility, within the *saudagar* community, women were assessed based on their economic output, which was contingent upon their capacity and willingness to engage in commercial activities.

The difference in gender order between the *priyayi* and *saudagar* communities can also be seen in the issue of polygamy. It was a common practice amongst *priyayi* men to have multiple wives, which led *saudagar* women to refrain from marrying *priyayi* men. Despite the potential for increased social status, *saudagar* women were hesitant due to concerns regarding limited autonomy and the possibility of polygamous relationships. Likewise, *priyayi* men also avoided

³¹ Besides the *priyayi*, the Muhammadiyah's social base consists of the trading community, especially at the beginning of its development. These merchants have economic power that usually exceeds that of the *priyayi*. The group's trading business varied from the batik industry, silver, gold, or crops.

marrying *saudagar* women because they were perceived as coarse and uncontrollable. Meanwhile, although not unknown, the practice of polygamy in *saudagar* society was less common. It is because, usually, “a *saudagar* man was so dependent on his wife to manage the family business that he could afford the possibility of incurring her wrath, which could lead to divorce” (Brenner, 1998, p. 76).

As Dahlan and Nyai Dahlan were also batik merchants, and Aisyiyah had a large base of *batik* entrepreneurs (Alfian, 1989), it can be argued that the gender construction of the *saudagar* community also inspired Dahlan to reassess his *priyayi* gender construct. This is evident in their marital relationship, which depicts a partnership both in the *batik* business and in *dakwah* Islam through Muhammadiyah.

3.2.3. Gender in the Dutch colonial government

The context of Dutch colonialism also influenced Dahlan’s gender discourse. The Colonial government presented two crucial features: education for women and the idea of an ideal family. During the colonial era, women’s education was primarily geared towards producing proficient homemakers who could effectively manage household affairs while simultaneously participating in social engagements. Following the ethical policy, indigenous girls from the *priyayi* families could access modern education from the Dutch colonial government, albeit very limited.

The colonial government typically handed women’s education to the church, assuming that women were educators of morals and character to their children and housekeepers (Vreede-De Struers, 2008; Dzuhayatin, 2015). This situation prompted Kumari Jayawerdana to argue that the education for women brought by the colonial government was not for the benefit of women in the colonies themselves but merely to perpetuate colonialism and serve the missionary interests (as cited in Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 123). Nevertheless, despite its limitations, this modern colonial education opened the door for the emergence of women’s organisations in the early 20th century.

Alongside modern education, colonialism also introduced a concept of the ideal family. Dutch colonial families brought the notion of the monogamous nuclear family, which resulted from European industrialisation. In this concept, there was a distribution of roles between men as the breadwinners and women as housewives and mothers. Over time, this concept of an ideal family gradually became the norm among Indonesian families as well. Kartini, the icon of Indonesian women's emancipation, is said to be very fond of the ideas of monogamous family propagated by the Dutch colonial government.

The influence of Dutch colonial modernity in Dahlan's gender discourse seemed most visible in two aspects: the gendered allocation of societal roles and the provision of modern education to women. Therefore, Dahlan supported the establishment of Aisyiyah as a platform for women's education. It was established to create modern Islamic wives who could manage their households while being active in social services. However, the issue of monogamous marriage did not seem to have much impact because polygamy remained to be practised as Islam allows men to take up to four wives.

3.2.4. Gender in Islamic modernism

Dahlan's gender discourse was closely intertwined with the influence of Islamic gender discourse from the Middle East's Islamic modernist movement. The most visible and profound influence can be seen in Dahlan's decision to support the establishment of Aisyiyah as an organisation for the Muhammadiyah women's movement. The fundamental objective of Aisyiyah was to provide education through the coordination of educational initiatives aimed at eliminating illiteracy among Muslim women in both Arabic and Latin scripts. It had its preachers, religious training courses, and cadre schools, which combined religious and secular education. Aisyiyah initiated the propagation of concepts pertaining to women's liberation and equal rights through the publication of *Suara Aisyiyah*, which was published for the first time in 1926.

The liberalisation of women through the establishment of modern organisations and the provision of education was one of the crucial topics in the

Islamic modernism movement. Muhammad Abduh was one of the Islamic scholars whose writings Dahlan read while in Mecca. In his discourse, Abduh reinterpreted Islamic canonical texts to deconstruct misogynistic cultural perceptions that placed women in an inferior position. In his interpretation, he emphasised that women's capacity was equal to that of men in all matters of humanity. For Abduh, education became the key to women's liberation because education would operate gradually and consistently to achieve fundamental and lasting change (Yusra, 2014, p. 266). Abduh's thinking can be found very well in Dahlan's gender discourse, which emphasises education for women through a well-organised movement.

In terms of polygamy, Abduh argued that the Quranic interpretation (4:129)³² to contextualize the Quran (4:3)³³ on the permissibility of taking up to four wives cannot be interpreted as a prohibition of polygamy. However, he argues that in modern times, polygamy is incompatible with the principle of 'education of nations' and, for that reason, should be severely restricted (J. Jomier as cited in Wild, 286). In other words, Abduh's perspective on polygamy can be understood as prioritising the discouragement of the practise rather than advocating for a strict legal prohibition. This opinion is in line with Muhammadiyah's family ideology, which proclaimed that while polygamy is permissible, monogamous marriage is the appropriate way to realise a *keluarga sakinah* (PP Aisyiyah, 2017).

Limited information is available regarding Dahlan's support for women's liberation during his era. However, the establishment of Aisyiyah offers some insight into this matter. Apart from involving his wife, Nyai Dahlan, in the Muhammadiyah movement, Dahlan also encouraged her to spearhead the women's movement through the establishment of Sopo Tresno, later known as Aisyiyah (Suratmin, 2005; Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020). Sopo Tresno's first activity was to provide batik training imbued with religious courses, thus opening more opportunities for women to exercise their agency in achieving their potential. As a

³² This verse reads "you will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so, but do not ignore one wife altogether, leaving her suspended [between marriage and divorce]. If you make amends and remain conscious of God, He is most forgiving and merciful" (the Quran, 2004, p. 63).

³³ see footnote nr. 24

result, women were no longer utterly dependent on their husbands economically and spiritually.

Dahlan's support for his wife reflects his perspectives on gender. He encourages the partnership between women and men both at home and in public. This partnership demonstrated his perception that women had intellectual and spiritual capacities equal to men and marked the initiation of gender construction within the Muhammadiyah organisation. In this light, the establishment of Aisyiyah not only served as a platform for women to negotiate their societal roles, but it also solidified the paradigmatic model of gender and familial dynamics within the Muhammadiyah association. The partnership between Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah signifies a movement towards equal gender relations between men and women.

Aisyiyah served as a platform for Dahlan and Nyai Dahlan to contest the *priyayi* gender order. Starting with their close family and extending to other members of both Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, they pushed the boundaries that restricted women from public participation. For example, Dahlan enlisted six young women from the *priyayi* families of his close friends with the intention of training them to assume the inaugural leadership position of Aisyiyah (Alfian, 1989; Noer, 1973; Mu'arif & Setyowati, 2020). These six women were Siti Barijah, Siti Dawimah, Siti Dalalah, Siti Busjro, Siti Wadingah, and Siti Badilah. In addition to providing religious education, Dahlan also facilitated these women to study non-religious education at public schools.

Dahlan's initiative to promote women's education to the level of Javanese men was in direct opposition to the traditional gender norms prevalent in the Javanese society, where women were generally not allowed to pursue formal education. Consequently, Dahlan faced criticism, antagonism, and threats due to this effort to reposition women's societal position. Derogatory epithets were directed at him. For instance, once, he was called a *kyai Kristen alus* (a subtle Christian *kyai*) who corrupted and destroyed the lives of Muslim women

(Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 142). These epithets were a mockery of Dahlan's adoption of norms perceived as colonial and Christian customs.

Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse was in opposition to that of the Javanese *priyayi* community. Given that he came from a *priyayi* family, this opposition was essential in providing a fundament for him to establish the identity of his movement. The founding of Aisyiyah indicated that, to some extent, opposition slowly withdrew, and existing gender discourse and praxis were replaced. Aisyiyah became a platform for Muhammadiyah women to advocate for emancipation and, in turn, change the image of women as submissive and subordinate beings. The organisation pushed the boundaries that restricted women and enabled them to improve their social roles and status. This change, of course, could not be separated from the influence of the historical circumstances at that time. Muhammadiyah reappraised the gender order of the Javanese *priyayi* culture by adapting external influences of the *saudagar* community, Dutch colonialism, and, most importantly, Islamic modernism.

3.3. Muhammadiyah's gender discourse after Ahmad Dahlan

Ahmad Dahlan's gender discourse has provided a reference model for Muhammadiyah to cultivate. It contributed to enhancing gender parity in education and social engagement by promoting equal opportunities for men and women. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this discourse was rooted in a heteronormative perspective, which views men and women within a hierarchical setting. Mu'arif and Setyowati (2020, p. 58) note that once Dahlan advised his friends and students to exercise caution in managing Aisyiyah's affairs, emphasizing that Aisyiyah would become a loyal companion for Muhammadiyah in its *dakwah* only if Muhammadiyah could provide it with proper guidance. Not only does this statement define Aisyiyah as a companion, but to some extent, it implies Muhammadiyah's authority over Aisyiyah. Muhammadiyah assumes the role of preceptor to Aisyiyah, akin to the patriarchal structure of a family where the husband holds the position as the head of the household.

From this perspective, Muhammadiyah cultivates the knowledge of ‘equal but different’ for its gender order. This notion posits that men and women possess equal rights but exhibit distinct *kodrat* (inherent characteristics). This distinction thus differentiates the societal, cultural, and reproductive roles between men and women, thereby establishing hierarchies between the two sexes, both within the public sphere and the household. In other words, the notion of ‘equal but different’ perpetuates the segregation of space and asymmetric power relations, wherein men hold a dominant position. In practice, for instance, Muhammadiyah promotes women’s education and public leadership roles while simultaneously emphasising their traditional roles as wives and mothers and limiting their access to organisational leadership positions.

To explore the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah after Ahmad Dahlan, I divide it into two distinct periods: the period of puritanism and post-puritanism. This categorisation is derived from two separate studies. The first is Burhani’s (2006) study, which highlights the ideological transformation of Muhammadiyah in the 1930s, whereby the movement shifted its orientation from a cultural movement to a more puritanical Islamic one. The second is Latif’s (2017) study, which examines the transformation of Muhammadiyah since the early 1990s, whereby the organisation shifted its perspective from a puritanical movement to an intellectual one. These ideological transformations have significantly impacted the evolution of the gender discourse within the organisation.

3.3.1. The period of puritanism

Although the foundational principles of Muhammadiyah’s gender order have remained steadfast, with the family ideology serving as the central tenet, there have been instances of contestations and changes within the discourse. Following the passing of Ahmad Dahlan in 1923, a notable shift occurred whereby puritanism gained traction within the organisation. Puritanism, which follows the characteristics of Islamic revival from the Middle East, refers to the attempt to revive Islam’s orthodox teachings based on the Quran and hadith. In the context of Muhammadiyah, this puritanism is often described as Muhammadiyah’s

repudiation of local cultural elements that are considered full of syncretic doctrines. In practice, Muhammadiyah's puritanical measures aimed at prohibiting *takhyul* (superstition), *bid'ah* (heresy), and *khurafat* (myth) from Islamic practices. This prohibition was also intended to promote the rationalisation of Islam among the Javanese Muslim community. One instance involved dispelling the notion of supernatural blessings attributed to certain *ulama* and their excessive idolisation.

In the era of Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah did not espouse a stringent dogma or enforce theological tenets upon its members. Dahlan's puritanical approach involved a nuanced interpretation and contextualisation of Quranic verses to the reality of modern life. This enabled him to exhibit a greater degree of flexibility and tolerance towards divergent ideologies, including Christian and communist groups, that exist beyond the Islamic faith (Alfian, 1989; Nakamura, 2017; Burhani, 2016a). However, the puritanical approach that emerged after Ahmad Dahlan was primarily focused on adhering to strict and literal interpretations of religious texts. This approach resulted in a diminished capacity to compromise divergent perspectives and simultaneously a concomitant decrease in flexibility when confronted with diversity.

The rise of this puritanical approach in Muhammadiyah was attributed to both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Burhani (2006) notes several external factors, including the victory of Wahabism in Mecca, the establishment of NU, and the power struggle amidst Indonesian independence. Meanwhile, internal factors encompassed the establishment of the Majelis Tarjih in 1928 and the emergence of new prominent figures in Muhammadiyah who espoused puritanical Islamic thought.

As the Majelis Tarjih was established, it became the engine that reinforced the puritanical approach within the organisation. The *majelis* was established by Kyai Haji Mas Mansur, an Islamic scholar from the north coast of Java. The idea of establishing the *majelis* was conceived and ratified during the 16th *muktamar* held in Pekalongan in 1927. The primary objective was to address matters pertaining to *khilafiah*, which refers to differences in opinions, perspectives, and attitudes. The

majelis was tasked with the responsibility of determining and validating certain practices, especially those concerning the five classifications rulings: *fardhu* (obligatory), *sunnah* (preferable), *mubah* (permissible), *makruh* (unfavourable), and *haram* (prohibited). Subsequently, the *majelis* transformed into a fatwa institution that bears the responsibility of issuing Islamic legal opinions within Muhammadiyah.

However, Burhani (2016a, pp. 122-128) notes that the *majelis* proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it protected the organisation from controversy due to differences of opinion among its members, but on the other hand, it discouraged critical and innovative thinking. Due to the tendency of the *majelis* to judge innovation through the binary lens of *haram* and *halal*, many members refrained from engaging in critical and innovative discourse for fear of being stigmatised as *haram*. This situation hindered the advancement of progressive Islamic thought, which had previously been established by Ahmad Dahlan, and turned the attitude of Muhammadiyah into ‘neoconservative.’

In conjunction with the establishment of Majelis Tarjih, the puritanical orientation of Muhammadiyah was further reinforced with the emergence of new puritan figures within the organisation. One of the most prominent figures was Haji Rasul or Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (1879-1945). Born in West Sumatra, Haji Rasul came from a prominent Muslim family. He was the one who brought Muhammadiyah to Minangkabau from Java in 1925 as a vehicle to hit back at the communists with whom he had a personal conflict. After the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) came under pressure from its unsuccessful rebellion in 1926, Haji Rasul successfully proliferated Muhammadiyah throughout Minangkabau (Burhani, 2016a). Because of this, Haji Rasul rose to popularity amongst the members of Muhammadiyah, and it established him as one of the highly influential figures within the organisation.

Unlike Dahlan, Haji Rasul was an actual puritan Islamic figure. Rather than prioritising social discourse and activities such as accommodating modern education and women's liberation, as exemplified by Dahlan, Haji Rasul directed

his attention toward religious teachings and rituals (Alfian, 1989; Burhani, 2016a). He was more focused on producing orthodox Islamic teachings through a literal understanding of Islamic canonical texts. Through his preaching, he refused to compromise with social practices that he considered to be incompatible with Islamic principles. For example, Haji Rasul aggressively criticised the matrilineal inheritance system commonly used in Minangkabau, which gave inheritance rights from mothers to their daughters (Alfian, 1989).

Haji Rasul's Islamic puritanism spread not only among Muhammadiyah members from Sumatra but also shaped the paradigms of many prominent Muhammadiyah figures from other regions. For example, his son-in-law Sutan Mansur (chairman of Muhammadiyah central leadership 1953-1959) drove Muhammadiyah to be a *shari'ah*-centric organisation (Mahsun, 2014, p. 50). Subsequently, Muhammadiyah was established in Surabaya, with the contribution of Pakih Hasjim, a disciple of Haji Rasul. According to Burhani (2016a, p. 135), Pakih Hasjim's Islamic *dakwah* frequently clashed with traditional practices and beliefs, similar to that of his instructor. Furthermore, Haji Rasul's son, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, popularly known as Buya Hamka, significantly influenced the development of Muhammadiyah's identity during the period of Indonesian independence. He participated in formulating the *muqaddimah* (introduction) of the Muhammadiyah Articles of Association and drafting the *Kepribadian Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Personality), a document used as a guide for Muhammadiyah members who want to go into politics.

The contrast in ideological perspectives between Dahlan and Haji Rasul is also apparent in their stance on gender-related matters. If Dahlan had attempted to push the boundaries of gender roles by expanding women's public participation, Haji Rasul was inclined to resist such efforts, resulting in a regression wherein the roles of Muhammadiyah women were pushed back into the domestic sphere. For example, during the 19th Muhammadiyah congress held in Bukit Tinggi in 1930, Haji Rasul expressed his strong opposition and deemed it impermissible to proceed with a proposed plan by the Muhammadiyah central leadership in Yogyakarta to organise a joint meeting of male and female members in which a speech by the

chairperson of Aisyiyah, Siti Haijinah, would be a feature in this event (Alfian, 1989; Burhani, 2016a). Finally, the committee cancelled the event out of respect for Haji Rasul's opinion. Furthermore, Haji Rasul also exerted a significant impact on the attire of women, specifically within the Muhammadiyah community, where he forced Muslim women to wear headscarves and prohibited them from wearing *kebaya* (traditional Javanese dress) (Burhani, 2016a). Upon observing this development, I would classify this era as the re-domestication of women's role within Muhammadiyah.

3.3.1.1. Re-domestication of women

The ideological transformation of Muhammadiyah, from its origin as a cultural movement under Ahmad Dahlan to its new form as an Islamic puritan organisation, has had a discernible effect on the organisation's approach to gender. Dahlan's efforts to achieve gender equality in his discourse were not continued wholeheartedly by Muhammadiyah after his departure, as women's progress was hampered by limitations. For example, in 1932, Majelis Tarjih allowed women to become teachers for both men and women, yet at the same time, the *majelis* also restricted women's movement by prescribing a decision that women could go out only during the day and never alone (van Door-Harder, 2006, p.91). In this light, somehow, Aisyiyah accepted this restriction by publishing a booklet, "*Toentonan Mentjapai Istri Islam jang Berarti*" (guidance on being a true Islamic wife), in 1937. This booklet promulgates the view that women are equal to men by stating that *wanita adalah kawan laki-laki* (women are friends of men); thus, women have the same right to practice religious deeds as men. However, this booklet also expects women to be *isteri Islam jang berarti* (the true Islamic wife) by emphasising their primary duty as housewives and mothers. The decision of Majelis Tarjih and the booklet signify the withdrawal of women to the domestic sphere after previously experiencing a trend of social openness. For many years later, this emphasis would lead the trajectory of gender discourses in Muhammadiyah.

The resurgence of patriarchal norms and values regarding the role of women within the Muhammadiyah community intensified following Indonesia's

independence in 1945. There were two underlying factors that contributed to this phenomenon. Firstly, the appointment of Soekarno drove *Jawanisasi* and propelled the expansion of *priyayi* culture at the national level (Pranowo, 2008). The term *Jawanisasi* denotes the prevalence of Javanese cultural elements in shaping the national culture of Indonesia, implying that the broader Indonesian culture is essentially a reflection of Javanese culture. Secondly, Indonesia entered the nation-building period, characterised by ideological contestation between nationalist-secular, Islamicist, and communist groups. The appointment of Sukarno as Indonesia's first President marked the victory of the nationalist group, blocking the desire of the Islamicist group to form an Islamic state. Subsequently, Soekarno's close association with the socialist-communist groups further signalled a political threat to the Islamicist group. During this period, Muhammadiyah aligned itself with political Islam groups. Therefore, the domestication of women in Muhammadiyah was a response to these political and cultural factors. Such an argument was expressed by one of my interlocutors from Aisyiyah, Bu Susi, who viewed that the returned of Muhammadiyah women to the domestic sphere took place because of the political contestation between Islam and communism. She said:

At the time of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) rebellion, for example, Muhammadiyah was very firm in dealing with the situation. Maybe because, as men, they felt more responsible. They were head-to-head with the PKI. At that time, many Muhammadiyah people were members of the Masyummi Party, so they faced the PKI directly in Parliament. Well, Aisyiyah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah then took the domestic part. These women moved culturally in the family to recruit and nurture the children of PKI members whose fathers were arrested by the government [after the failed attempt of the communist revolution].

Bu Susi went on to explain that Muhammadiyah believes that the family is the main domain where religious and cultural values are transferred from parents to children. Therefore, if Muhammadiyah wants to realise its organisational ideals in building a truly Islamic society, it is in the organisation's interest to protect its families from being infiltrated by secular and communist ideologies (see also Syamsiatun, 2016; Dzuhayatin, 2015). Hence, women were instructed to return to their domestic roles

because, traditionally, in the context of *priyayi* culture and Islamic orthodoxy, family and the moral education of children have always been attached to women as mothers.

3.3.1.2. Alignment with the New Order's gender discourse

The failure of the PKI rebellion in 1965 resulted in a change of power from Sukarno's Old Order to Suharto's New Order. With this shift of power, the re-domestication of women in Muhammadiyah became even more robust, corresponding to Indonesia's national trend. The distribution of roles between men and women, for instance, was formalised through Marriage Law No. 1/1974, which regards men and women as equal but different. The legislation asserts that husbands and wives have equal rights in the family and society, but at the same time, it designates husbands as the primary authority figures and financial providers within familial units while relegating wives to subordinate roles as the appendages and companions to their husbands.³⁴ Nevertheless, despite the asymmetric gender relations, this newly formulated family law guarantees and protects women's rights in the household.

The formulation of the marriage law presented an opportunity for Muhammadiyah to promote its family ideology within the broader context of the nation. The implementation of this law was intended to supersede the pre-existing Dutch colonial marriage law, thereby facilitating Muhammadiyah's objective of establishing an authentically Islamic community. Throughout the formulation process, Muhammadiyah maintained its stance that the legislation must not be in conflict with Islamic marriage law, which encompasses the practise of polygamy and the solemnisation of interfaith marriages. For this matter, this marriage law showed the interaction between Islamic legal tradition with the state and judicial practice through the codification of *fiqh* provision on family law, which leads to

³⁴ This differentiation of role is stipulated on chapter 6 article 1-3 concerning the rights and duties of husband-wife: 1). Hak dan kedudukan isteri adalah seimbang dengan hak dan kedudukan suami dalam kehidupan rumah tangga dan pergaulan hidup bersama dalam masyarakat. 2). Masing-masing pihak berhak untuk melakukan perbuatan hukum. 3). Suami adalah kepala keluarga dan isteri ibu rumah tangga.

“the creation of a hybrid family law that was neither classical *fiqh* nor Western, and a new discourse and gender of literature that is neither traditionalist nor modern” (Mir-Hoseini, 2022, p. 27). Such a phenomenon is not isolated to Indonesia but exists in other majority-Muslim countries as well.

In addition to the marriage law, the New Order's domestication of women was also manifested in the ideology of *'ibuisme negara'* (state mother-ism), as coined by Suryakusuma (1988). This ideology created a picture of ideal women as wives, housewives, mothers, supplemental earners, and citizens. *Ibuisme negara* did not prohibit women from being active in public. In fact, women were encouraged to engage socially and economically for national economic development. This encouragement translated into an expansion of women's education and a significant rise in women's employment during the New Order. However, as their role in the family was defined as the primary duty, women were expected to put the family first, not to be too ambitious, and not to exceed their husband's careers. Meanwhile, men were not held to the same standard of domestic involvement, resulting in women bearing the primary burden of household duties. Consequently, this ideology created a dual role for women, where they were required to play an active role in social and economic life as well as to manage the household, which ultimately prevented them from achieving equal accomplishments as men.

During the New Order era, Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah published two books that would significantly shape the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah. The two books were *Adabul Mar'ah fil Islam* (women's ethics in Islam), published in 1975, and *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah* (guidance toward a harmonious family), published in 1989. These publications can be seen as the revision and development of *Toentoenan Mentjapai Istri Islam Jang Berarti*, published in 1939.

According to Dzuhayatin (2015), *Adabul Mar'ah fil Islam* and *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah* are two conflicting books. She argues that the latter is a setback from the previous one. This setback, according to her, can be observed from the spirit of women's liberation in *Adabul Mar'ah fil Islam*, which is an improvement from the book *Toentoenan Istri Islam jang Berarti*, is being reversed

in *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*, which emphasises the domestication of women. Because this book was published not long after the launch of Dharma Wanita³⁵, Dzuhayatin suggests that the publication of *Tuntunan Menuju keluarga sakinah* provides a theological justification for the New Order's *ibuisme negara* (p.194).

While I agree with Dzuhayatin's arguments, it is worth noting that these three books espouse a common objective and theme by upholding heteronormativity within the gender discourse of Muhammadiyah. The publications have produced and reproduced knowledge that strictly promotes the concept of the heterosexual family, emphasising its clear and well-defined boundaries. The changes in views regarding the role and position of women in society were intended to strengthen this family ideology. Although an expansion of women's public roles is outlined, these roles are still anchored on wifeness and motherhood as primary and priority duties for women. For instance, *Adabul Mar'ah fil Islam* justifies women pursuing a professional career. However, as underlined in *Tuntunan Menuju Keluarga Sakinah*, this pursuit should not transgress their *kodrat* (nature) as wives and mothers. Indeed, with the publication of these books, Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah were well in line with the New Order's *ibuisme negara*.

Muhammadiyah's gender discourse, which emphasises women's primary duties as wives and mothers, has been the subject of significant critique. Internally, considerable criticism was particularly voiced by the younger generation of Muhammadiyah women in Nasyyatul Aisyiyah (Syamsiyatun, 2016).³⁶ This criticism would soon receive a response from Muhammadiyah. At the onset of the 1990s, a significant number of Nasyyatul Aisyiyah's leaders had studied at and or graduated from gender studies programs at universities in Indonesian or abroad.

³⁵ Dharma Wanita is an organisation formed by the New Order for the wives of civil servants. This organisation is said to be the embodiment of the ideology of *ibuisme negara*.

³⁶ Nasyyatul Aisyiyah is one of Muhammadiyah's autonomous organisations that accommodates young women. It was formed in 1931. The idea to establish Nasyyatul Aisyiyah was to support the Muhammadiyah movement by supporting the intellectual capacity of Muhammadiyah's girls. Thus, the establishment of Nasyyatul Aisyiyah was intended emancipate Javanese Muslim girls by breaking the patriarchal and feudal culture of Javanese society who at the time limited the public activities and mobility of their daughters.

This new generation of leaders then became the driving force behind this young women's organisation in reflecting Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah*. While they accepted the Islamic teaching concerning a woman's duty, Nasyyatul Aisyiyah criticised the policy for being unfair to women (e.g., the women's dual role and the indifference of Muhammadiyah men in the application of its gender policies).

3.3.2. The period of post-puritanism

In the early 1990s, Muhammadiyah underwent a period that Latief (2017) refers to as the 'post-puritanism' era, characterised by a notable transformation from a puritanical Islamic movement to one more focused on intellectual discourse. During this period, Muhammadiyah saw the emergence of scholars and academics in its leadership structure who gave solid impulses for the further development of the organisation's ideological framework. This transformation became increasingly visible when Muhammadiyah redefined its Majelis Tarjih in 1995. Under the leadership of Amin Abdullah, a scholar at the Universitas Islam Negeri (Islamic State University) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, the newly redefined Majelis Tarjih began to expand its Islamic studies. The *majelis* widened the spectrum of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah, shifting its focus on the purification of religious rituals and activities towards a more open, progressive, and cosmopolitan perspective.

In response to the critique raised by Nasyyatul Aisyiyah regarding the conceptualisation of *keluarga sakinah*, Muhammadiyah has incorporated gender-related topics into its Islamic studies alongside matters pertaining to social, economic, political, and environmental concerns. One notable instance pertains to the development of women's *fiqh*, which encompasses the introduction of the organisation's groundbreaking discourse of female imams within Majelis Tarjih (Samsuri & Hayati, 2006).

3.3.2.1. Three lines of narratives

The emergence of new intellectuals in the leadership structure also brought a new organisational culture of discourse. The new intellectuals freely expressed their views without feeling bound by the norms and official views of the organisation,

outlined personal views often substantially different to the organisational discourse and thus created controversies, particularly at the grassroots level. As a result, Muhammadiyah witnessed an increase in the internal contestation of ideas. The new generation of scholars engendered three distinct narrative strands within the Muhammadiyah movement until today: the conservative/textualist, moderate, and progressive/contextualist (see Boy ZTE, 2016; Dzuhayatin, 2015; Qibtiyah, 2019). In the context of gender discourse, the three narrative threads engage in mutual critique for espousing divergent notions.

The moderate group is the largest group within Muhammadiyah. It reflects the mainstream opinion and attitude of the organisation. According to Dzuhayatin (2015), the moderates have been the ‘guardians’ of Muhammadiyah’s traditions since the era of Ahmad Dahlan, which includes his gender discourse. She claims that the moderates exhibit a tendency to selectively embrace the development of feminist discourse that has been advanced by Muslim feminists such as Fatima Mernissi, Rifat Hasan, and Amina Wadud. They employ contextual interpretation of Islamic canonical texts in situations where it is deemed suitable and necessary (Burhanuddin & Fathurrahman, 2004). Therefore, even though the moderates realise that gender is a social construction, they still advocate for asymmetrical gender relations, especially in the family setting. This is due to their belief that the inherent differences between men and women are divinely ordained and should not be subject to contextual interpretation. Thus, even though they acknowledge that husband and wife can share household duties, the primary authoritative figure of the family normatively remains the husband. This reasoning underpins the normative contention among the moderates that men retain the priority in assuming the role of the *imam* (Dzuhayatin, 2015).

The gender narrative of the moderate group is widely accepted among Muhammadiyah members at the central and regional levels and is generally considered the official narrative of Muhammadiyah. Their narrative is disseminated through official documents, translated into policies, and underlies Muhammadiyah’s organisational structure and management. The moderate gender

discourse is subject to criticism from both progressive and textualist groups while simultaneously serving as a mediator of their opposing discourses.

Within the moderate group, Dzuhaytin (2015) and Qadir (2003) identify several prominent figures, among others: Syamsul Anwar, Elida Djasman, Chamamah Suratno, Noorjanah Djohantini, and Siti Syamsiatun. If Dzuhayatin (2015) appoints the current Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, as a moderate on gender issues, Boy ZTF (2016) appoints him as a progressive on the issue of religious pluralism.

The emergence of progressive groups within Muhammadiyah can be attributed to the increased presence of scholars, many of whom graduated from Western universities, on the leadership boards since the 1990s. Of course, it is not to say that progressivity in itself comes only from the West, but it is reasonable to assert that the progressive gender discourse observed in Muhammadiyah is influenced by the global feminist movement. Indeed, the early 1990s witnessed a revival of Islamic feminism that advocated for gender equality in all aspects of life. With their critical method of reading Islamic texts, international Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Fazlur Rahman, Asma Barlas, Rifat Hasan, and Leila Ahmed have inspired the emergence of progressive gender discourse in Indonesian Muslim society, including Muhammadiyah (Qadir, 2010; Nurmila, 2011; Ilyas, 2015). The hermeneutic approach to Quranic interpretation espoused by these Muslim feminists has been a source of inspiration for numerous progressive scholars affiliated with Muhammadiyah. Simultaneously, it has also emerged as a topic of contention among the three factions within Muhammadiyah to which the progressives are often accused of being a liberal group that promotes a Western neo-modernist approach and relativism (Dzuhayatin, 2015; Qadir, 2010).

The progressive discourse revolves around the matter of the universal values of Islam and endeavours to incorporate said values into societal concerns. The subjects that are of significant concern to them encompass matters pertaining to human rights, pluralism, democracy, and environmental concerns. The dissemination of the narrative often occurs through written materials and academic

forums. In the context of gender issues, the progressives espouse an ideology of gender equality that aligns with the predominant perspective of the global gender regime. They build upon a framework of moderate gender ideology and extend their discourse on gender. While there may be some overlapping ideas, the progressive group distances themselves from the moderate perspective, which they perceive as having conservative leanings. For instance, instead of perpetuating the idea of 'equal but different,' the progressives insist that the two sexes have equal status, position, and rights, whether in the family, public, or religious affairs (Qibtiyah, 2019). For them, the dichotomy between women and men ends in the biological anatomy. With this theological interpretation, the progressives emphasised the equal partnership between men and women in all aspects of life, enabling them to move their discourse beyond the issue of wifehood and motherhood easily.

Many progressives hold institutional positions within Majelis Tarjih and Aisyiyah. Several notable figures are, among others, Amin Abdullah, Abdul Munir Mul Khan, Hamim Ilyas, Wawan Gunawan, Alimatul Qibtiyah, and Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin (see Qadir 2003, Boy ZTF, 2016; Dzuhayatin, 2015). The efficacy of the progressive group can be observed since 1995. During that period, Amin Abdullah, the newly appointed chairman of Majelis Tarjih, extended an invitation to two members of Aisyiyah to become part of the *majelis*' leadership board. This initiative was taken with the aim of incorporating the perspectives and aspirations of women into the decision-making processes of the *majelis*. Additionally, with regard to the structure of leadership within the Muhammadiyah association, there exists an ex-officio position whereby the chairperson of Aisyiyah automatically assumes an executive leadership position within Muhammadiyah. Nevertheless, despite this progress, the matter of women's leadership within Muhammadiyah remains a topic of debate until today.

The third group is the textualists, who derive their gender narrative from the biological distinction between males and females, which they contend denotes divergent societal roles. In other words, they perceive gender roles as innate and intrinsic to a human being. The primary focus of the textualist gender discourse pertains to the matter of female leadership, whether it be in the context of family,

public life, or organisation. The narrative espouses an assumption of the superiority of male leadership in all aspects of life while overlooking the evidence of women's leadership within the Islamic historical context. Typically, the textualist narratives are disseminated through *pengajian*, with few scholarly writings. In general, the individuals who belong to the textualist group are affiliated with Majelis Tabligh,³⁷ with a select few also associated with Majelis Tarjih. These individuals are, among others, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, Syamsuddin Arif, Henri Shalahuddin, Nirwan Syafrin Manurung, Muhammad Ikhsan, and Yunahar Ilyas, who, on several occasions, has been shifting from a textualist narrative to a more moderate view (Dzuhayatin, 2015). While the progressives can be found predominantly within the central leadership circle, the literalists tend to appear in the regional leadership (Dzuhayatin, 2015).

The emergence of the literalists within Muhammadiyah can be attributed to various factors, including their opposition to the progressive movement. According to Ahmed (1992), the notion of 'holding on to an original Islam' is a response to the discourse of colonialism. Based on this premise, the textualist gender discourse serves as a response among certain members of the organisation to the global feminist movement, which they perceive as a new form of colonialism. Their response elicits apprehension regarding the potential infiltration of external influences, particularly those stemming from Western liberal perspectives, into the gender discourse within Muhammadiyah. In practice, there exists a strong opposition between textualist gender narratives and progressive gender narratives. The former accuses the latter of embracing Western feminism, advancing liberal and secular ideologies, and endorsing religious relativism (Qibtiyah, 2019; Dzuhayatin, 2015). For the textualists, the notion of religious relativism is unacceptable due to their assumption that Islam is a perfect religion, rendering the contextualisation of Islamic authoritative texts to social developments both redundant and disrespectful.

³⁷ Majelis Tabligh is a unit within Muhammadiyah with functions and tasks to develop and systematize methodology of Islamic thought and experience of the Muhammadiyah movement.

Furthermore, the emergence of the textualist faction within Muhammadiyah may also be associated with the political reform that took place in Indonesia in 1998. The reform that overthrew the New Order led to an increase in political freedom, which subsequently was used by Indonesian Islamicists to regain momentum. This political situation also brought to light the infiltration by the transnational Islamic movement, which propagated the notion of establishing an Islamic state within Muhammadiyah (see Jung, 2018; Wahid, 2019). Although Muhammadiyah remains a social movement, many of its activists are actively involved in the Indonesian political landscape. Consequently, in light of the transnational Islamic political momentum, Muhammadiyah observes the emergence of internal textualist groups. Despite the limited quantity, these activists have proficiently disseminated their Islamic ideas in Muhammadiyah.

The 2005 *muktamar* is a significant example of the impact of the literalist group in their discourse of rejecting the notion of women's leadership in Muhammadiyah. This instance demonstrates that despite being a minority faction, the literalist group was able to sway the opinion of the congress participants and secure majority votes in advancing their narrative. For the literalists, there were at least two reasons for their opposition to women's leadership. Firstly, the opposition was grounded on the exegesis of the Quranic (4:34),³⁸ which, according to them, posits that women are not entitled to leadership positions within the organisation, as men are the leaders in both the familial and societal spheres (Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 299). Secondly, they argued that women should not hold leadership roles in Muhammadiyah, citing the existence of Aisyiyah as a sufficient avenue for female leadership, or otherwise, as the literalist suggested, Aisyiyah should be dissolved prior to women assuming leadership positions in Muhammadiyah (Burhani, 2016b, p.73).

³⁸ The verse reads "husbands should take good care of their wives, with [the bounties] God has given to some more than others and with what they spend out of their own money" (The Quran, 2004, p. 54).

3.3.2.2. Beyond women's wifhood and motherhood

Whilst Muhammadiyah's understanding of gender still prioritises women's roles as wives and mothers, the emergence of progressive thought has propelled the discourse forward. During the 2010 *muktamar*, the progressives effectively pushed their narratives. Issues that had been suspended for decades, including the controversy of female *imam*, female president, polygyny, and minimum age of marriage, were brought back to debate. However, it is essential to consider that all these progressive debates took place within the heteronormative framework. This implies that gender equality, as understood by the organisation, is underscored by gender norms that strictly follow binary thinking.

In order to be successful in integrating progressive values into organisational decisions and policies, the progressives made compromises. Concerning family ideology, Muhammadiyah commits to monogamy as the norm, as it is perceived to be more effective in fostering *keluarga sakinah*. At the same time, Muhammadiyah does not prohibit polygyny because the organisation upholds the view that the practice is allowed in the Quran. A compromise was also made regarding the question of whether women could be *imam*, which was perhaps one of the most important decisions in Muhammadiyah. After a prolonged period of deliberation spanning nearly a decade, a resolution was ultimately formulated despite fundamental objections from the textualist factions. The concession in the compromise is that the role of imam is customarily reserved for men, and only in specific circumstances can a woman assume the role of imam for adult males (Dzuhayatin, 2012, p. 168). Although there are terms and conditions that apply to female *imams*, this decision was nonetheless quite bold and progressive compared to other Muslim communities in Indonesia. Because even though the issue of the female *imam* is not new, presenting it in a community who are used to the guidelines of classical *fiqh* was not a simple task (Wahid, 2012).

The decision concerning the female *imam* was of significant magnitude, as conveyed by one of my interlocutors from Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, Bu Alimatul. She argued that, in theory, the issue of gender equality had reached the pinnacle in

Muhammadiyah. She argues that while many Islamic scholars recognise the legitimacy of female *imams*, such recognitions remain confined to the individual level, whereas in Muhammadiyah, this recognition has taken place on the organisational level. Notwithstanding, she acknowledged that the socialisation and implementation of this policy necessitate hard work from the organisation, as there will inevitably be disapproval at the grassroots.

The notion that Muhammadiyah has attained the ultimate level of gender equality is not new. Siti Noordjannah Djohantini, who served as the general chairman of Aisyiyah from 2010-2022, expressed a comparable viewpoint. She said that the issue of gender bias in Muhammadiyah had been resolved with the establishment of Aisyiyah and the development of a new perspective on women's *fiqh* (Bias Gender, 2019). However, such statements indicate a slippery slope of neoconservative attitude in Muhammadiyah. If something is considered final or perfect, it no longer requires change and improvement. Simultaneously, the dynamic nature of social reality requires constant modifications and enhancements, which may lead to more progressive interpretations of religious texts in the future. Historically, gender has been conceptualised within the binary framework. However, contemporary advancements in knowledge have rendered this framework insufficient for comprehending gender.

3.4. The deployment of gender in Muhammadiyah

According to Blackwood (2010), gender deployment in Indonesia also serves as the deployment of sexuality. Within the context of Muhammadiyah, the organisation's gender discourse has been functioning as a vehicle to propagate the ideology of the heterosexual family and is designed to create proper men and women in the pursuit of creating a truly Islamic society. Thereby, Muhammadiyah places significant normative and practical importance on the heterosexual family as it serves as a domain where men and women meet, the next generation is born, and the transfer of religious and cultural values between generations takes place. In other words, the family serves a dual purpose as both the source of organisational regeneration and the foundation of the nation. In this light, Muhammadiyah produces a

comprehensive and rigorous set of gendered guidelines for familial conduct that prescribe normative boundaries for the relationships between the sexes.

To illustrate this deployment of gender and sexuality, I examine the channels and methods utilised for the dissemination of gender within the organisation, i.e., through the publication of books and the organisational structure. The amalgamation of these two mechanisms produces, standardises, and installs knowledge pertaining to gender binarism and heterosexual family into the consciousness of Muhammadiyah's followers.

3.4.1. *Keluarga sakinah*

Muhammadiyah's fundamental tenet posits that the establishment of a truly Islamic society, as envisioned by Muhammadiyah, hinges on the primacy of the family unit. For this reason, *keluarga sakinah* prescribes a comprehensive set of guidelines for gender relations, which is linked to the family law of both the state and Islam. This set of regulations has a dual impact: the standardisation of gender relations between men and women, thereby perpetuating heteronormative view, and the formalisation of sexuality by means of strict definitions of permissible and impermissible behaviours. In other words, *keluarga sakinah* serves as a mechanism employed by Muhammadiyah to establish and strengthen heteronormativity within the institution.

The process of inculcating the values of *keluarga sakinah* into individuals is typically accomplished through a variety of methods, including but not limited to *pengajian*, media exposure, workshops, and training sessions. For example, Aisyiyah has a program called *Madrasah Perempuan Berkemajuan* (MPB/ progressive women's school), which provides short courses for Muhammadiyah women to respond to contemporary issues. During our conversation, Bu Alimatul recounted her experience of presenting on the topic of female imams as a matter pertaining to *keluarga sakinah*. She underlined that the socialisation of Muhammadiyah's decision on female imams via MPB appeared to yield favourable outcomes.

Organisationally, Muhammadiyah is progressive, but many of its people are moderate. For example, regarding female *imams*, Muhammadiyah has decided it is permissible. The problem is how to disseminate this discourse at the grassroots level. This year (2019), I went to Lampung to organise MPB. There, we discussed the issue of female *imams*. At the beginning of the course, no one agreed with this issue; it was zero. But after only a few hours, I discussed the issue; 42% of the participants changed their minds and agreed [with the notion of female *imams*].

In order to analyse the emergence of the *keluarga sakinah* ideology within the context of Muhammadiyah, I will trace its historical timeline. The formulation of *keluarga sakinah* can be attributed to the publication of three important literary works: “*Tuntunan mentjapai isteri Islam jang berarti*” (guidance on being a true Islamic wife) published in 1939, “*Adabul mar’ah fil Islam*” (women’s ethics in Islam) published in 1982, and “*Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah*” (guidance toward a harmonious family) published in 1984.

3.4.1.1. Book 1: *Tuntunan mentjapai isteri Islam jang berarti*

The consolidation of *keluarga sakinah* can be traced back to the formulation of the *Tuntutan mentjapai isteri Islam jang berarti*, which standardised the rule for gender relations between men and women for the first time in Muhammadiyah (see PP Muhammadiyah, 1939). It was formulated by the central leadership of Aisyiyah in 1937 and published by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah in 1939. In terms of physical appearance, the booklet is quite simple and thin. Yet, its contents comprise guidelines intended for Muhammadiyah women, outlining appropriate behaviours within both familial and societal contexts, which have played a significant role in shaping gender norms within the organisation.

The booklet prescribes a set of 12 guidelines for women to adhere to in order to fulfil the role of an Islamic wife, wherein each of these guidelines is supported by theological justifications from the Quran and hadith. These 12 guidelines are: 1). taking care of her husband's household; 2). pleasing her husband; 3). obeying her husband's orders; 4). maintaining the sanctity of herself and her household; 5).

raising her children; 6). assisting her husband in educating their children; 7). covering her *aurat* (intimate parts); 8). not behaving (acting) inappropriately; 9). not to associate with men who are not her *mahram* (family member whose illegal to marry); 10). travelling only by following the decision of the Majelis Tarjih; 11). staying at home and if going out not as a *jahiliyah* (ignorant) woman; 12). doing good to relatives, in-laws, and servants.

In its introduction, the intention is clearly stated as “to be a guide for Muslim women to improve their dignity by fulfilling their wifhood obligations.” This statement introduces the main ideas of the booklet in positioning women in a subordinate position and is elaborated further, especially in the third point, which requires women ‘to obey the orders of their husbands.’ This subordination of women is supported with the proposition of the Quran (2:228), which reads “*sebagaimana isteri-isteri itu berhak membuat kebadjikan, djuga berhak mendapat kebadjikan. Dan laki-laki itu mempunjai satu derajat lebih dari perempuan; sesungguhnya Tuhan Allah itu jang Maha Mulia dan Bidjaksana*” (wives have [rights] similar to their [obligations], according to what is recognised to be fair, and husbands have a degree [of right] over them: [both should remember that] God is almighty and wise (the Quran, 2004). The use of this particular verse cements the fundamental notion of ‘equal but different,’ which posits that both men and women are equally entitled to engage in virtuous deeds and receive equitable treatment, albeit with varying degrees of inherent dissimilarity between the two genders. What is meant by these different degrees is that men naturally have characteristics that make them better leaders than women. The understanding of ‘equal but different’ would serve as the fundamental framework for Muhammadiyah’s gender order in the times ahead.

The construction of the asymmetrical gender relationship in the *Tuntunan mentjapai isteri Islam jang berarti* is founded upon a perception of inherent distinctions between females and males. The booklet proposes specific roles for women based on the characterisation of women as ‘creatures with delicate and sensitive characters.’

“Sudah menjadi pembahagiannya jang adil, perempuan bangsa jang halus itu, manj dai pengatur rumah tangga, pengasuh anak-anak, penggirang hati, pembawa kesajangan serta dapat memperbaiki tabiat laki-laki jang biasanya kekerasan dan kesabaran laki-laki itu tidak digunakan dimana mustinya.” (p. 13)

It has become a fair share that women, as delicate creatures, become managers of the household, nurturers of the children, pleasers, and correctors of the men’s temperament, whose violence and patience are usually not used where they should be.

In addition to placing women in a subordinate position to men, a control mechanism for women’s sexuality is formalised. For example, this mechanism is ascertained in point seven, which regulates women’s dress code, and in point nine, which prohibits women from associating with men who are not their *mahram* without the permission of their husbands. Regarding the requirement for women to cover their *aurat*, the booklet refers to a hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim as follows:

“Dua matjam ahli neraka jang tiada akan kulihat: Segolongan kaum jang membawa tjambuk sebagai ekor lembu jang dipakai untuk memukuli orang; dan segolongan perempuan-perempuan jang berpakaian (tetapi) telandjang, jang menarik-narik dan menggengel-gelengkan kepalanja sebagai punuk unta; mereka tiada masuk syurga dan tiada akan mentjium baunja; dan sesungguhnya harum sjurga itu adalah tertjium dari antara djauh sekian, sekian.”

Two kinds of hell’s workers I shall never see: A class of men who carry whips like the tails of oxen with which they beat people; and a class of women clothed (but) bare, who pull and shake their heads like the humps of camels; they shall not enter Paradise, nor shall they smell its fragrance; and indeed the fragrance of Paradise is wafted from far, far away.

Meanwhile, regarding the prohibition of women from associating with men who are not her husband and *mahram*, as stated in point nine, it is referred to a hadith narrated by Thabrani: *“Rasulullah s.a.w. melarang perempuan diadjak berbitjara melainkan dengan idzin suaminja”* (Rasulullah, peace be upon him, prohibits women from being spoken to except with the permission of her husband).

Although the booklet places women in a subordinate role, it also functions as a means of negotiation for Muhammadiyah women in their struggle against male domination. Through this booklet, Muhammadiyah women demand concessions by

producing and standardising knowledge about women's rights within the familial and societal context. Thus, even though Muhammadiyah women accepted their subordination by acknowledging the idea of different *kodrat*, they also exercised their subversive agency by formalising the notion of equal rights through their insistence on assuming responsibilities from men in the family, including the provision of life necessities and the provision of emotional support, protection, and respect for their wives. It is written "*maka samalah hak suami istri itu, ketjuali peperintahan, adalah pada laki-laki, jang memang sudah sepatutnya, sebagaimana atas laki-laki bertanggung djawab akan isterinya dan rumah tangganya*" (the rights of husband and wife are the same, apart from giving orders that belongs to men, which is proper because a man is responsible for his wife and household) (p. 11). The demand of Muhammadiyah women for men to engage in virtuous conduct within their households is further emphasised with the stipulation of another theological justification. A hadith narrated by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi is cited: "*orang mukmin jang paling sempurna imannja, ialah jang paling baik budipekertinya, dan orang jang paling baik dari kamu sekalian ialah jang paling baik kepada isterinja*" (the most perfect believer in faith is the one with the best character, and the best of you is the one who is kindest to his wife).

3.4.1.2. Book 2: *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam*

More than four decades later, Majelis Tarjih of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah published *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* in 1982 (see Majelis Tarjih, 1982). Dzuhayatin (2015) asserts that this publication represents a significant enhancement from its predecessor, as it advocates for the social emancipation of women. However, upon careful analysis of the primary content, I find that this book represents a continuation and elaboration of the old fundamental understanding of women and men, as it outlines 'equal but different' as in the previous publication. For instance, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* reaffirms the supremacy of male leadership, citing the Quran (4:34) to justify this idea: "*kaum laki-laki adalah pemimpin atas perempuan-perempuan, lantaran Allah telah melebihkan sebahagian dari mereka atas sebahagian lainnya, dan karena kaum laki-laki itu membelanjakan hartanya*"

(p. 11).³⁹ The utilisation of this particular verse serves to strengthen the notion that males, particularly within familial contexts, assume the position of the household leader who bears the responsibility of providing financial support.

Despite emphasising the supremacy of male leadership, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* also provides theological justification for women's participation in public. Women are allowed and encouraged to be active in society by engaging in various professions, including in the legal and political fields, as well as in science and art. Moreover, religious arguments are made for allowing women to be involved in *jihad* (war). These theological justifications, which allow and encourage women to access the public sphere, proved to be the most significant development from the previous booklet. However, the progressive ideas in *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* are very much anchored on the concept of 'equal but different.' This assertion is elaborated by stating that within Islam, both men and women are afforded equal rights and obligations, albeit with variances in their respective forms due to gender differences (p. 6). Likewise, these differences are then linked back to the role of men and women in the family, where the central role of men is being a husband and head of the family, and women are wives and mothers. In this case, the gender discourse observed in *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* is congruent with the gender discourse espoused by the New Order, which centres on the concept of *ibuisme negara*.

The notion of 'equal but different' may appear to be at odds with the choice to expand women's public access, but I argue that this is unfounded. The 'contradiction' could be interpreted as a means of preserving Dahlan's gender discourse while simultaneously maintaining the image of being a modernist organisation that continuously adapts to contemporary societal development. Having said that, the decision to expand women's access to the public sphere while

³⁹ There are different interpretations of this Quranic verse. If the interpretation in the book *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* were translated directly into English, it would read "men are rulers over women, because God has favour them over the other, and they spend their wealth." However, according to Haleem's translation, this verse reads "husbands should take good care of their wives, with [the bounties] God has given to some more than others and with what they spend out of their own money" (The Quran, 2004, p. 54).

upholding the dominance of male leadership within the family situates women in an ambivalent position because women's progress in public will permanently be restricted by their primary duties in the family as a wife and a mother. This ambivalence engenders a dual role for women that is akin to the one established in the gender discourse of the New Order.

It is safe to argue that despite its progressive nature, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* is a pronouncement of heteronormativity in Muhammadiyah. This pronouncement is explicitly emphasised in the first paragraph of the book's opening section, which underlines gender binarism on the basis of the biological, anatomical distinctions between males and females. The paragraph reads:

“Wanita adalah jenis makhluk dari manusia yang susunan tubuhnya agak berlainan dengan susunan dan bentuk tubuh laki-laki. Ia lebih halus kulitnya dan lebih halus pula perasaannya dan lebih lunak sendi tulangnya. Dijadikan oleh Allah s.w.t. sejak dari asal mula kejadiannya di dunia ini untuk pasangan bagi laki-laki dalam proses menyempurnakan sunnah dan peraturannya, yaitu mengadakan keturunan guna kelangsungan manusia sampai waktu yang telah ditentukan. Laki-laki tidak akan merasa tenang dan tenteram hidupnya di muka bumi ini tanpa wanita, dan begitu pula sebaliknya, karena memang dari asal kejadiannya telah diberi sifat dan tabiat yang demikian.” (p. 5)

Women are creatures whose body structure is somewhat different from that of men. They have smoother skin, more sensitive feelings, and softer bones and joints. Allah makes them from the beginning to be partners for men in the process of perfecting the sunnah and its regulations, namely producing offspring for the continuation of humanity until a predetermined time. Men will not feel calm and peaceful on this earth without women, and vice versa, because they have been given this nature and character from the beginning of their creation.

The subsequent paragraph places additional emphasis on heteronormativity by presenting arguments that suggest the differences in biological anatomy were intended by God to guide humankind in loving and caring for one another, as well as in fulfilling the role of prospering the world as God's *caliph* (vicegerent). In another part of the book, heteronormativity is increasingly underscored. For example, in terms of education, gender binarism is emphasised by requiring women

to reflect their position as women. It is written “*bahwa ia (perempuan) adalah wanita bukan laki-laki secara agamis dan biologis*” (that she is a female not a male religiously and biologically) (p.43). This binarism is further clarified by providing the theological basis of a hadith narrated by Bukhari “*Rasulullah s.a.w. mengutuk kepada laki-laki yang menyerupai perempuan dan perempuan yang menyerupai laki-laki*” (the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him cursed the men who imitate women and the women who imitate men) (p.44).

As highlighted in *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam*, Muhammadiyah asserts that the establishment of a family unit for procreation is one of the essential duties of humankind in the world. Based on this perspective, there are two crucial issues to underline. Firstly, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* places the family at the forefront of its gender discourse, in line with Muhammadiyah's mission of establishing a truly Islamic society. It emphasises the pivotal role of the family in shaping both the community and the nation. Secondly, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* not only governs gender but also regulates sexuality, stipulating that sexual relations between men and women are permissible only within the confines of marriage. Based on these perspectives, it presents a series of guidelines to ensure that the interactions between men and women, both in the domestic and public sphere, are conducted in an appropriate manner.

Obviously, the guidelines are primarily directed towards women, as indicated by the title *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam*, which can be translated as ‘etiquettes of women in Islam.’ The book, for example, requires women who participate in an event where both genders are present to be accompanied by either their husband or *mahram* (p. 21), and in order to prevent the possibility of attracting attention from other men, women are required to speak ‘naturally’ and should not use strong fragrances (p. 34). Overall, *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* provides a comprehensive set of guidelines that are strict and detailed in nature, pertaining to the conduct of women in various aspects of their lives, including but not limited to their attire and behaviours within both familial and societal contexts.

3.4.1.3. Book 3: *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah*

Less than a decade later, following the publication of *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam*, Aisyiyah authored another book concerning gender relations, which was published with the approval of Muhammadiyah in 1984. The book entitled *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* (see PP Aisyiyah, 2017) holds a significant role in the gender discourse of the organisation and serves as the primary source of reference for Muhammadiyah's family ideology: *keluarga sakinah*. The phrase *keluarga sakinah* is taken from the Quran (30:21),⁴⁰ wherein it is posited that the fundamental objective of marriage and family life is to engender a sense of serenity in human existence through the cultivation of mutual love and affection. Therefore, for Muhammadiyah, *keluarga sakinah* is defined as a family formed based on a legal marriage and registered in the office of religious affairs, in which this marriage is founded upon mutual love and respect with the ultimate goal of fostering a harmonious, contented, and blissful life blessed by God in this world and the hereafter (PP Aisyiyah, 2017, p. 25). The notion of *keluarga sakinah*, according to Siti Chamamah Suratno, the Aisyiyah Chairwoman (2005-2010), subsequently had an impact on the conceptualisation of an ideal family model propagated by the Indonesian government (in Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 153).

Despite facing significant criticisms from both internal and external organisations, as previously stated, *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* remains the primary point of reference for Muhammadiyah regarding gender and family discourse. It has undergone several revisions since its initial publication in 1982. The last revision was published by Aisyiyah in 2017 with the acknowledgement from Muhammadiyah through the Decree of the Central Leadership of Muhammadiyah No. 101/KEP/I.0/B/2015 concerning the *Tanfidz* of the Decision of the 28th National Meeting of *Tarjih*.

⁴⁰ This verse reads "another of His signs is that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquility: He ordained love and kindness between you. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect" (The Quran, 2004, p. 258).

The guidance towards a harmonious family, as presented in *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah*, builds upon the narrative established in the two preceding books, which position the family as the focal point of the Muhammadiyah movement. The family unit functions as a crucial setting for the cultivation of future generations of pious individuals, who will, in return, contribute to the revitalisation of the organisation and serve as the cornerstone for the establishment of a truly Islamic society. Heterosexual marriage as the only legitimate institution for family formation becomes the norm every Muslim man and woman is expected to perform. In *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah*, this expectation is justified by at least three theological foundations. Those theological foundations are (PP Aisyiyah, 2017, pp. 71-75):

Dan kawinkanlah orang-orang yang sedirian di antara kamu dan orang-orang yang layak (berkawin) dari hamba-hamba sahayamu yang lelaki dan hamba-hamba sahayamu yang perempuan. Jika mereka miskin, Allah akan memampukan mereka dengan kurnia-Nya. (Quran, 24:32)

Marry off the single among you and those of your male and female slaves who are fit [for marriage]. If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God's bounty is infinite, and He is all knowing (The Quran, 2004, p. 222).

Wahai para pemuda barangsiapa di antara kamu sekalian telah cukup persediaan untuk menikah maka menikahlah. Sesungguhnya nikah itu akan menjaga dari kejahatan mata dan mampu menjaga kehormatan. Barangsiapa yang belum berkemampuan hendaklah berpuasa. Sebab baginya puasa itu merupakan perisai (yang mampu menahannya dari perbuatan zina). (Bukhari Muslim)

O, young people! Whoever among you can marry should marry because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty. And whoever is not able to marry should fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual urges.

Apabila seseorang sudah menikah, maka berarti ia telah menyempurnakan separuh agamanya, maka hendaklah ia bertakwa kepada Allah dalam menjaga separuh agama yang tersisa. (Al-Baihaqi)

When a person gets married, he has completed half of his religion, so let him fear Allah in maintaining the remaining half of his religion.

As in *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam, Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* also prescribes a comprehensive set of normative guidelines in order to create a harmonious family. These guidelines provide a precise definition of the respective roles, responsibilities, and relationships among family members, encompassing the husband/father, wife/mother, children, and extended family members. Additionally, the book also offers a set of principles for families to lead their lives in various aspects, encompassing spirituality, education, health, environment, economy, society, law, and politics.

Similar to its preceding books, *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* reiterates the notion of 'equal but different' citing the Quran (4:34).⁴¹ However, in contrast to the others, the assertion of 'equal but different' in *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* is conveyed more subtly by giving a sharper focus on the topic of gender equality between men and women. It is elaborated in a whole sub-chapter encompassing five aspects of equality: equality in terms of worship, equality in social functions, equality in the narrative of human genesis, equality in terms of potential for achievement and success, and equality before the law. With these five points, the book seeks to assert gender equality between men and women while the idea of superiority and subordination should be abandoned (p. 4).

Notwithstanding, this claim appears to be paradoxical given that *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* still adheres to the notion of distinct *fitrah* (nature) between males and females, which subsequently translates into distinct familial and societal roles. In a separate chapter, this distinction is employed to reaffirm the distribution of roles between spouses, wherein the husband is underscored as the head of the family and the primary breadwinner, and the wife assumes the role of the household manager who is expected to comply with her husband's directives (pp. 105-106). Even though the idea of different natures between men and women is not as strongly highlighted as in the two previous books, the fact that the notion of different roles between husband and wife is attached directly to the previously

⁴¹ See footnote nr. 38 and 39

mentioned five points of equality results in a somewhat ambivalent handling of the topic of gender equality.

Like *Adabul mar'ah fil Islam* and *Tuntunan mentjapai isteri Islam jang berarti*, *Tuntunan menuju keluarga sakinah* also showcases the efforts of Muhammadiyah women in gaining concessions in gender relations against male domination. Therefore, this book should not be perceived as a mere form of submission but rather as a negotiation tool for Muhammadiyah women. As van Doorn-Harder (2006) suggests, Muhammadiyah women employ *keluarga sakinah* to navigate their interests across multiple frameworks, including Islam, Muhammadiyah, Javanese culture, and the Indonesian state. She notes that although *keluarga sakinah* comes with strict normative gendered boundaries, it may not give women freedom as enjoyed by men, but it still aims at fundamentally improving the life quality of Muslim women. The distinction of rights and duties between husbands and wives translates into women's protection within the family. The book prescribes normative direction for women to exhibit obedience and devotion in their roles as wives while simultaneously mandating that men demonstrate qualities of love and care in their roles as husbands. For members of Muhammadiyah, both male and female, the ethical implications of meeting the expectations of *keluarga sakinah* are substantial because the failure to do so would constitute a direct challenge to the organisation's fundamental objective of establishing a truly Islamic society.

3.4.2. A family-like structure

The mechanism of gender discourse in Muhammadiyah also takes place in the organisational structure. The formation of organisational structures in Muhammadiyah is predicated upon gender and age stratification, which embodies the norms and values of a harmonious family. In this light, the institutional structures of Muhammadiyah explicitly reinforce the sex/gender system, thereby perpetuating the discourse of inherent gender distinctions and reinforcing the gender binary. The outcome of this particular structure is the establishment of normative boundaries between individuals based on their gender, which restricts

them within the confines of their biologically determined sex categories. This implies that their physiological feature serves as a limiting factor for their movement within the organisation.

Like other national-scale organisations, Muhammadiyah has a complex organisational structure, both vertical and horizontal. The vertical structure is a policy line that is formed based on regional coverage mimicking that of the Indonesian state: *pusat* (national), *wilayah* (province), *daerah* (district), *cabang* (sub-district), *ranting* (village).⁴² Meanwhile, the horizontal structure entails two main elements: first is the auxiliary leadership units consisting of *majelis* (council/department) and *lembaga* (body), which carry out the main tasks of Muhammadiyah, and the second consists of the autonomous organisations, organisational units under Muhammadiyah, which have the authority to regulate their own affairs under the guidance of Muhammadiyah leadership.

In terms of membership, Muhammadiyah is gender inclusive. In its statutes (*Anggaran Rumah Tangga*), Article 4 emphasises that the membership of Muhammadiyah consists of Muslim men and women who accept and are willing to carry out the organisation's vision and mission (see PP Muhammadiyah, 2005). The membership of the leadership board is also gender inclusive, as outlined in the statute article 10, which clearly states that the membership of central leadership boards can be both men and women. Thus, for obtaining a leadership position, gender should not be a problem. Of course, again, this gender neutrality must be seen within binary terms.

Nevertheless, the formation of gender-based autonomous organisations within the structure of Muhammadiyah has introduced complexities in the leadership practices of the organisation with regard to gender. For instance, the incorporation of Aisyiyah into Muhammadiyah's organisational structure paved the way for the institutionalisation of a gender dichotomy, which, according to Noer

⁴² Muhammadiyah has established several *cabang* (branch) abroad such as in Malaysia, Thailand, and Germany. These *cabang* are usually managed by Muhammadiyah students who are studying in the country.

(1973), symbolises the process of women's subordination. In practice, Aisyiyah is frequently utilised as a pretext to dismiss women's leadership within Muhammadiyah, limiting the opportunity for women to occupy the highest leadership seats in Muhammadiyah.

Furthermore, the gendered organisational structure of Muhammadiyah is resulting in imbalanced power relations within the association, wherein Muhammadiyah holds authority over Aisyiyah but not the other way around. As outlined by Dzuhayatin (2015, pp. 218-242), Muhammadiyah, as a patron organisation, has legal, structural, and financial superiority over the other autonomous organisations. For instance, as stipulated in its statutes, the legal authority of Muhammadiyah covers the formation and dissolution of autonomous organisations, which means Muhammadiyah may intervene with the structure of Aisyiyah. Baroroh Baried, chairwoman of Aisyiyah 1965-1985, once said, "they (Muhammadiyah) can also fire members of the Aisyiyah board, which they have done in the past. We cannot fire members of their board, and we don't have a veto in their organisation. You see, it is rather like a husband-wife relationship" (as quoted in Van Doorn-Harder, 2006, p. 72). In the financial sector, Muhammadiyah has the authority to control all finances and assets, including the finances and assets of Aisyiyah. Therefore, for instance, Muhammadiyah's facilities are, in general, in much better condition than Aisyiyah's. For example, the office of Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta is much more luxurious compared to the old and poorly maintained office of Aisyiyah.

The decision to integrate Aisyiyah into the structure of Muhammadiyah holds historical significance in paving the way for the emergence of other dichotomies. In addition to gender, the structure of autonomous organisations in Muhammadiyah is also based on age stratification. After Aisyiyah, more autonomous organisations were incorporated into the Muhammadiyah structure, including Pemuda Muhammadiyah (organisation for Muhammadiyah young men), Naswiatul Aisyiyah (organisation for Muhammadiyah young women), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (organisation for Muhammadiyah university students), Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah (Organisation for Muhammadiyah school students), Hizbul

Watton (Muhammadiyah boy and girl scouts), and Tapak Suci Muhammadiyah (organisation for Muhammadiyah martial art). Ultimately, the gender/age-based structure of the autonomous organisations presents a barrier for women and the younger generation to have equal opportunities in internal decision-making processes within Muhammadiyah.

Furthermore, there is a distinction between general and special autonomous organisations. The general status of an autonomous organisation does not include authority to manage *amal usaha* (business charities), and its members are not necessarily official members of Muhammadiyah. For example, Pemuda Muhammadiyah, the memberships of Tapak Suci Muhammadiyah, IPM, and IMM do not require them to become Muhammadiyah cadres. Meanwhile, the special status gives an autonomous organisation the limited authority to manage *amal usaha*. This status also means that the members of the autonomous organisation are also members of Muhammadiyah. Currently, Aisyiyah is the only special autonomous organisation in Muhammadiyah.

The practical outcome of this gender segregation in Muhammadiyah's organisational structure is the institutionalisation of asymmetrical power relations and the standardisation of the hierarchy of authority between men and women. In terms of organisational leadership, it strengthens the primacy of males by assigning Muhammadiyah men superior positions while at the same time creating a glass ceiling for Muhammadiyah women. Due to gender-based segregation, the inclusion of women in Muhammadiyah's leadership board remains unsettled, let alone the possibility of women becoming the general chairwoman. These consequences contradict the organisational statutes (AD/ART), which entitles men and women to the same rights and opportunities, including the option to become the organisation's leaders.

On the organisational level, the gender-based structure automatically distributes authorities and powers within the association, wherein Muhammadiyah assumes the position of the primary patron with the most dominant roles, while autonomous organisations are obliged to follow its guidance. Muhammadiyah

undertakes the role of the patriarch within the association, exerting dominance over the other autonomous organisations in a manner akin to that of a husband or father in a familial unit. Meanwhile, in a manner akin to the role of a wife or mother, Aisiyiyah accompanies Muhammadiyah in the pursuit of its objectives and is granted some limited authority to manage certain ventures. The other autonomous organisations, Pemuda Muhammadiyah and Nasyiatul Aisiyiyah, which are also structured following gender segregation, are akin to children who are expected to serve as the future leaders of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiyah, respectively.⁴³

The cultural and theological foundations of Muhammadiyah contribute to the practise of its gender segregation. Muhammadiyah emerged within the cultural context of Javanese society, which is characterised by a clear division of social space between genders where men hold authority in public spaces while women are primarily confined to domestic spaces. From a theological perspective, the concept of gender segregation is rooted in the notion of reducing social interaction with individuals of the opposite sex as a means of preventing adultery, which is considered a significant transgression of Islamic sexual norms. Thus, Muhammadiyah's organisational structure functions as a mechanism to regulate and govern sexual behaviour within the institution. However, gender-segregated structures are not unique to Muhammadiyah as they can be found in other religious-based organisations and political parties in Indonesia.⁴⁴

⁴³ Dzuhayatin (2015, p. 215) illustrates this symbolization of an ideal family through the Muhammadiyah structure vividly. The husband/father gets a forum called Muhammadiyah symbolizing the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. In accordance with the norms of the conjugal-nuclear family, the husband/father plays a central role in the family. After forming a family consisting of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyiyah, regeneration begins following the development of children. It starts from toddlers at Aisiyiyah's kindergarten Bustanul Athfal, continue to the adolescence at the Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah. In accordance with the moral concept of Muhammadiyah's *keluarga sakinah*, children must have their own rooms after they grow into adulthood. Hence, Pemuda Muhammadiyah was formed for the young man and Nasyiatul Aisiyiyah for the young women.

⁴⁴ These organisations include NU and other Indonesian political parties such as Golkar, PDI-P dan Democratic Party, etc.

3.5. Heterosexuality as the primary pillar

As previously discussed, Muhammadiyah's gender deployment functions as a framework for communicating its moral perspectives, specifically pertaining to sexuality.⁴⁵ This deployment contains discourses that consistently and comprehensively disseminate knowledge about the proper roles of men and women linked to their reproductive functions. It prescribes a narrow understanding of (hetero)sexuality for both men and women, which can only be expressed appropriately within marriage. Sexuality is even more limited for women who are mostly bound to a husband's authority.

The knowledge of what is perceived as appropriate regarding gender roles is then disseminated and operated through extensive networks of organisational policies, programs, and activities. It establishes moral codes within the organisation and shapes a dominant understanding of gender with firm normative boundaries and a dichotomy of 'normal' and 'abnormal,' 'permissible' and 'forbidden,' or 'right' and 'wrong.' Furthermore, this gender construction not only prescribes the expected behaviours of men and women within the organisation but also within the context of the Indonesian state and Islam.

In general, the primary emphasis of Muhammadiyah's gender discourse is on the fulfilment of traditional gender roles of both men and women, including reproductive responsibilities. In the context of the LGBT controversy in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah's gender discourse serves as a reinforcement of heteronormativity by positioning homosexuality and transgender as deviations and violations of the inherent nature of human reproductive sexuality. During our conversation, one of my interlocutors, Bu Alimatul, outlined Muhammadiyah's perspective on gender and sexuality, which is firmly grounded in the norms of heterosexuality:

⁴⁵ Blackwood (2010) in her book *Falling into the Lesbi World* observed this connection between the deployment of gender and deployment of sexuality particularly during the New Order. She observed that the New Order used deployment of gender as a vehicle to propagate their discourse of sexuality. Thus, the discourse of sexuality was formed by creating "properly gendered, reproductive citizens situated within heterosexual nuclear families" (p. 40).

Indeed, gender in Aisyiyah-Muhammadiyah is *still* two, not six. In gender studies, there are six, right? Male, female, transgender, transsexual, hermaphrodite, and transvestite. However, when it comes to sexuality, it is different. In my opinion, in terms of sexuality, Aisyiyah-Muhammadiyah uses the perspective of a heterosexual family. They do not condone the perspective of a specific group that believes everyone has the right to choose whatever they want. Muhammadiyah follows the concept of *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious family), confirming that marriage means heterosexual marriage.

Bu Alimatul's statement that Muhammadiyah 'still' recognises two genders is an intriguing point to highlight. This prompted me to ask whether Muhammadiyah may in the future recognise other genders, to which she replied that she could not predict it, but she does not overrule the possibility either. Nonetheless, Bu Alimatul's overall statement suggests that after more than a century, the gender discourse in Muhammadiyah has remained confined to rigid heteronormative parameters. In other words, heterosexuality has been the primary pillar of Muhammadiyah's gender discourse from its inception until today.

The prevalence of heteronormativity implies that discourses of gender, sexuality, and family are inextricably linked. Within the context of Muhammadiyah, it can be succinctly posited that gender and sexuality are informed by biological sex and that the manifestation of gender and sexuality is closely intertwined with the institution of heterosexual marriage. In this light, for instance, heteronormativity assumes that males must exhibit masculine traits and are sexually attracted to females. However, it is essential to note that in Muhammadiyah, the expression of such sexual interests is deemed religiously and socially acceptable only within the boundaries of legal marriage. Thereby, for Muhammadiyah, the emergence of the LGBT discourse that demands human rights reflects a worldview that fundamentally clashes with their gender discourse. The LGBT discourse presents a challenge that threatens the organisation's fundamental purpose in creating a truly Islamic society as it explicitly exposes impropriety and transgression of their gender and sexual norms.

Although it was relatively rare, open opposition to LGBT existed in Muhammadiyah far before the controversy in 2016. For instance, in 1997, Lukman

Harun, a prominent figure of Muhammadiyah, protested two talk shows broadcasted by two Indonesian private TV channels, saying that the two programs were against the nation's cultural and religious values because they sensationalised issues of homosexuality, infidelity, and fornication in 1997 (Oetomo, 2003, p. 139). Such open opposition was also expressed through academic channels. For example, Wahid (2003), a member of the Majelis Tarjih, published an academic article in which he observed that homosexuality has emerged as a prevalent sexuality in modern society, with its practices being openly carried out and perceived with empathy by a segment of the society. Subsequently, he presented two scenarios of actions in response: either prohibit homosexual practices and therefore reject homosexual people altogether or forbid it but still offer empathy. From these two scenarios, he opted for the first.

The sporadic and small-scale opposition towards homosexuality from Muhammadiyah can be explained through a study by Boellstorff (2007). He once proposed the notion of incommensurability as a means of examining homosexuality within the context of Indonesia. He suggested that homosexuality was deemed ungrammatical for Indonesians, resulting in its marginalisation and, therefore, invisible within the gender-sexuality discourse in Indonesia, despite its existence being prevalent throughout the nation. However, this situation has changed in recent years as the issue of homosexuality in Indonesian gender and sexuality discourse has gradually started to gain public attention.

In Muhammadiyah, the topic of homosexuality has been inserted in its official document during the past decade. For instance, in its *tanfidz* (an official document containing decisions taken during the general assembly) of the 47th *muktamar* in 2015, Muhammadiyah has designated the LGBT community as a specific focus of its da'wah initiatives aimed at special communities (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 108). The inclusion of the LGBT community as a target in Muhammadiyah's *dakwah* program shows that the organisation is beginning to acknowledge the existence of LGBT as a social reality living among Muslim communities that needs to be considered. In this light, Burhani (2016b) characterises the LGBT community

as a facet of societal diversity that poses a challenge for Muhammadiyah to confront. He writes:

Selain persoalan waktu, masyarakat sekarang ditantang untuk hidup bersama dengan berbagai kelompok manusia yang beragam, bahwa kita adalah warga dunia (global citizens) yang sangat majemuk. Bahkan keragaman itu kadang diluar dari batas bayangan masyarakat selama ini. Dulu mungkin tidak dibayangkan bahwa kita akan hidup bertetangga dengan komunitas LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, dan transgender). Tetapi sekarang mereka adalah realitas sosial di tengah kita. Jadi bukan hanya perbedaan keyakinan keagamaan, semisal Ahmadiyah dan Syiah, yang menjadi bagian dari pluralitas masyarakat, tetapi juga mereka yang memiliki orientasi seksual berbeda. (Burhani, 2016b, pp. 47-48)

In addition to the issue of time, our community faces the challenge of living together with various diverse human groups; we are global citizens of a very diverse world. However, diversity is sometimes beyond the limits of what people have imagined so far. For example, in the past, we might not have imagined that we would live next door to the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community. Nevertheless, now, they are a social reality that lives among us. Therefore, it is not only differences in religious beliefs, such as Ahmadiyah and Shia, which are part of the plurality of our society, but also those with different sexual orientations.

In a span of less than a year, since the LGBT community became one of the focal points of Muhammadiyah's *dakwah* initiative, the topic of LGBT has become a contentious issue among the Indonesian public, resulting in the community being subjected to both verbal and physical abuse. With the increasing visibility of LGBT in the public eye, the narrative in Muhammadiyah also changed. If, in the previous year, LGBT was referred to as a *dakwah* target for special communities (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 108), in 2016, LGBT was publicly declared a threat to society (Suara Muhammadiyah, 2016). In the following years, the topic of LGBT has emerged as a subject of open discourse, signifying a shift that homosexuality is becoming 'commensurable' in the discourse surrounding gender and sexuality, at least within the context of Muhammadiyah. This I will discuss in the next chapter.

“A man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these images is to wound him.”

(James, 1890, p. 294)

Chapter 4. Muhammadiyah’s LGBT public narrative

The previous chapter scrutinised the pervasiveness of heteronormativity in Muhammadiyah’s gender norms. Within this framework, the organisation perceives LGBT people as deviating from the norms, posing a potential risk to the established social order and presenting a direct opposition to its gender and sexual standards. In this chapter, I examine the construction of Muhammadiyah’s public discourse pertaining to LGBT. It initiates by investigating the progression of anti-LGBT sentiment since 2016, considering the impact of religious, political, and cultural factors. The intertwining of these three factors is evident in the formation of dualisms within the LGBT narrative: religiously, LGBT is situated in opposition to Islam; politically, LGBT is situated in opposition to Indonesian identity; culturally, LGBT is situated against the mainstream social norms. These dualisms serve as the basis for the construction of a grand narrative of LGBT in Indonesia. In this vein, Muhammadiyah also actively contributes to the narrative construction by utilising the dualism framework in its LGBT discourse and creating ambivalence in the process.

4.1. Discrimination against minorities in Indonesia

Before discussing the specifics of anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia, it is necessary to provide a brief contextualisation of the challenges faced by minority groups in general in the country. First and foremost, the protection of minority groups within the Indonesian populace has been formally institutionalised within the country's legal system, which includes the Constitution and the political philosophy Pancasila. The presence of minorities is, therefore, an integral part of Indonesia's narrative of diversity and toleration. Endeavours to protect minorities have been incorporated in the construction of self-perception among the Indonesian population, where knowledge of the country's multicultural and pluralism ideals is taught to Indonesian children from an early age. The founding President Soekarno once declared:

This country, the Republic of Indonesia, does not belong to any group, nor to any religion, nor to any ethnic group, nor to any group with particular customs and traditions, but is the property of all of us from Sabang to Merauke! (i.e., from the further-most northwestern to southeastern points of the archipelago). (As quoted in Vatikotis 2017, p. 157; Fealy & Ricci, 2019, p. 1)

However, intention may not always correspond to reality, and belief does not always translate into practice. Unfortunately, the reality of recent years in Indonesia does not seem to match the ideals outlined in the Constitution or implied in the Pancasila. The domestic and international media have reported on various social tensions and conflicts in which minority groups experience stigmatisation, discriminatory treatment, and even violence at the hands of other groups in society. In some cases, politicians, public officials, and religious leaders have been involved in this denigrating treatment for ideological or political reasons.

The second amendment of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia guarantees the protection of individual fundamental human rights, including the protection of self, honour, dignity, and the right to feel secure from threats. In addition to the constitution, Indonesia has a set of political philosophies that provide frameworks for the recognition and protection of each citizen. The second and third precepts of Pancasila, which read 'just and civilised humanity' and 'social justice

for all of the people of Indonesia,’ respectively, also serve as the basis for a political life centred on humanity and justice for everyone. These ideals are encapsulated in the Indonesia national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, an old Javanese phrase that perhaps best translates as ‘out of many, one.’ This motto is a political statement designating diversity as an essential foundation in the nation’s life. It signifies that Indonesia is based on the inclusion of the extraordinary diversity of its people, which means that all differences must be respected and protected. These three political frameworks are instruments created by the Indonesian people to exercise their rights and power equally within the borders of the Republic.

Despite the formal guarantees of constitutional protection and the inculcation of citizens’ self-perception, the protection of minorities is frequently contested. Religious triggers often give rise to these challenges in numerous instances. A growing trend of religious populism and conservatism since the Indonesian political reform in 1998, as pointed out by many scholars (see, for example, Yilmaz & Barton, 2021; Sebastian et al., 2021; Amal, 2020; Mietzner, 2020; Zuhdi, 2018; Hadiz, 2017; van Bruinessen, 2013) has had an impact on a decline of democratic political culture in Indonesia. These numerous readings suggest that religious populism and conservatism also manifest in the strengthening of Muslim exclusivism, leading to the increasing stigmatisation of minorities. In this context, stigmatisation can be defined as “the process whereby a mark or attribute – culturally understood as devalued and discrediting– is recognised in, or applied to, an individual or group of individuals by another more powerful group of individuals” (Schormans, 2014). Stigmatisation has a powerful force to manifest as social exclusion, resulting in discrimination and infringement upon the rights of marginalised groups.

In Indonesia, the dominant group holds expectations for minority groups to adhere to their norms and values. Law enforcement officials often defer to the majority by forcing the minority to submit to their demands, often justified in upholding morality, following religious norms, and maintaining public order. This situation bears a resemblance to the scenario expounded by Kenneth Burrige, who writes:

The most favourable political condition for the emergence of discrimination toward religious minorities seems to be when harmony is a euphemism for the kind of (political system) that is either not powerful enough to suppress radical groups, or which is willing to compromise the rights of religious minorities in order to stop the threat from hard-liners, with the alibi of creating order or preventing chaos or bloodshed. (As cited in Burhani, 2019, p. 33)

Burridge's explanation focuses primarily on religious minorities, but his observation can be extrapolated to other minority groups, including sexual minorities, without diminishing its significance. In Indonesia, minority rights are often compromised by the State under the pretexts of upholding morality, following religious norms, and maintaining public order. This situation is inextricably linked to the loose interpretation of the article in the Constitution that limits the enforcement of human rights. Despite the extensive elaboration of fundamental human rights in the second amendment of the 1945 Constitution, as set out in Articles 28A - 28I, these rights are subject to the following restrictions:

In exercising their rights and liberties, each person has the duty to accept the limitations determined by law for the sole purposes of guaranteeing the recognition and respect of the rights and liberties of other people and of satisfying a democratic society's just demands based on considerations of morality, religious values, security, and public order. (UUD 1945, 2nd amendment, article 28J).

In recent years, instances of discrimination and violence against minority groups in Indonesia have been frequent. Ahmadiyah and Shia, for example, are two minority religious groups in Islam that have been constantly under attack, particularly by militant Islamist groups. In February 2011, a group of people committed a violent act against the Ahmadiyah community in Cikeusik, West Java, resulting in the death of three Ahmadi men and the injury of five others (Ulum, 2011). Similarly, in August 2012, a violent attack against the Shia community in Sampang, Madura, resulted in the loss of one life, the critical injury of four individuals, and the destruction of numerous homes in the community (Bisri et al., 2012). The occurrence of these attacks can be attributed to the perceived deviation from Islam by these two minority groups. Ahmadiyah is deemed a heretical sect due to their rejection of Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet, while Shia is deemed blasphemous due to their belief that the Prophet mandated the leadership of

Muslims to his nephew and son-in-law, Ali bin Abi Talib. This belief entails the rejection of the leadership of the other three *khulafaurrasidin*.⁴⁶

Apart from intrareligious discrimination, interreligious discrimination also occurs against other religious minorities. An instance of the infringement of religious freedom can be observed in the actions of the city government of Bogor, located in West Java. The government has refused to adhere to the Supreme Court's ruling that validates the construction permit for the GKI (*Gereja Kristen Indonesia/Indonesian Christian Church*) Yasmin. In this light, in 2012, Human Rights Watch (2012, p. 337) notes that in the GKI Yamin's case, "senior government officials—including Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, Home Affairs Minister, Gamawan Fauzi, and Minister of Human Rights and Law, Patrialis Akbar—continued to justify restrictions on religious freedom in the name of public order." In 2021, the Mayor of Bogor claimed that the Yasmin church conflict had been resolved with the government donating new land for the construction of the church. However, this claim was refuted by Bona Sigalingging, a GKI Yasmin's administrator, who contended that the predicament could only be resolved if the city government adhered to the Supreme Court's ruling (Peresmian GKI, 2021).

Moreover, racial and ethnic discrimination also quite often occurs in Indonesia. Between 2011 and 2018, the National Commission for Human Rights documented a total of 101 complaints pertaining to racial and ethnic discrimination, with the year 2016 seeing the highest number of such complaints (Komnas HAM, 2018). These complaints cover a broad spectrum of discriminatory practices, such as restrictions on public services, disbandment of traditional rituals, discrimination on land ownership rights, and unequal access to employment. A regional regulation in Yogyakarta serves as an instance of racial discrimination whereby Chinese Indonesians, who are not recognised as indigenous Indonesian citizens, are

⁴⁶ The *Khulafaurrashidin* were the four caliphs whom Sunni Islam believes succeeded the Prophet Muhammad in leadership after his death. This term can be interpreted literally as leaders who get guidance. The four companions of the Apostle who were included in the *Khulafaurrashidin* in order are Abu Bakr Ash-Shidiq, Umar bin Khattab, Uthman bin Affan, and Ali bin Abi Talib.

prohibited from owning land within the province (Lestarini, 2018).⁴⁷ In addition to the Chinese Indonesian demographic, Papuans also frequently encounter instances of racial discrimination in Yogyakarta. For example, on the 15th of July in 2016, the Yogyakarta Regional Police apprehended eight Papuan students who were alleged to have caused a disturbance in public order. The detentions took place as a large contingent of law enforcement officials and representatives from various mass groups encircled the Papuan student residence in Yogyakarta, purportedly intending to hold a demonstration to voice their aspirations for West Papua's self-determination (Idhom, 2017).

In the context of Indonesian minorities, Fealy & Ricci's (2019) edited volume *Contentious belonging: the place of minorities in Indonesia* offers a deeper analysis, thereby providing valuable insight into their life and experiences. This volume documents and critically examines various facets of minorities' lives, encompassing disability, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity. According to Fealy and Ricci (2019, p. 6), as proposed by Francesco Capotorti, the definition of minority is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria. They suggest that the concept of minority identity is a social construction because "membership of minority group may be ascribed objectively by society or applied subjectively by members of a particular group." Wieringa (2019) presents a chapter in this volume that delves into the topic of sexual minorities in Indonesia. She argues that although there has been a higher degree of tolerance towards same-sex relationships in past periods of Indonesian society, presently, this level of acceptance is declining. She suggests that the increasing hegemonic power of heteronormativity and the rise of conservative Muslim groups in the Indonesian nation-state is a key factor contributing to this gradual decline. In another chapter, Jones (2019) reflects on these instances of 'contentious belonging' and identifies two potential outcomes that exist between the inclusive nature of Indonesia's motto, *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* and the exclusive

⁴⁷ The regional regulation in question is the instruction of the Deputy Regional Head of Yogyakarta No. K.898 / I / A / 1975 on 5 March 1975 concerning *Penyeragaman Policy Pemberian Hak Atas Tanah kepada Seorang Warga Negara Indonesia Non-Pribumi* (the Uniform Policy on the Granting of Land Rights to a Non-Indigenous Indonesian Citizen).

nature of Muslim majoritarianism, by which the latter generates a pressure of conformity to the increasingly conservative set of social norms and values.

The past tolerance toward same-sex practices amidst heteronormativity, as observed by Wieringa (2019), has also been studied by Boellstorff (2005, p.222). He writes, “although homosexuality and transgenderism usually escape official comment, if directly asked, most religious and state authorities swiftly condemn transgenderism and homosexuality as sinful and incompatible with Indonesian tradition.” To conceptualise this situation, Boellstorff (2007, p.142) uses the term ‘incommensurability,’ in which heterosexuality dominated the public debate and thus there had been “virtually no context where Islam and male homosexuality have come together in the public realm.” Boellstorff’s statement implies that heteronormativity is ingrained in Indonesian society and that any ‘acceptance’ of non-normative gender and sexuality is likely a result of their perceived insignificant in societal discourse.

However, presently, it appears that this circumstance has undergone a transformation. The topic of homosexuality and transgender identity has garnered growing public attention, with particular prominence in 2016 when it became a central topic in public discourse. Government officials and prominent Islamic figures were among those who actively expressed their opposition to it. Since then, the stigmatisation of LGBT people has become more apparent through acts of verbal and physical aggression directed toward them. The stigmatisation has also been leading to public demands to criminalise homosexual relationships and transgender expression.

4.2. The 2016 anti-LGBT moral panic

It was in January 2016 when the Minister of Indonesian Higher Education, Muhammad Nasir, issued a public statement in response to a brochure circulated on social media by the Support Group and Resource Center (SGRC) of the Sexuality Studies at the University of Indonesia offering counselling services for the LGBT community. He commented that LGBT people should not be allowed to enter

university campuses and argued that “there are standards of values and morals to uphold, and a university is a moral safeguard” (LGBT not welcome, 2016).

Following the Minister’s statement, a multitude of other public officials echoed his message through the media. For instance, Nasir Djamil, a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) from the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), suggested that LGBT people who ‘infiltrate’ universities’ scientific studies or discussion groups pose a significant threat to the nation (Dahono, 2016). That same month, in January, the chairman of the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), Zulkifli Hasan, claimed that homosexuality is incongruous with Indonesian culture and, therefore, “as a movement, the existence of LGBT must be opposed” (Nurbianto, 2016). In the following month, Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu made allegations that LGBT rights activism was a form of proxy warfare against the nation, instigated by external parties, and deemed it to be more perilous than a nuclear conflict (Hakim, 2016). Subsequently, Minister of Social Affairs Khofifah Indar Parawansa implied that homosexuality is contagious by stating that the LGBT organisations specifically aim to convert underprivileged middle school students in Lombok (HRW, 2016, p. 20). That same month, in February, Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin conveyed an ambiguous message: he urged the public to refrain from exhibiting hostility towards the LGBT community but also warned that the LGBT movement is trying to shift the religious values and the identity of the nation, specifically in relation to family values and the Indonesian marriage law (Sawitri, 2016).

Muslim organisations and authorities also echoed the prevailing anti-LGBT sentiment of these politicians. To illustrate this case, I take a few examples from the elites of the three most influential Muslim organisations in Indonesia: Haedar Nashir and Anwar Abbas from Muhammadiyah, Said Aqil Siraj from NU, and Maruf Amin from the MUI. According to an article in Suara Muhammadiyah, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, claimed that LGBT people are in opposition to the principles of Pancasila and are incompatible with both human nature and religious values (Haedar Nashir, 2018). He emphasised that the state must not allow the existence of the LGBT community in Indonesia. Several other

prominent figures of Muhammadiyah had previously also expressed such anti-LGBT sentiment. In 2015, the General Secretary of Muhammadiyah, Anwar Abbas, asserted that ‘LGBT is not human rights’ but that it is a disease that could be cured if there is willingness and determination of the ones concerned. Thus, he insisted that the state must help LGBT people to return to heterosexuality, which he believes as the true sexuality according to the law of nature (Festiani, 2015). In 2017, Anwar Abbas called for a nation-wide boycott against Starbucks for supporting the legalisation of same-sex marriages in the US (Anya, 2017). From NU, the Chairman Said Aqil Siraj claimed that “the phenomena of LGBT in Indonesia have been hazardous” and that the ‘LGBT phenomenon’ was not only against religious teachings but also in contradiction with human nature (Yudha & Indrawan, 2016). Accordingly, he asserted that the National Boards of NU endorse the position of Minister Muhammad Nasir, who forbade university campuses from giving access to LGBT people. A similar opinion was also expressed by Maruf Amin, the chairman of the MUI, who claimed that “LGBT activities and campaigns are forbidden in Islam and other Abrahamic religions” (MUI rejects, 2016). He argued that LGBT contradicts the first and second principles of Pancasila, Article 29 paragraph 1 and Article 28 J of the 1954 Constitution, as well as Law No. 1/1974 about marriage. He also referred to the MUI Fatwa No. 57/2014 about lesbian, gay, sodomy, and molestation. Amin added that ‘LGBT activities’ are dangerous and can become sources of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS.

The negative attitudes toward the LGBT community were not limited solely to political and religious figures but also extended to scholars and academics. The number of academic publications focusing on the LGBT issue in Indonesian academic journals has increased dramatically since 2016. However, the majority of these publications further stigmatise and dehumanise LGBT people. They are synthesising the religious and nationalist narrative that situates the LGBT community in a state of direct opposition (see, for example, Sari et al., 2020; Nafisah, 2019; Rahmah, 2018; Afriyanti et al., 2018; Maliarta et al., 2018; Pramono et al., 2018; Yanggo, 2018; Yansyah & Rahayu, 2018; Ayub, 2017; Ermayani, 2017; Nasrun, 2017; Andina, 2016; Galih, 2016; Harahap, 2016; Rohmawati, 2016; Santoso, 2016; and Zaini, 2016). The recurring narrative in these articles echoes

that of the state officials and religious figures, defining LGBT as a contagious disease that endangers social morality and as deviant sexual behaviour that violates religious norms and goes against Indonesian culture.

Yansyah & Rahayu (2018, p. 143), for example, argue that the sexual orientation of LGBT people cannot be justified because it deviates from the existing norms in society. Thus, for them, using the human rights narrative to support the sexual rights of the LGBT community is not feasible because the definition of human rights should be restricted by law, religious norms, ethics, and local culture. Such an understanding clearly employs a loose interpretation of the restrictions on human rights enforcement as outlined in the Indonesian Constitution (see this chapter's beginning). Though Yansyah and Rahayu acknowledge that the LGBT community should be protected from discrimination and violence, they express an ambivalent idea by insisting that as a minority group, LGBT people must adjust to the majority's norms (p. 142). Other scholarly articles posit that individuals who identify as LGBT pose a threat to society due to the perceived correlation between homosexuality and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Yanggo (2018, p. 4), for example, writes that homosexuality as a sexual deviation carries a more devastating risk as it "can cause HIV / AIDS, syphilis, and other genital cancer." Without providing adequate context, he establishes this claim based on the outdated term *gay-related immunodeficiency disease* (p. 19).⁴⁸

Fierce opposition to LGBT also comes from a conservative group called AILA (*Aliansi Cinta Keluarga Indonesia*/Indonesian Family Love Alliance), which, despite being a nonacademic organisation, many of its members are academics from several prestigious universities in Indonesia. AILA was founded in 2013 with the purpose of 'strengthening family values' for a more 'civilised'

⁴⁸ The term Gay-related Immunodeficiency Disease or GRID was first mentioned in an article published in the New York Times on 11 May 1982 (see Lawrence, 1982). It was named GRID because in its early years, HIV and AIDS were viewed primarily as the disease of drug addicts and gay White men, hence the name of GRID (Platt & Platt, 2013). However, upon the realization that the gay attribution did not fully cover the demographics of the disease, the term GRID was changed into AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). According to the Singapore LGBT Encyclopedia Wiki (2021), the term GRID was never used in scientific biomedical publications and only used by the press for a very short period of time. On 8 August 1982, the term AIDS first appeared in New York Times (see Herman, 1982) and replaced the term GRID.

Indonesian society. In late 2016, they submitted a petition to the Indonesian Constitutional Court for a judicial review to change the definition of adultery, rape, and sodomy so that they would be more in line with their view of religious values. In this petition, AILA requested the Court to delete specific phrases stipulated in the three articles of the Criminal Code: the phrase ‘married’ in Article 284, thus extending the definition of adultery to any sexual relationship outside marriage; the phrase ‘woman’ in Article 285, thus extending the definition of rape to include rape of men against men and women against men; and the phrase ‘whom he knows or should reasonably presume to be underage’ in Article 285 thus extending the definition of sodomy to any homosexual relationship, regardless whether or not it is consensual. This judicial petition clearly demonstrates AILA’s desire to outlaw any consensual sexual relationship outside of marriage, including same-sex relationships. Even though the Court eventually rejected this petition, with four of the nine judges delivering dissenting opinions in late 2017, AILA’s objectives were partially achieved in 2022 with the passage of a revised Criminal Code by the Indonesian parliament, which criminalises all extramarital sexual relations.

The public statements by high-ranking public officials and religious authorities, amplified by the Indonesian media and confirmed by Indonesian academia, led to “an unprecedented rhetorical attack on Indonesian sexual and gender minorities” (HRW, 2018, p.1). Scholars and journalists have captured this unprecedented attack with the term ‘moral panic.’ Stanley Cohen explains that moral panic may lead to, among other, stereotypical depictions of certain groups of persons who are then accused of being a threat to social values, so solutions need to be made:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons, emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. (Cohen, 2011, p. 1)

According to Cohen, the source of the panic could be something relatively new, or it has been present for a long time but has recently come to light. Beyond these public debates, moral panics can have direct consequences for those portrayed as 'immoral' group(s), such as psychological and physical violence and the loss of their rights.

Important in the construction of moral panic is the role of social media in disseminating anti-LGBT sentiments in public. By 2016, according to the Association of Internet Service Providers Indonesia, internet penetration in Indonesia reached about 132.7 million people or 52% of the total population of Indonesia, and around 97% of these internet users were active on social media (as cited in Damayanti & Santoso, 2018). Technological access coupled with a democratic climate has created new opportunities for Indonesians to become more actively involved in political causes by communicating and transmitting individual perspectives and emotions. Concomitantly, it also makes the digital landscape a productive platform to circulate fear of and hatred against LGBT people fostered by the entanglement between anti-LGBT actors and social media. The hyper-transparent interaction features transformed social media into a platform for public judgment on the LGBT community and a podium to incite violence against them.

Through social media, the suspicion of foreign intervention to promote LGBT in Indonesia has culminated in fuelling moral panic. For example, news of the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the United States in 2015 became a media sensation and spread among Indonesian social media users. The story around this same-sex marriage was often framed as if the LGBT community in Indonesia was pushing the same goal of legalising same-sex marriage in the country (#TrenSosial: Legalisasi, 2015). This story fits particularly well with the narrative espoused by some public figures that the LGBT issue is a Western idea to undermine 'Indonesian values.' According to AILA, the spread of Western feminism in Indonesia has led to more women becoming lesbians and leaving marriage (Wijaya, 2022). This culmination of suspicions about foreign intervention also immediately impacted government policy. In February 2016, the Indonesian government sought clarification of the UNDP's funding allocated for LGBT-related programs in several

Asian countries, including Indonesia, and demanded that the UN body terminate any programs related to the LGBT community in the country (Halim et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, this foreign intervention can also be seen from a different perspective, in the sense that other Muslim countries may have inspired the anti-LGBT moral panic in Indonesia. In contrast with rapid progress on gay rights elsewhere, such as the legalisation of gay marriage in Germany (Curry, 2017a) and the recognition of sexual orientation as a protected right in India (Curry, 2017b), 2016-2017 saw LGBT people targeted for criminalisation in some Muslim countries such as in Egypt and Azerbaijan. Neither of these countries has explicit anti-gay laws, but LGBT people are often arrested and charged with debauchery, immorality, or blasphemy in Egypt (Aboulenein, 2017) or charged with ‘disobeying police orders’ in Azerbaijan (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Whereas, in Indonesia, police raided ‘gay parties’ and charged them based on anti-pornography law (Hutton, 2017). Seeing this pattern, these countries appear to influence each other.

The negative sentiment against homosexuality and transgender expression has persisted in Indonesia for many years, but the resurgence of the 2016 moral panic has led to extreme hatred toward the LGBT community. The national survey conducted by the Wahid Foundation and LSI (2017) discovered that in 2016, the LGBT community became the most hated group in Indonesia. This phenomenon can be attributed to the continuous negative media portrayal of LGBT, which, according to Listiorini (2020), increased dramatically between 2016-2018. She points out that in this period, the media’s representation of the LGBT community as being immoral, dangerous, and responsible for natural disasters has fuelled an unprecedented amount of hate speech against the community.

A notable consequence was the escalation of hate speech into discrimination against and persecution of LGBT people. In February 2016, for instance, Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah in Yogyakarta was attacked by a hard-line Islamic group, the Front Jihad Islam (FJI) (Yuliawati, 2016). The attack on the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) was only one of many instances of violence that occurred across the country, which were perpetrated not only by groups of private individuals but also by state

agents. Human Rights Watch (2018), for example, documents the rise in verbal and physical threats against LGBT organisations, activists, and individuals by militant Islamists. Whereas Zakiah (2018) identifies the increase in stigma, discrimination, and violence directed at LGBT in different regions throughout 2017 were primarily perpetrated by state actors.

This section has illustrated that anti-LGBT sentiments in Indonesia originate and were propagated by various parties, including politicians, religious leaders, academicians, and journalists. The entanglements of these actors with media and digital infrastructures have led to the proliferation of hatred, surveillance, and control by citizens and the state towards LGBT Indonesians. The following sections explore the construction of the anti-LGBT narrative in Indonesia, which employs a threefold duality by portraying the LGBT community as a danger to Islam, the nation, and public health.

4.3. The grand narrative of anti-LGBT in Indonesia

The prevailing anti-LGBT sentiment in Indonesia is built on a tripartite duality that portrays the LGBT community as adversaries of religions (among Muslims, this would be Islam), the nation, and public health. Combined, these three dualities culminate in a grand, coherent narrative that comprehensively underscores the widespread disapproval of Indonesian society toward LGBT people. In her dissertation, Wulan Widyasari has also established such dualities by identifying three distinct narratives that frame discussions surrounding LGBT topics among Indonesian social media users. These narratives are characterised as ‘religion issues vs. LGBTQ issues,’ ‘nationalism issues vs. LGBTQ issues,’ and ‘health issues vs. LGBTQ issues’ (Widyasari, 2023, pp. 61-71). However, due to the specificity of this research topic, I have made an adjustment to the terms.

The utilisation of ‘othering’ mechanisms is a prominent feature in the development of the anti-LGBT grand narrative. According to John A. Powell, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, the act of othering is the result of “a conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group” (Powell, 2017). He explains that othering is primarily

driven by those with significant power or influence in shaping public opinion, such as politicians, religious leaders, and the media, rather than through personal contact, where, in an overwhelming case, people do not ‘know’ the groups they are othering. This social process often leads to the marginalisation and dehumanisation of the unfavoured group, which in the context of LGBT in Indonesia is very evident. Furthermore, the construction of the grand narrative also signifies the power relationship between the majority (Muslims and heterosexuals) and the minority (LGBT people). It represents the establishment of a hierarchical social order wherein heterosexual Muslims are constructed as superior to LGBT people.

4.3.1. LGBT vs. Islam

The influence of Islam on social and moral codes in Indonesian society is significant. Consequently, it shapes the conscious and unconscious responses of Indonesians to controversies. It is in this context that many studies have identified Islam as an essential factor in the production of knowledge of non-normative gender and sexuality. According to Davies (2010, p. 209), in Indonesia, where Islam holds a dominant position, heteronormativity, which prescribes the conventional belief that a good Muslim should marry and procreate, is often regarded as the “Islamic” norm. Therefore, she suggests explicitly that an analysis of non-normative gender and sexuality in Indonesia should incorporate the influence of Islam, which is frequently employed to either persecute or justify its presence.

In the context of LGBT in Indonesia, the manifestation of Islam in public debates in the media can be seen in the instrumentalisation of *halal* and *haram* as the fundamental ordering principle for assessing and evaluating the issue. In this duality, LGBT is perceived as haram and a violation of Islamic values. It is narrated as evil and repugnant, ready to corrupt the morality and righteousness of Muslim society and destroy future generations. Hence, it is a prevalent occurrence to come across assertions such as ‘homosexuality is prohibited in Islam,’ ‘transgender expression is incongruous with Islamic beliefs,’ and ‘LGBT practices are deemed immoral and sinful’ in various forms of discourse, including social media

conversations and newspaper articles.⁴⁹ As Engchuan (2020) explains, the mainstream discourse on the LGBT issue in Indonesia is trapped in the 'LGBT/Islam binary,' putting the LGBT people in direct opposition to Islam.

The binary framework of *haram* and *halal* in response to LGBT is also prevalent among Indonesian academics. For example, Yanggo (2018), Ayub (2017), and Zaini (2016), who equate LGBT to a homosexual relationship between men or women, employ the perspective of classical Islamic jurisprudence to conclude that LGBT is *haram*. Moreover, they argue that LGBT violates the human's fundamental biological nature to procreate, thereby undermining the sanctity of family values and eroding societal morality. Zaini (2016) writes that not only are homosexual behaviours against human nature, but they also damage male masculinity, infringe upon women's rights, and disrupt social order, ethical standards, and compassionate conduct. Nevertheless, he fails to offer an additional explanation for these allegations.

Eventually, the dichotomy between Islam and LGBT gives rise to a precarious situation where the discussion surrounding LGBT issues is limited to the binary categorisation of *haram* and *halal*. When something is deemed *haram*, any associated matters are often dismissed as inappropriate, thereby facilitating the normalisation of its dehumanisation. In practical terms, since homosexuality and transgender identity are deemed *haram*, this leads to the disregard of human rights, equal access to public services, and the right to protection of LGBT people. For instance, Hegarty (2022) observes that following the establishment of narratives surrounding the transgression and criminality of LGBT, the public becomes preoccupied with concerns regarding the potential destruction of Indonesian society by this 'evil group.' He elaborates further that upon the establishment of this narrative, the dignity and privacy of the LGBT people as citizens are disregarded and violated by law enforcement and media outlets, who perceive them as a source of 'entertainment' on television. In addition to its portrayal as a form of televised entertainment, the persecution of LGBT people is also commonly a pre-emptive

⁴⁹ For examples of these tendentious phrases in the media, see: Hukum LGBT (2022); Lasena (2022); Sasongko (2015).

measure to prevent a series of natural disasters. Puteri and Wijaya (2020) note that there exists a belief within the society that the natural calamities that occur in Indonesia are divine retribution because Indonesia tolerates the transgression of LGBT people.

4.3.2. LGBT vs. Indonesia

Duality is also employed to juxtapose LGBT with the cultural values of Indonesia, depicting homosexuality and transgender identity as cultural products incompatible with Indonesian values. As articulated by many Indonesian politicians (see section 4.2), the LGBT community is portrayed as a threat emanating from the West, with the intention of infiltrating and undermining the moral and cultural foundation of Indonesia. Through such depictions, these politicians have explicitly characterised the LGBT community as being un-Indonesian.

These narratives have evoked a sense of apprehension among the Indonesian public. Blackwood (2010) explains that heterosexual marriage is expected from every Indonesian because proper sexuality can only be expressed through legal marriage. This expectation is supported and perpetuated by the state through its ideas of traditional family values and Islam through its moral precepts. Thus, as Boellstorff (2007, p. 144) puts it, heterosexual marriage becomes “a foundational unit of the nation, piety, and proper citizen selfhood” and an embodiment of the politics of belonging of Indonesian citizens. In other words, extramarital sexual relationships and the prospect of same-sex marriage are viewed as devastating assaults on these social norms. Since LGBT people are associated with the advocacy of same-sex marriage and the perception of a culture of sexual liberation, their presence is perceived as a potential challenge to the coherence and unity of the Indonesian national identity.

4.3.3. LGBT vs. public health

The duality of LGBT versus public health is rooted in the stigmatisation of homosexuality and transgender identity as contagious diseases as well as the source of sexually transmitted diseases. There has been a prevalent accusation that LGBT

people have a purported agenda to spread their deviant behaviour, especially to children and young people. For example, Indonesia's Minister of Social Affairs, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, made a statement alleging that the LGBT community recruited children from low-income families in Lombok to join the community by giving them lipsticks (HRW, 2016, p. 20). Similarly, AILA, whose memberships consist mainly of Muslim women and mothers, promotes the stigma that homosexuality is a contagious disease that threatens children. Referring to criminal cases of sexual abuse against minors, AILA claims that sodomy victims will turn homosexuals on their own because once they get used to anal penetration, they will feel pleasure and gradually cease to feel victimised.⁵⁰

However, historically, the discourse on homosexuality as a disease did not originate in Indonesia. Homosexuality was classified as a disease scientifically and officially through the publication of DSM-II (the second edition of the American Classification of Mental Disorders) in 1968. According to Burton (2015), this classification appropriated the Church's designation of homosexual relationships as sinful acts during the 19th century and elevated it to the status of a mental disorder. This classification survived in the DSM until 1987 when APA (the American Psychiatric Association) decided to remove Homosexuality as a mental disorder altogether. Internationally, however, homosexuality was only removed from the classification as a mental disorder in 1992 when the WHO (World Health Organisation) dropped it from its ICD (International Classification of Diseases).

Apart from being considered a transmittable mental illness, many in Indonesia also believe the narrative that the existence of LGBT people contributes to a public health crisis through the transmission of venereal diseases. This narrative posits a strong correlation between the LGBT community and the proliferation of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, which pose a significant threat

⁵⁰ AILA writes this claim on their Kompasiana account. Kompasiana is a journalist blog transformed into a citizen media. Here, everyone can report events, express opinions and ideas and channel aspirations in the form of writing, images or audio and video recordings. AILA account can be accessed at <https://www.kompasiana.com/ailaindonesia/58ae52c5b17a61cb04c16d68/homoseksualitas-dapat-menular>.

to the future of the nation. Various elements in society, including politicians, religious leaders, and academics, have been disseminating such messages as an alarm. Even the TNI (Indonesian National Army) has also joined in spreading such warnings by tweeting a comic strip linking the LGBT community to the proliferation of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (see Akun Twitter, 2019).

4.4. An alternative perspective to the grand narrative

The Indonesian Muslim community exhibits a significant inclination towards utilising Islam as a tool to contextualise the contemporary issue of homosexuality and transgender identity. This inclination, however, can be categorised into two factions: the first faction employs Islam to ostracise LGBT people, as previously elaborated upon, while the second faction utilises Islam to embrace LGBT people, albeit being a minority with a less prominent voice compared to the former. To examine the second faction, I refer to Rodriguez's (2022) work, wherein he delineates three progressive Muslim organisations that he characterises as the "allies of queer Muslims." These organisations are the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), Inter-faith Dialogue, and Gusdurian Network. Rodriguez asserts that these organisations serve as a crucial catalyst for Muslim engagement in support of sexual minority rights through Islamic principles. He suggests that their discourse, which is grounded on principles of social justice, liberation, and contextualism, emerges as drivers for the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities into the fabric of society. As Rodriguez observes, the perspective on Islam as a source of social support and connection becomes the guiding principle for these organisations to include those who are frequently portrayed as different.

Regarding their size and impact on shaping public opinion, these three organisations are comparatively less significant than NU and Muhammadiyah. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the presence of an alternative viewpoint within the Indonesian context. Furthermore, as mentioned by Rodriguez (2022), some individuals who are actively involved in these progressive Muslim organisations also hold significant positions as scholars with affiliation to NU. These individuals

include Kyai Hussein Muhammad, Musdah Mulia, Abdul Muiz Ghazali, Marzuki Wahid, and Aan Anshori. This fact suggests that their perspectives could potentially influence the discourse within NU, which is Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation.

Religious justification for the acceptance of gender and sexual minorities is achieved through theological discourse that involves interpreting religious texts in a contextual and sensitive manner with regard to gender and sexual diversity. For instance, in October 2018, a workshop was organised by a group of Muslim and Christian scholars in collaboration with GAYa Nusantara.⁵¹ The objective of the workshop was to advocate for an all-encompassing interpretation of religious sources that is more accommodating towards gender and sexual minorities by presenting an alternative approach to the exegesis of religious texts, thereby contesting the prevailing dominant beliefs. The Muslim scholars who attended the workshop, among others, were Kyai Hussein Muhammad and Arif Nuh Safri.⁵² The workshop produced a book titled *Tafsir progresif Islam & Kristen terhadap keragaman gender dan seksualitas: Sebuah panduan memahami tubuh dan Tuhan* (Progressive interpretation of Islam & Christianity on gender and sexual diversity: A guide to understanding the body and God) edited by Alfikar (2020). It aims to dismantle the underlying ideas that support the discriminatory and hateful religious doctrine against LGBT people. The contextual method employed in this book provides a framework for interpreting religious texts pertaining to homosexuality and transgender that promote a humanistic approach. The book discusses several topics, such as the concept of sinners, the reality of homosexuality, the story of Lot, as well as the concept of piety and faith.

⁵¹ GAYa Nusantara was founded 1987 by Dede Oetomo, a scholar and human rights activist, as an association that promote the LGBTIQ+ equal rights and human rights in general. In 2012 the association received a new legal frame and became a foundation and registered at the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

⁵² Kyai Husein Muhammad is the leader at the Dar al-Tauhid boarding school in Arjawinangun, Cirebon. He is one of the founders of Fahmina Institute, an organisation that promotes democracy, community empowerment, education, openness, and justice in Indonesian society by addressing politically contested issues including gender inequality, poverty, religious pluralism, and political self-advocacy. Meanwhile, Arif Nuh Safri is a lecturer at the Institut Ilmu al-Qur'an an-Nur Yogyakarta and an imam at the Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah in Yogyakarta

The book offers a perspective and critique of the commonly circulated interpretations of the Lot narrative, particularly within the context of Indonesia. The narrative of Lot is comprehended within a contextual and comprehensive framework rather than being narrowly construed as a mere issue of homosexual conduct. The act of anal intercourse practised by the tribe of Lot is interpreted as a means of exerting dominance over others. Furthermore, this act of sexual coercion was merely one of the many transgressions perpetrated by the people of Lot, including but not limited to gambling, murder, and fraud. Through this contextual interpretation, the book suggests that God's punishment upon the people of Lot was not due to homosexuality, as we understand it today, but rather due to other multiple societal crimes.

In addition to institutional initiatives, there exist endeavours by independent scholars to engage with the LGBT community. For example, by looking at the issue of homosexuality from the perspective of Islam and human rights, Qibtiyah (2015) compares the textual and contextual readings of the Quran and hadiths in perceiving homosexuality, in which the former produces a rigid view of LGBT while the later allows for more flexible accommodation. From this comparison, she argues that Muslims should favour the contextual readings, as doing so would allow them to humanise and respect the dignity of homosexual people as fellow human beings. Meanwhile, Muiz (2015) and Safri (2019) offer positive contributions to the religious discourse on transgender women. Muiz (2015) specifically investigates *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) concerning transgender women, which so far has not been adequately developed. He observes that the existing *fiqh* is mostly constrained in defining the issue of transgender women's biological sex rather than addressing their gender identity. Such *fiqh* thus produces discriminatory religious practices toward transgender women, such as the imposition of rigid dress codes that prohibit crossdressing. Since such laws exclude Muslim transgender women, they ultimately undertake religious legal reasoning independently. For instance, as illustrated by Safri (2019), Muslim transgender women in Yogyakarta decide to wear the *jilbab* (Islamic dress for women) to fulfil their religious calling and to gain a sense of personal security and dignity. From this perspective, the two scholars extend an invitation to Muslim scholars to persist in their endeavours to develop Islamic

jurisprudence that acknowledges the identity of transgender women, as they, too, are human beings who require legal frameworks and guidelines.

The emergence of progressive Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia can be contextualised within the broader global emergence of progressive Islam. This emergence can also be viewed as a manifestation of efforts to cultivate a more humanistic religious perspective towards homosexuality and transgender identity. Kugel (2010), in his book *Homosexuality in Islam*, advocates for a humanistic perspective toward comprehending and practising Islam to establish an Islam that is inclusive for all human beings. While he sheds light on the theological struggle faced by LGBT Muslims, he also calls for the Muslim community, in general, to examine the Quran, hadith, and Islamic legal rulings critically and constructively. From the perspective of sexual desire, Ali (2016) discusses the Islamic ethics of sexual intimacy. For her, a just sexual relationship should be based on meaningful consent and mutuality. As such, she questions the centrality of the lawfulness of heterosexual marriage as the sole basis for accepted sexual intimacy. For lawfulness cannot be a sufficient guarantor for ethical sexual intimacy, which is based on meaningful consent and mutuality, she challenges the centrality of heterosexual marriage and opens a potential for a more inclusive discourse for same-sex relationships.

4.5. The position of Indonesian Muslim organisations on LGBT

Gender and sexuality in Indonesia are governed by state regulations and religious ethics. Marriage law number 01/1974 serves as an example of the manifestation of the State and religion's authority. The first article of this law stipulates that "marriage is a physical and emotional bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife to form a happy and eternal family based on the divinity." The second article underscores the religious aspect of marriage, stating that "the marriage is legal if it is carried out according to the law of each religion and belief." Even though the law does not explicitly target non-normative gender and sexuality, the fact that marriage can only be legally done between a man and a woman and must

follow religious rules have shaped the understanding that non-heterosexual relationship cannot be accommodated.

Religious institutions were significant actors in shaping public perception during the 2016 LGBT controversy. In addition to the MUI and the prominent Muslim organisations of Muhammadiyah and NU, various other Islamic organisations held a certain degree of influence. While Muhammadiyah and NU are commonly perceived as representative of moderate Islam, the Indonesian chapter of Hizbut Tahrir (HTI) and the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) espouse fundamentalist perspectives.⁵³ As one of the leading radical organisations in Indonesia, the HTI drew nationwide attention in 2017 when the government banned it for opposing the state ideology Pancasila and seeking to establish a caliphate (Sinaga et al., 2019). Meanwhile, the FPI was an Indonesian hard-line Islamist organisation formed in 1998. It was established with support from the military and political figures to counter public criticism against them. Before its disbandment in 2020, FPI was vocal against multiculturalism and pluralism. During the moral panic in 2016, both HTI and FPI were fierce opponents of the LGBT community.

Despite the differences in their view on Islam, these Muslim groups and organisations hold the same perspective on LGBT issues. In their fierce opposition to LGBT, these organisations consistently reproduce the grand narrative. It is also their demand that the state intervene by legislating the LGBT's sexual behaviour and preventing their political movement. On many different occasions, prominent figures of these religious organisations have publicly advocated for the state to impose legal punishment against the LGBT community and their allies.

Despite their shared rejection of the LGBT community, these organisations employ varying approaches. As an illustration, it can be observed that Muhammadiyah and NU employed a verbal strategy to express their dissent toward the LGBT community. Conversely, FPI often resorted to physical aggression as a

⁵³ In terms of numbers these two organisations are smaller than Muhammadiyah and NU, but they have a louder voice and could attract public attention more effectively. Sometimes, their message meets a sentiment that was widely represented in Indonesian society (and not covered by the mass organisations) and thus filled a discursive gap.

means of reacting to the matter, which included acts of persecution and the forcible dispersal of events related to the LGBT cause. FPI gained notoriety for engaging in unlawful raids on any activity perceived to be in contravention of Islamic principles, including events associated with the LGBT community. For example, in 2010, the FPI staged a protest demanding the immediate termination of the Q! Film festival hosted at the Goethe Institute in Jakarta, threatening that if their demand were not fulfilled, they would burn down the venue (FPI disrupts, 2010). In other words, FPI frequently challenged the authority and legitimacy of the state in maintaining public order. In the meantime, it was not within the character of HTI to employ physical aggression. However, they had advocated for the most severe form of retribution, that is, the death penalty, as a means of eradicating LGBT people (see Hizbut Tahrir, 2015).

4.5.1. MUI and its anti-homosexuality *fatwa*

The institutionalisation of the anti-LGBT stance occurred through the religious channel when the quasi-state entity of MUI in Indonesia, vested with the power to issue Islamic legal opinions, promulgated its official statements on the matter. In addition to reaffirming that LGBT is in violation of the Indonesian Constitution (MUI Nyatakan, 2016), MUI also issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) in 2014, classifying homosexuality as a crime (Fatwa MUI, 2014, Nr. 57). Upon examination, the *fatwa* specifically addressed lesbianism, gay-sex, sodomy, and molestation without mentioning transgender identity. The opening statement of the *fatwa* reads that “according to its nature, God creates human and other living beings in pairs and regulates the tendency of sexual orientation based on their opposite partners.” This statement encapsulates the naturalisation of human sexuality while simultaneously refuting the notion that sexuality is a social construct. This *fatwa* reinforces the naturalisation of sexuality by employing theological interpretations derived from the Quran, hadith, and classical *fiqh*. The Quranic verses that recount the story of Lot are particularly crucial in establishing this theological framework. Given that heterosexuality is perceived as the norm, homosexuality is deemed as a deviation that threatens both the natural and social orders. Accordingly, MUI issued this *fatwa* to reject homosexual relationships and oppose the legalisation of same-

sex marriage, citing that the only justified marriage through which sexual desire might be practised is heterosexual marriage.

The *fatwa* comprises three primary segments. The initial segment comprises a comprehensive provision that provides definitions of the terminology employed. The subsequent segment encompasses legal provisions that pertain to the “perpetrators of homosexual relations.” Lastly, the third segment comprises policy recommendations for the government. The definitions of homosexual, gay, lesbi, and sodomy discussed in the initial segment are worthy of examination due to the implications of organisational confusion regarding the meanings of said terms. MUI defines these four terms as sexual activity (Fatwa MUI, 2014, Nr. 57):

1. *Homoseks adalah aktifitas seksual seseorang yang dilakukan terhadap seseorang yang memiliki jenis kelamin yang sama, baik laki-laki maupun perempuan. (Homosexual is a person's sexual activity with someone of the same sex, either between males or between females.)*
2. *Lesbi adalah istilah untuk aktifitas seksual yang dilakukan antara perempuan dengan perempuan. (Lesbi is a term for sexual activity between females.)*
3. *Gay adalah istilah untuk aktifitas seksual yang dilakukan antara laki-laki dengan laki-laki. (Gay is a term for sexual activity between men and men.)*
4. *Sodomi adalah istilah untuk aktifitas seksual secara melawan hukum syar'i dengan cara senggama melalui dubur/anus atau dikenal dengan liwath. (Sodomy is the term for unlawful sexual activity by means of anal/anus intercourse, also known as liwat.)*

The second segment of the *fatwa* delineates a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual behaviour. Whereas homosexuality as a sexual orientation is considered a disorder that must be cured and deviation that must be corrected, ‘homosexual behaviours’ are subject to punishment, and sodomy can be punished with the maximum penalty of death. The third segment pertains to the recommendations

made by MUI to the House of Representatives (DPR) regarding the non-legalisation of the gay and lesbian community and the criminalisation of homosexuality. However, a paradox arises in the third segment as the MUI advocates for the state to administer severe punishment toward gays and lesbians while simultaneously recommending rehabilitation. In addition, MUI urges the public not to allow homosexual activities, sodomy, and other deviant sexual orientations to flourish and proliferate in society.

4.5.2. NU and its official condemnation

In the context of the 2016 anti-LGBT moral panic, NU emerged as the most influential Islamic organisation in Indonesia to issue an official statement condemning the LGBT community. The statement under the title *Sikap dan taushiyah PBNU tentang perilaku seksual menyimpang dan penanganannya* (PBNU's attitude and message regarding deviant sexual behaviour and its handling) was delivered to the public by the deputy chairman KH. Miftakhul Akhyar on 25 February 2016 in Jakarta. According to its statement, NU deems the 'LGBT behaviour' to be contrary to human nature. Consequently, any initiatives or endeavours that promote or advocate for LGBT rights are considered unlawful and subject to legal repercussions (NU Online, 2016).

The statement begins with the affirmation that Islam protects reproduction rights as an essential factor in human survival and can only be exercised through the institution of legal heterosexual marriage. From this premise, NU suggests that all forms of sexual relations outside of legal marriage ought to be classified as a crime against humanity. In this context, the organisation posits that LGBT is a 'deviant behaviour' that transgresses the dignity of human beings while also infringing upon their reproductive rights. Therefore, NU recommends the rejection of the LGBT community, which encompasses all entities that support and advocate for the normalisation of LGBT in Indonesia.

Unlike MUI's *fatwa*, the statement of NU does not provide any definition of the acronym LGBT. However, a close reading of the statement indicates that the organisation generally interprets LGBT as deviant sexual behaviour that requires

correction or punishment. This interpretation is derived from the first point, which reads:

PBNU menolak dengan tegas paham dan gerakan yang membolehkan atau mengakui eksistensi LGBT. LGBT mengingkari fitrah manusia. PBNU menegaskan bahwa perilaku LGBT adalah perilaku yang tidak sesuai dengan fitrah manusia. Dengan demikian kecenderungan untuk menjadi LGBT adalah menyimpang, sehingga orang yang mengidapnya harus direhab. Pola rehabilitasi dilakukan sesuai dengan faktor yang menyebabkannya.

PBNU firmly rejects the understanding and movement that allows or recognises the existence of LGBT. LGBT denies human nature. PBNU asserts that LGBT behaviour is behaviour that is not in accordance with human nature. Thus, the tendency to be LGBT is deviant, so people who suffer from it must be rehabilitated. The arrangement of rehabilitation is carried out in accordance with the factors that cause it.

This first point is the organisation's affirmation of its rejection of LGBT, with NU calling LGBT 'behaviour that violates human nature.' The statement suggests that due to its status as a violation, rehabilitation for LGBT is necessary. This notion of rehabilitation is further expounded upon in the second point. According to NU, rehabilitation is both a right and responsibility for people with 'LGBT tendencies.' The objective of this rehabilitation, the organisation elucidates, is to facilitate LGBT people to return to a state of 'normalcy' that aligns with religious, social, and cultural norms. The organisation underscores the significance of employing a compassionate yet assertive approach in rehabilitation efforts. The responsibility for these efforts ought to be shared between the government and society, NU notes.

The third segment of the statement entails advocating for punishments against any effort and campaign aimed at normalising LGBT and their 'deviant activities.' There are two important points to highlight in this segment. Firstly, NU urges the government to prohibit foreign intervention and financial assistance toward LGBT activities. Secondly, NU advises the parliament (DPR), especially the members

affiliated with the organisation, to formulate legislation that prohibits LGBT and categorises its conduct as a criminal offence. The legislation, NU proposes, should also mandate the rehabilitation of LGBT individuals and impose punishment on those who propagate and advocate for the normalisation of LGBT.

The two documents issued by MUI and NU share a commonality in their respective definition of terminology. Both organisations conflate the meaning of 'gay' and 'lesbi' in MUI's *fatwa* and 'LGBT' in NU's statement as sexual behaviours rather than an individual's sense of self. The utilisation of such a definition will result in the conflation of all LGBT-related issues with transgressive sexual activities, thereby obscuring the discourse on protecting the fundamental civil rights of LGBT people. This can be seen, for instance, in the two organisations' demands, whereby they call for the state to criminalise the LGBT community. Their insistence that any conduct associated with the LGBT community ought to be construed as endorsing deviant sexual behaviours and, as such, should be prevented or penalised. This perspective leaves no room for the consideration of the protection of the fundamental rights of the LGBT community.

4.5.3. Muhammadiyah and its 'soft approach'

Interestingly, in contrast to MUI and NU, Muhammadiyah did not issue any official statement about LGBT. As reported by the Jakarta Post, the Secretary General of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mukti, states that Muhammadiyah considers LGBT expressions immoral and only recognises legal marriages between men and women. However, he emphasises that publicly condemning LGBT people using *fatwa* or verbal theological condemnations would not be effective in addressing LGBT issues. Instead, Mukti asserts the "we (Muhammadiyah) think dialogue is an alternative solution to avoid unproductive arguments in public" while announcing that the organisation intends to offer counselling services to LGBT people who want to seek help (as quoted in National scene, 2016). The Jakarta Post calls Muhammadiyah's decision to refrain from public condemnation as a 'soft approach.'

However, Muhammadiyah's soft approach has been contradicted by several of its prominent figures. As previously elaborated, a number of Muhammadiyah leaderships have expressed public denunciation towards the LGBT community. They echoed the same narrative as the other two organisations and publicly condemned the LGBT community for committing sexual deviance. Furthermore, while these prominent figures denounce violence against LGBT people, they urge the Indonesian government to legislate a prohibition of same-sex sexual relationships.

It is important to highlight the contradiction between the organisation's soft approach and the condemnation by some of its leadership. Can we assume that this contradiction is intentional? Does the leaders' anti-LGBT sentiment indicate the organisation's actual trajectory on the matter? To what extent do their statements represent the 'official' position of the organisation? Discussing public personal comments of Muhammadiyah's prominent figures is rather intricate. According to Latief (2017, p. 55), there exists in Muhammadiyah the contestation between the 'official' and 'unofficial' opinions. The term official opinion denotes that the opinions have been formulated as a result of the organisation's formal deliberation, which is subsequently documented in written form and authenticated by the leadership of the said organisation. In contrast, unofficial opinion denotes that the opinions are subjective viewpoints expressed by individuals, including both leaders and regular members. Consequently, these unofficial opinions cannot be regarded as a representation of the organisation's stance. Latief underlines that the emergence of new ideas among Muhammadiyah intellectuals is so dynamic that the organisation's official infrastructure could not always keep up with the speed of societal developments. On the other hand, many of the organisation's official collective decisions may not always be executed by its members. In some cases, those official decisions may not always receive support from the existing leadership at the time. The inevitability of competition between official and unofficial opinions arises from Muhammadiyah's expansive structure, which fosters an environment conducive to the emergence of diverse intellectual perspectives among its members.

In the context of the 2016 LGBT controversy, it is pertinent to recognise that while personal remarks should not be interpreted as the official stance of the organisation, they possess a sense of authority due to their origin. As they came from authoritative figures within the ranks of the organisation's leadership, these statements might as well be seen as the organisational position by the grassroots. However, the emergence of leadership opinions that do not fit into the framework of the organisational position has created ambivalence in Muhammadiyah's position. Amid this ambivalence, another question emerges: are these personal comments a strategy of the organisation to convey its position while, at the same time, avoiding possible controversies that might be disruptive to the organisation? I further discuss this topic of ambivalence in the subsequent subchapter.

4.5.4. Aisiyiah and its forbearance press release

Although Muhammadiyah refrained from making an official statement, its women's organisation, Aisiyiah, released a press statement in response to the 2016 LGBT controversy. The press release, titled *Pernyataan sikap Pimpinan Pusat Aisiyiah tentang LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Transgender)* (The official statement of Aisiyiah Central Leadership's regarding LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender)), was published in the fourth edition of Suara Aisiyiah, on page 16, in April 2016. As an official document, the press release was signed by Aisiyiah's chairwoman at that time, Siti Noordjanah Djohantini.

Prior to presenting its four-point stance, Aisiyiah tries to substantiate its position by providing empirical, theoretical, and theological foundations. The empirical background highlights that LGBT issues have caused societal controversy, especially among Muslim communities. Aisiyiah acknowledges that the emergence of this controversy can be attributed to the diverse range of perspectives held by Indonesian people when addressing the issues. Within this theoretical framework, Aisiyiah recognises the multifaceted nature of human beings, encompassing both their potential and vulnerabilities. Due to the inherent capacity and desires of human beings for worldly gratification, the establishment of rules becomes imperative in order to cultivate and maintain amicable and

harmonious social relations. In this context, Aisyiyah asserts that the regulations governing the social and sexual relations of Muslim communities in Indonesia are primarily outlined in the Marriage Law 1/1974. This legislation prescribes explicitly heterosexual marriage. Additionally, Islamic norms derived from the Quran (29: 31-35),⁵⁴ which recounts the story of the Prophet Lot, Aisyiyah underscores, also serve as guiding principles in regard. Aisyiyah also makes a reference to the Quran (21:107 & 2:183),⁵⁵ which affirms the compassionate character of Islam as a religion that provides guidance and enlightenment to humanity.

Based on the theoretical, empirical, and theological studies, Aisyiyah then conveyed their messages concerning LGBT issues in four points as follows:

1. *Terkait dengan legalisasi hukum negara atas perkawinan sejenis, maka Aisyiyah menolak atau tidak menyetujui pernikahan sesama jenis. Prinsip relasi sosial dan perilaku seksual berdasarkan benar, baik, dan sehat secara agama, spiritual, sosial, hukum, fisik, dan psikis. Hal itu hanya dapat dilakukan dalam ikatan perkawinan yang sah sesuai dengan UU Perkawinan 1/1974*

Regarding the legalisation of same-sex marriage, Aisyiyah rejects or disapproves of same-sex marriage. It is because the principle of social relations and sexual behaviour is based on the conception of religiously, spiritually, socially, legally, physically, and psychologically correct, ethical, and healthy. Therefore, sexual relations can only be done within a legal marriage following Marriage Law 1/1974.

⁵⁴ These verses read “⁽³¹⁾when Our messengers brought the good news [of the birth of a son] to Abraham, they told him, ‘We are about to destroy the people of that town. They are wrongdoers.’ ⁽³²⁾Abraham said, ‘But Lot lives there.’ They answered, ‘We know who lives there better than you do. We shall save him and his household, except for his wife: she will be one of those who stay behind.’ ⁽³³⁾When Our messengers came to Lot, he was troubled and distressed on their account. They said, ‘Have no fear or grief: we shall certainly save you and your household, except for your wife— she will be one of those who stay behind— ⁽³⁴⁾and we shall send a punishment from heaven down on the people of this town because they violate [God’s order].’ ⁽³⁵⁾We left some [of the town] there as a clear sign for those who use their reason” (The Quran, 2004, p. 254).

⁵⁵ The verse 21:107 reads “it was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all people” (The Quran, 2004, p. 208) and the verse 2:183 reads You who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may be mindful of God” (The Quran, 2004, p. 20). However, in the context of this press release, there appears to be an error in the writing of the verse number. Based on the existing description, the correct verse number should be verse nr. 185, which reads “it was in the month of Ramadan that the Quran was revealed as guidance for mankind, clear messages giving guidance and distinguishing between right and wrong” (The Quran, 2004, p. 20).

2. *Perilaku seksual yang benar, baik, dan sehat secara agama sesuai dengan paham yang diyakini Aisyiyah yaitu perilaku seksual seperti yang dituntunkan dalam Al-Quran dan Hadis. Keluarga sebagai basis pengenalan pendidikan seksualitas yang sehat, halal dan aman serta fungsi biologis dan reproduksi melalui keluarga sakinah.*

Aisyiyah believes that religiously correct, good, and healthy sexual behaviour should follow the guidance prescribed by the Quran and hadith. Therefore, sex education to introduce biological and reproduction functions that follow the conception of healthy, halal, and safe should start from the family through *keluarga sakinah*.

3. *Tidak menyetujui segala bentuk gerakan yang mempromosikan LGBT yang akan berpengaruh pada perusakan moral generasi muda.*

Aisyiyah disapproves of all forms of movements that promote LGBT, which will damage the morality of younger generations.

4. *Tidak menyetujui kekerasan dan diskriminasi kepada setiap warga negara apapun bentuk preferensi seksualitasnya, dengan tanggung jawab bagi organisasi keagamaan untuk membimbing dan melakukan dakwah yang humanis.*

Aisyiyah disapproves of violence and discrimination against any citizen regardless of their sexual preference. Furthermore, Aisyiyah wishes religious organisations to take responsibility for guiding Muslim communities through humanist da'wah.

There are four crucial points that should be underlined in Aisyiyah's statement. Firstly, Aisyiyah employs a dualistic framework in the formulation of its opinion. By using the terms “sexual behaviour that is correct, ethical, and healthy religiously, socially, legally, and biologically,” Aisyiyah implies that LGBT people have violated these norms, thereby positioning them as wrong, unethical, and unhealthy. Secondly, Aisyiyah’s disapproval of LGBT people cannot be dissociated from heteronormativity, which serves as the fundamental pillar of its gender norms. It is indicative when Aisyiyah mentions that the family has a vital role in providing sexual education to children through *keluarga sakinah* in order to avoid moral decay due to LGBT. Thirdly, Aisyiyah’s opposition to LGBT people is rooted in concerns regarding the potential advocacy for the legalisation of same-sex marriage within the LGBT movement. In this case, it appears that Aisyiyah’s opposition to LGBT is

based more on their perception of LGBT as a movement that promotes homosexuality and transgender identity. Lastly, it is noteworthy to observe that Aisyiyah's press release indicates forbearance toleration. As stated in point five, despite the fact that Aisyiyah views homosexuality as an incorrect sexual preference, they emphasise that this preference should not be used as a justification for any form of violence or discrimination.

How Aisyiyah's press release is positioned within Muhammadiyah? Can we assume that this press release also represents the official position of Muhammadiyah, which has been ambiguous?

4.6. The ambivalence of Muhammadiyah's public position

To unravel Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT, I interviewed several prominent figures. I inquired about the organisation's decision not to issue any statement against the LGBT community despite the issuance of such a statement by MUI and NU. A close reading of my data shows that despite unanimous agreement among my interlocutors regarding the immorality and impropriety of same-sex sexual relationships, there existed a divergence of opinion with respect to the appropriate response to the moral panic in 2016. This divergence is reflected in the absence of an official statement.

According to one of my interlocutors, the absence of an official statement could be attributed to the perception of it being unnecessary. In explaining this reason, Pak Yunahar argued that religious edicts are reserved for matters that are legally ambiguous and, therefore, necessitate *ijtihad*. He maintained that homosexuality is deemed unlawful in Islam, and thus, there is an established stance that regards LGBT as 'clearly forbidden in Islam.' Consequently, he asserted that Muhammadiyah is not required to issue any official statement regarding the matter, and its absence, therefore, cannot be misconstrued as a toleration towards LGBT. He said:

We believe there is no need to issue a *fatwa* for something already clear. Adultery, for example, if you are looking for a *fatwa* forbidding adultery

in Muhammadiyah, it does not exist because the law is already clear. *Fatwa* is only issued for something that must be decided by *ijtihad*. Alcohol is *haram*. Thus, there is no *fatwa* regarding alcohol in Muhammadiyah. It is just a matter of conveying it to the people. Adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism are prohibited. Thus, there is no need for a *fatwa*. Cigarettes need a *fatwa* because there is no law about cigarettes in the Quran and hadith. The legal cases for which there is a *fatwa* are *ijtihad*.

Pak Syamsul, the head of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, expressed agreement with Pak Yunahar, albeit with a lesser degree of conviction. In response to the same question, he informed me that the issue was a matter of discussion in Muhammadiyah. However, his emphasis was only on the fact that LGBT was discussed among the members of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid. He mentioned that while the discussion essentially rejects LGBT, this rejection was never translated into a public statement because the discussion was only to gain better insight into LGBT as a contemporary issue.

Observing from outside Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, Bu Atiyatul, the head of Majelis of Law and Human Rights of Aisyiyah central leadership, had her own perspective regarding the possible reasons behind the absence of an official statement from Muhammadiyah. She confirmed that the department responsible for religious legal opinions in Muhammadiyah is Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid. In line with Pak Yunahar's perspective, she argued that Islamic law explicitly outlaws same-sex sexual relations, and thereby, it is not necessary for Muhammadiyah to issue any religious opinion and statement on the matter. However, Bu Atiyatul brought attention to the existence of intersex individuals in society. She emphasised that intersex is an innate biological state, as opposed to homosexuality and transgender identity. In relation to this specific circumstance, she posited that Muhammadiyah would benefit from additional research on how to address this phenomenon effectively.

Meanwhile, still on the same question, a member of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Muhammadiyah Pak Hikam provided a different and rather intriguing response by asserting that the absence of an official statement on LGBT was a showcase of Muhammadiyah's pragmatic approach to dealing with controversial issues.

Although acknowledging that same-sex sexual relations are deemed ethically incorrect under Islamic jurisprudence, he did not consider this theological discourse as the main argumentation behind the absence of an official statement. Instead, he posited that the primary factor at play pertains to the political strategy in addressing contentious matters with the aim of mitigating any potential conflicts that may have a detrimental impact on Muhammadiyah as a whole. In this sense, Pak Hikam acknowledged that the topic of LGBT is a sensitive issue and that there exist varied perspectives within the organisation. Therefore, the issuance of an official statement has the potential to generate unnecessary disputes and divisions. He elucidated:

So, Muhammadiyah cannot be a proponent or opposer of such sensitive issues, but Muhammadiyah will let its members take any stance. It is the strategy. It is how I read the situation. For sensitive issues, Muhammadiyah will not take an official position. Why? Because Muhammadiyah's members have diverse opinions. If Muhammadiyah takes a firm stance that is different from the views that exist among its members, these members may terminate their memberships. However, as a member of Muhammadiyah, one may take his/her stance. And they are encouraged to do so. If one is a proponent of the issue, he/she may defend it. It is how Muhammadiyah maintains its existence. It includes the practices of other religious controversies. For example, Muhammadiyah will never take any official position regarding the practice of *tahlilan* because if Muhammadiyah supports *tahlilan*, those who are against the practice may leave the organisation and vice versa. So, Muhammadiyah will not interfere in such cases. Each member is allowed to follow their calling. Another example is the tuberculosis care program, which also supports patients with AIDS. It is not Muhammadiyah's official program, but Aisyiyah does it, and it does not matter for Muhammadiyah. However, before Aisyiyah took the first step, Aisyiyah consulted Muhammadiyah about the theological considerations first. For this tuberculosis care program, I was also invited for consultation.

In order to mitigate internal discord, Muhammadiyah adopts a tendency to refrain from adopting firm positions on contentious matters, encompassing not only social concerns but also religious rituals. For instance, in the interview excerpt, Pak Hikam provided an explanation as to why Muhammadiyah refrains from issuing an

official edict regarding the practice of *tahlilan*.⁵⁶ This practice has been perceived by some Muhammadiyah members as a *bid'ah*, while others view it as a cultural tradition, making it a sensitive topic.⁵⁷ Therefore, for such an issue, Muhammadiyah gives freedom for each member to take their personal position, whether it be negative or affirmative. Hence, with regard to the controversy of LGBT, the absence of an official statement can be interpreted as Muhammadiyah allowing its member the liberty to express their individual positions. As a result, it was expected that there would be numerous personal comments made by the organisation's prominent figures concerning the LGBT issue.

From Pak Hikam's interview, there is a solid reason to see the absence of an official statement as an organisational political strategy. This strategic approach allows Muhammadiyah to pragmatically navigate and circumvent further controversy that might be aimed at the organisation. Nevertheless, from a more constructive standpoint, this strategy facilitates ambiguity, which is beneficial not only for Muhammadiyah but also for the broader discussion of the LGBT issue. In contrast with certain Muslim organisations that seek to gain profile and influence by polarisation, Muhammadiyah adopts an inclusive strategy that allows for the expression of dissenting opinions. In this light, referring to Bauer's (2011) study on the culture of ambiguity in Islam, the strategy employed by Muhammadiyah can be interpreted as a manifestation of the Islamic ethos that places significance on ambiguity as a societal code in a multicultural setting.

In contrast with Pak Yunahar and Pak Hikam, Bu Susi from Aisyiyah held a differing viewpoint. She argued that the absence of a statement from Muhammadiyah is only a matter of precedence. She elucidated that Muhammadiyah prioritised its works based on the level of significance and immediacy, owing to the organisation's limited resources. With this assumption, Bu

⁵⁶ *Tahlilan* is a ritual/ceremony carried out by some Muslims in Indonesia to commemorate and pray for the dead which is usually carried out on the first day of death until the seventh day, and then carried out on the 40th day, the 100th day, the first year, the second, the third and so on. *Tahlilan* is usually accompanied by a *kenduri* (feast).

⁵⁷ *Bid'ah* linguistically means innovation or novelty. In term of religious matters and practices, *bid'ah* is considered heretical.

Susi suspected that Muhammadiyah did not consider LGBT to be a pressing issue and, therefore, did not deem it necessary to release an official statement on the matter. She said:

As far as I know, there is no *fatwa* from Muhammadiyah concerning the issue of LGBT. At least, I have never read it. Maybe, according to Muhammadiyah, this is only my guess, that many other things are more urgent (than the LGBT issue). For example, when Muhammadiyah formulated a *fiqh* about water, I think the issue of water availability for the community is considered more important than the issue (of LGBT). Then there is the *fiqh* of information, the *fiqh* of child protection, and the *fiqh* of the management of the state assets so that the state appropriately manages the soil, water, and wealth. So, when Muhammadiyah has addressed an issue, it indicates that the issue is considered more critical and urgent for Muhammadiyah to be addressed.

Bu Susi's observation led me to another noteworthy finding. Although Muhammadiyah did not make any official statement, Aisyiyah issued a press release in 2016 to address the controversy of LGBT. This official document, which I discussed earlier in this chapter, was published in the organisation's magazine, *Suara Aisyiyah*.

This finding is intriguing as it appears that the different measures taken by Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah may signify a division of responsibilities between the two organisations. In this context, the issue of LGBT is closely associated with the topic of gender, sexuality, and family, which these topics are stereotypically assigned to women as they are considered feminine issues. The release of an official statement by Aisyiyah instead of Muhammadiyah has prompted me to inquire about this potential division. In response, Bu Susi underscored that there exists no official division of such nature. However, she acknowledged that, indeed, in practice, there are different expectations placed on Aisyiah and Muhammadiyah. This acknowledgement was confirmed by Bu Alimatul, the head of Aisyiyah's Research and Development Unit (LPPA) and also a member of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid. She said:

On paper, yes, there is indeed no division of programs between Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah because Aisyiyah is an autonomous organisation. However, I understand that the existing division of tasks emerged because there is a gender stereotype embedded in society, and it is also sometimes understood and practised by Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah. For example, the program of *keluarga sakinah* was initiated by Aisyiyah. However, this program is now accommodated by Muhammadiyah through its Tarjih decision. So, the current program of *keluarga sakinah* applies to all members of the association.

What is the significance of Aisyiyah's statement on LGBT for Muhammadiyah? According to Bu Alimatul, who was involved in formulating the text, this statement only serves as an appeal specifically aimed at Aisyiyah members, although Muhammadiyah members, in general, are also very welcome to accept it. This point was reiterated by Bu Susi, who emphasised that as an appeal, the statement does not carry any organisational obligation. Consequently, Aisyiyah members were granted the liberty to adhere to or disregard the statement without incurring any organisational repercussions. Upon being asked about the representativeness of this statement for Muhammadiyah's position, both interlocutors responded with hesitation, stating that the statement was crafted by Aisyiyah and, therefore, reflected the opinion of Aisyiyah. They highlighted that this statement cannot be assumed to represent the position of Muhammadiyah.

For the same inquiry, Bu Atiyatul provided a more definitive response. While emphasising that a press release serves as a prompt measure in addressing pressing matters, in this context, Aisyiyah's statement on LGBT cannot be construed as a representation of Muhammadiyah as a whole. The reason for this is that the press release bears the signature solely of the Aisyiyah leadership, whereas a statement that reflects the position of Muhammadiyah necessitates the signature of the Muhammadiyah leadership as well.

In contrast to my interlocutors from Aisyiyah, Pak Hikam presented a divergent perspective regarding Aisyiyah's press statement on LGBT. While other respondents from Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, whom I interviewed, appeared unaware of Aisyiyah's press release, Pak Hikam made a direct reference to it without being asked. Unlike my interlocutors from Aisyiyah, who suggested that

the official statement does not represent the position of Muhammadiyah, Pak Hikam asserted otherwise. According to him, Aisyiah's press release was reflective of the position of Muhammadiyah because the deliberations that preceded the drafting of the text involved participation from representatives of Muhammadiyah.

The varying perspectives above illustrate an ambivalent approach of Muhammadiyah toward the LGBT controversy. To help understand this ambivalence, one may borrow Brown's (2019) notion of a 'big tent' structure that typifies Muslim organisations in Indonesia. This notion suggests that to maintain its existence, an organisation will try to accommodate its members' thoughts and proclivities as much as possible. In this context, Muhammadiyah endeavours to incorporate diverse political and theological viewpoints across a wide range spectrum of conservatism and liberalism while skilfully manoeuvring between leaderships and policy directions that are 'moderately liberal' and 'moderately conservative' (Brown, 2019, p. 399; Bush & Munawar-Rachman, 2014; van Bruinessen, 2011). Because of such structure, Brown (2019) argues, Muhammadiyah is not firmly committed to being an organisation of either liberal pluralism or Islamic conservatism.

Two chairmen of Muhammadiyah have drawn analogies regarding Muhammadiyah's big structure and the broad spectrum of thought within. Both of these illustrate that the perpetuation and societal contributions of Muhammadiyah are contingent upon the preservation of an organisational culture characterised by ambiguity. The former chairman of Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, once said that "the Muhammadiyah leadership is like a big tent. So, as long as they still believe in God, in religion, and the Prophet Mohammad, and they still pray and fast, we will protect them. The parameters are simple" (as cited in AsiaViews, 2005; Brown, 2019). However, this then begs the question of whether these simple parameters are still applicable to LGBT Muslims. Does this tent remain big enough to house and protect them? Meanwhile, the current chairman, Haeder Nasir, compared Muhammadiyah to a commercial Airbus aeroplane whose pilot may not perform arbitrary acrobatic manoeuvres, but he must be intelligent and skilled in following the well-established route (Nashir, 2022). To this expression, he added

that Muhammadiyah respects its members' rights to freedom of expression, but personal attitudes may not bear the name of the organisation. This also raises the question of whether the respect for freedom of expression will be inclusive to the expression of people with non-normative gender and sexuality.

Specifically, Muhammadiyah's choice not to issue an official statement on LGBT is a practice of ambiguity. The absence of an official statement has allowed for different interpretations. On the one hand, it can be perceived as a manifestation of forbearance toleration. Despite the fact that Muhammadiyah disapproves of same-sex relationships and transgender expression, they choose to exercise restraint by refraining from publicly and formally denouncing them. For the LGBT community, this situation provides them with some room for peace and dignity as the organisation has not institutionalised hatred and condemnation of them. However, on the other hand, this circumstance also did not prevent negative sentiments from emerging. Many prominent figures of the organisation made individual statements condemning and ostracising LGBT people, which were subsequently amplified by the media. It is, finally, these two contradicting realities that characterise the position of Muhammadiyah regarding LGBT since 2016 as ambivalent.

4.7. The paradox of perspective and practice

The media reported on Muhammadiyah's choice to refrain from issuing official statements regarding the LGBT controversy in 2016. For instance, under the title "National scene: Muhammadiyah takes soft approach on LGBT," Jakarta Post compared the choice of Muhammadiyah with that of the MUI and NU, both of which chose to condemn and demand the criminalisation of LGBT people (National scene, 2016). As cited by the newspaper, Abdul Mukti, the secretary general of Muhammadiyah, expressed a preference for the utilisation of dialogue as a means of addressing the controversy of LGBT in order to circumvent unproductive public contentions. While he maintains Muhammadiyah's opinion on the immorality of same-sex relationships and acknowledges heterosexual marriage as the only legal marriage, Mukti asserted that public theological condemnation would be

counterproductive in dealing with the issue. He elucidated upon Muhammadiyah's objective, which is to embrace LGBT people and guide them to heterosexuality. Because of this choice, in contrast to the reporting on MUI and NU, the coverage of Muhammadiyah by the Jakarta Post during the LGBT controversy in 2016 was more sympathetic in comparison (see MUI wants, 2016; Sundaryani, 2016).

However, the soft approach is undermined when the prominent figures of the Muhammadiyah themselves join the public condemnation of the community members. The approach becomes even more controversial when Muhammadiyah's media voices their condemnation of the LGBT community fiercely. This scenario created a paradox wherein Muhammadiyah initially strives to promote dialogue and avoid public condemnation, yet in practice, its leadership did the opposite. To address this paradox, I investigate two Muhammadiyah media outlets, Televisi Muhammadiyah and Suara Muhammadiyah, with regard to their construction and propagation of the anti-LGBT narrative. To unravel it, I employ the grand narrative framework to locate any duality that may be used to characterise LGBT people.

4.7.1. Televisi Muhammadiyah

Televisi Muhammadiyah, or tvMu, is a satellite-based television service whose idea was conceived at the 1995 *muktamar*. After about 18 years, on 18 November 2013, tvMu was finally launched by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah. As an organisational communication channel, tvMu functions as a medium for organisational purposes, specifically for Muhammadiyah's mission of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. Its primary role is to fulfil the organisation's strategic communication objectives, which include disseminating information, providing educational and entertainment programs, and serving as a mechanism for social control (tvMu, n.d.).

In conjunction with my research topic, I conducted an analysis of videos disseminated by tvMu on its YouTube channel. The rationale for selecting this source of data is twofold: firstly, the videos are readily available to a broad audience at any time, and secondly, the channel boasts a substantial number of subscribers. As of the time of writing, the total number of subscribers to tvMu's YouTube channel has reached almost 280 thousand subscribers. The videos that have been

uploaded exhibit a range of content, encompassing brief news reports, scholarly discussions, and religious sermons or *pengajian*, with durations spanning from 1.5 minutes to 2.5 hours. Upon entering the keyword “LGBT” in the search bar, a total of 36 videos were retrieved, all of which contained the specific keyword in their respective titles. These videos were uploaded between the years 2016-2021. Of these 36 videos, only one was posted in 2016 despite the national controversy on the LGBT issue that started that year. The highest number of videos was uploaded in 2018, with a total of 14 videos, followed by 2019 and 2021, with seven videos of each, six videos in 2017, and one video in 2020.

Table 3. LGBT-related videos on tvMu’s YouTube channel

Nr.	Video	Duration	Views	Date
1	<i>Opini – Fenomena LGBT</i> (Opinion – The LGBT Phenomenon) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvPRmxZIMKg&t=706s	29:50	47	24.03.2016
2	<i>Seruan Boikot Starbucks di Indonesia. CEO dukung pernikahan sejenis dan LGBT</i> (Call for Boycott of Starbucks in Indonesia. CEO supports same-sex marriage and LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vwWwKl-2xw	2:28	4,689	30.06.2017
3	<i>MUI turut menolak produk yang mendukung LGBT</i> (MUI also rejects products that support LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgguUvC1ZeI	2:35	639	05.07.2017
4	<i>Dukung LGBT, Starbuck menyalahi aturan agama dan negara</i> (Supporting LGBT, Starbucks violates religious and state rules) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uw1U7MYEkbs&t=5s	18:56	668	05.07.2017
5	<i>LGBT Musuh HAM</i> (LGBT is enemy of Human Rights) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MmuNrKWILg	5:42	112	11.10.2017
6	<i>LGBT. Komnas HAM: ...fasilitator sebetulnya ini mesti dihukum</i> (LGBT. National Commission of Human Rights: ...Facilitators should be punished...) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NDBxTxgeis	8:32	159	10.10.2017
7	<i>MUI dan Muhammadiyahanggapi putusan MK Soal Zina dan LGBT</i> (MUI and Muhammadiyah respond to the Constitutional Court's decision on adultery and LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5M9TMz3R7s	1:57	1,103	20.12.2017
8	<i>Menyikap upaya legislasi LGBT. Mahfud MD, Zulkifli, Edmin Edison. Pengajian 2/2/18</i> (Responding to the legislation of LGBT. Mahfud MD, Zulkifli, Edmin Edison. Pengajian 2/2/18) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q84GWXZJLlo	1:50:32	4,370	03.02.2018

9	<i>Ketua PP Pemuda Muhammadiyah: LGBT Masalah serius bangsa Indonesia</i> (The chairman of the central leadership of Pemuda Muhammadiyah: LGBT is a serious problem in Indonesia) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URoDj2Sh2qk	2:05	317	06.02.2018
10	<i>Chamamah Soeratno: Masyarakat harus mengawal gerakan LGBT</i> (Chamamah Soeratno: the society must monitor the LGBT movement) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-qbkBrB9k8	1:42	237	06.02.2018
11	<i>Muhammadiyah akan terus kawal upaya legalisasi LGBT</i> (Muhammadiyah will continue to oversee efforts to legalise LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8cmWvM9hhI&t=84s	4:16	109	06.02.2018
12	<i>Mantan ketua MK Hamdan Zoelva soroti masalah paham LGBT</i> (Former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Hamdan Zoelva, highlights the issue of LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmP8a0wness	2:10	141	07.02.2018
13	<i>Bimbingan orangtua dan kegiatan organisasi hindarkan remaja pada pengaruh LGBT</i> (Parental guidance and active in organisations prevent youth from the influence of LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUvN-aij4L0	1:48	44	08.02.2018
14	<i>Ancaman LGBT dan Miras bayang-bayangi Indonesia</i> (Threats of LGBT and alcohol overshadow Indonesia) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbF0NSORaB0	2:28	44	13.02.2018
15	<i>Yunahar Ilyas: LGBT mengundang murka Allah</i> (Yunahar Ilyas: LGBT invites God's wrath) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrGBIAeDke0	3:59	37	13.02.2018
16	<i>Master Sains Psikologi UMS: cara pencegahan LGBT di kalangan remaja</i> (Master of Science Psychology Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta: ways to prevent LGBT among teenagers) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kPtU5WItA	6:15	334	21.02.2018
17	<i>Hukum Berat menanti pelaku menyimpang LGBT</i> (Heavy punishment awaits the deviant perpetrator of LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjmEtbJulI8	2:21	13	09.04.2018
18	<i>Pemuda Muhammadiyah sampaikan keprihatinannya terkait krisis moral dan LGBT</i> (Pemuda Muhammadiyah express their concerns regarding the crisis of morality and LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6Ibipeom8k	3:04	192	11.10.2018
19	<i>Din Syamsuddin: Kaum LGBT harus dapatkan bimbingan agar sembuh</i> (Din Syamsuddin: LGBT people must get guidance to heal) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nr_mjqYtgTk	1:32	103	12.10.2018

20	<i>Ketua umum PP NA mendorong pembinaan kaum LGBT</i> (The general chairwoman of the central leadership of Nasyyiatul Aisyiyah encourages counselling of LGBT people) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDMVt2cwq_k&t=85s	2:49	25	15.10.2018
21	<i>Muslim membela LGBT</i> (Muslims defend LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnFjYa_-WDw&t=189s	8:32	123	22.11.2018
22	<i>Sebutan buruk & LGBT Part 1</i> (Ugly name & LGBT part 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGZAqUxoRpo	9:24	14	18.02.2019
23	<i>Sebutan buruk & LGBT part 2</i> (Ugly name & LGBT part 2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vnW7_DoSUY	7:33	9	18.02.2019
24	<i>Sebutan buruk & LGBT part 3</i> ((Ugly name & LGBT part 3) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUXKENo6T_A	8:26	5	18.02.2019
25	<i>LGBT mengancam masa depan negara part 1</i> (LGBT threatens the future of the country part 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_mOsjj6D3c&t=13s	8:02	12	12.03.2019
26	<i>LGBT mengancam masa depan negara part 2</i> (LGBT threatens the future of the country part 2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSF5OWbu0Oo	8:20	5	12.03.2019
27	<i>LGBT mengancam masa depan negara part 3</i> (LGBT threatens the future of the country part 3) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQI7t-bBBic	9:07	5	12.03.2019
28	<i>Gerakan LGBT figure seorang ayah sangat penting memproteksinya</i> (The LGBT movement, a father figure is very important in the protection from it) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dOPh1GF48w	2:02	62	05.08.2019
29	<i>Hukum cendekiawan Muslim yang mendukung LGBT</i> (The law for Muslim scholars who support LGBT) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61IYjukU_xI	4:40	396	30.01.2020
30	<i>Dialektika TVMu: HAM, LGBT dan Moral Bangsa</i> (TVMu Dialectic: Human Rights, LGBT, and the morality of the Nation) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLz4mxiZW68&t=3096s	1:09.30	1987	09.10.2021
31	<i>Resep Illahi: LGBT melanggar kodrat part 1</i> (Divine recipe: LGBT violates the law of nature part 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbUYq4eaJow	8:38	102	28.05.2021
32	<i>Resep Illahi: LGBT melanggar kodrat part 2</i> ((Divine recipe: LGBT violates the law of nature part 2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9s38QncZkg	7:58	25	28.05.2021
33	<i>Resep Illahi: LGBT melanggar kodrat part 3</i> (Divine recipe: LGBT violates the law of nature part 3) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrTuJhNGGJ8	8:53	79	28.05.2021

34	<i>Perilaku LGBT dalam Islam dan HAM tidak dapat dibenarkan</i> (LGBT behaviour cannot be justified in Islam and human rights) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvvKlcouSTM	4:14	163	12.10.2021
35	<i>Waspada transmisi konten negatif LGBT</i> (Beware of the transmission of the LGBT negative content) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jliWeQjbvI	7:50	474	12.10.2021
36	<i>PP NA Soroti perilaku LGBT yang masif</i> (The central leadership of Nasyyatul Aisyiah Highlights Massive LGBT behaviour) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6PSG5CKCVM	4:09	228	12.10.2021

From reading the videos' titles above, tvMu espouses a largely biased narrative against LGBT people. For instance, those videos lack a balanced portrayal of the LGBT community, as they exclusively present negative perspectives on the platform. LGBT people are portrayed using inflammatory language such as 'endangers the nation,' 'violates the law of nature,' and 'moral crisis.' As a result, these videos undermine the initial assertion by Muhammadiyah regarding the facilitation of constructive dialogue in addressing LGBT issues in Indonesia. In so doing, tvMu is implicated in exacerbating what Abdul Mukti refers to as 'unproductive public contentions,' which is precisely what Muhammadiyah wants to avoid.

Drawing on Latief's (2017) analysis of the dichotomy between official and unofficial opinions, one might contend that the perspectives being disseminated through tvMu are not Muhammadiyah's official position. Perhaps it is true that these videos only represent the personal perspectives of the people working at the TV channel and should in no way be seen as an official representation of the organisation's stance. Nevertheless, what measures can the public employ to differentiate between opinions that are official and unofficial? One can assert with confidence that tvMu has been broadcasting a uniform and consistent perspective condemning LGBT people without any meaningful internal rebuttal. In this light, in the absence of contrasting viewpoints, the differentiation between official and unofficial opinions loses its relevance. The undisputed perception put forth will likely be construed by the public as emblematic of the organisation's position as a whole. Hence, a crucial inquiry for tvMu revolves around its educational commitment, specifically whether or not they are willing to broadcast opposing

perspectives that present a more balanced representation of the LGBT community in its channel.

The efficacy of the message communicated through tvMu's videos is derived not solely from their sources but also from their method, which combines multiple discourses from religious, political, and cultural standpoints. The religious discourse pertains to theological exegeses of Islamic canonical texts that repudiate homosexuality on the ground that it violates natural law. The political discourse disseminates the notion that the LGBT community serves as a political instrument of Western liberalism aimed at dismantling Indonesian national identity. Meanwhile, the cultural discourse revolves around the notion that the LGBT phenomenon represents a form of lifestyle liberalisation of lifestyle that contradicts Indonesian cultural values, which are grounded in religious norms and morality. Pancasila has been employed on multiple as a cohesive and strengthening structure for all three discourses to oppose LGBT, effectively positioning it as simply un-Indonesian.

To examine how the narrative against LGBT is being established, I have selected a video recording of a *pengajian* with the title "*Menyikapi Upaya Legalisasi LGBT: Mahfud MD, Zulkifli Hasan, Edmin Edison*" (Responding to the Legalisation Efforts of LGBT: Mahfud MD, Zulkifli Hasan, Edmin Edison) (tvMu Channel, 2018a). This *pengajian* took place at Muhammadiyah headquarters in Jakarta in February 2018. The selection of this video is based on three factors. First, this video garnered a notably greater viewership in comparison to other videos. As of the time of writing, the video, which was uploaded on 3 February 2018, has garnered more than 4,300 viewers. Secondly, in contrast to academic discussion, which typically caters to a specific audience, *pengajian* is characterised by a broader audience base that encompasses individuals from diverse social and educational backgrounds. Lastly, in contrast to the news format, *pengajian* provides a more significant amount of information to its participants. This information is often perceived a highly credible by the audience due to the incorporation of religious elements and the esteemed social standing of the speakers.

The *pengajian* is organised in a panel format, featuring two prominent politicians and a scientist as the speakers. They are Mahfud MD, Zulkifli Hasan, and Rizki Edmi Edison.⁵⁸ In addition to these panellists, the opening and closing remarks are delivered by Haedar Nashir, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, and Abdul Mukti, the General Secretary of Muhammadiyah, respectively. This *pengajian* scrutinises LGBT through the religious, legal, political, and scientific lenses by which the panellists employ their respective capacities. They mutually suggest that LGBT has evolved into a movement that seeks to normalise same-sex relationships in Indonesia. Hence, they jointly produce a single opinion against LGBT. Nevertheless, the panellists emphasised that the rejection of LGBT should not be directed at the persons but at their behaviour.

Before delving into the content, it is pertinent to provide a general overview of the ambience of the *pengajian*, as it may serve as an estimate of the participants' receptivity to the narrative. A welcoming and amicable ambience is likely to enhance participants' receptivity and openness to new information, thereby promoting the progression of the narrative. As shown in the video, the *pengajian* room is packed with participants consisting of men and women dressed in typical Indonesian Muslim attire, with many of the men wearing *peci* (a traditional cap) and all women wearing hijab sitting separately on the floor. The video shows the typical ambience of Muhammadiyah's *pengajian*. It is calm, easy, and relaxed, with plenty of jokes thrown by the panellists and greeted with laughter by the participants. In addition, the participants were allowed to participate in a Q&A session that brought the issue closer to their everyday lives. Nevertheless, despite the friendly ambience, the uploaded video on YouTube is accompanied by occasional displays of several videos with provocative captions as background illustrations. There is, for instance, a video showing police raids at an allegedly gay party. The scene shows pictures of several men, handcuffed and wearing prison

⁵⁸ Mahmud MD was a former Chief Justice of the Indonesian Constitutional Court. Since October 2019, he holds the position of Coordinating Minister for political, legal, and security affairs. Zulkifli Hasan is the chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN), a political party that is recognised for its strong association with Muhammadiyah. Additionally, he served as the Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) from 2014-2019. Rizki Edmi Edison is the Director of the Neuroscience Centre at Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA, Jakarta.

uniforms or forced shirtless, being treated like criminals. At the same time, the video's caption reads, "*Indonesia darurat LGBT: kaum LGBT mencoreng nama bangsa dan negara*" (Indonesia's LGBT emergency: LGBT people tarnish the reputation of the nation and the state).

The *pengajian* begins with an opening ceremony with a recital of some verses of the Quran that narrates the story of Lot. Following the recital, the moderator gave the podium to the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, for an opening speech. Referring to the story of Lot, Nashir suggests that LGBT is the modern reproduction of sexual transgression of the past. He theorises a dichotomy within the LGBT community, distinguishing between a minority congenital LGBT and the rest are LGBT by choice who follow 'humanism, secular, and liberal' values. The latter group, according to him, seeks recognition and validation from the State. Nashir advises that Muslims ought to exhibit empathy towards the congenital LGBT and aid them in their efforts to regain 'normalcy.' However, he cautions that the second group who 'live an LGBT life' by choice should be approached with prudence as they possess the potential to mobilise and demand legalisation from the State. It is unclear what 'legalisation' he is referring to, but the prevailing public discourse in Indonesia and around the world suggests that he is referring to the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Within this context of legalisation, Nashir calls for the State to denounce LGBT on the basis that they contravene the first and second principles of Pancasila. He suggests that the first principle entails Indonesia's adherence to divine values that stem from various religious values. Meanwhile, the second principle, he suggests, necessitates Indonesia's adherence to civilised humanity that conforms to the natural constitution (*fitrah*) and rules of divinity. Furthermore, Nashir argues that while sexual desire is an inherent human need, it can only be fulfilled through the proper and dignified institution of marriage.

Following the opening speech, the moderator gives a summary underlining the transgression of LGBT before ceding the podium to the first speaker. Mahfud MD delivers his remarks in his professional capacity as an expert in constitutional law. He begins his talks by highlighting the struggle to reform the penal code of

Indonesia, which has been ongoing for over three decades within the parliament. According to him, the article pertaining to adultery is a highly disputed provision. He notes that its definition is based on the definition established during the Dutch colonial period, which is incongruent with the Islamic perspective. In the context of LGBT, Mahfud MD states that the present penal code essentially permits same-sex relations, provided that they do not involve minors. Aside from the legal struggle surrounding the redefinition of adultery, Mahmud MD expounds upon the foreign influence in Indonesia's LGBT discourse. He outlines the assertion regarding the allocation of US\$ 8 Million in foreign funding by UNDP to provide assistance to LGBT organisations and promote their agenda.

As he concludes his talks, Mahmud MD suggests that the protracted discourse surrounding LGBT in Indonesia can be attributed to divergent human rights conceptions. Referring to the Cairo Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities,⁵⁹ he suggests a particularity in the conceptualisation of human rights. Based on this particularity, he discerns human rights in the West, which are grounded in liberal, secular, and individualistic principles, from that in the East, which is founded on cultural and religious conventions. According to Mahfud MD, the Indonesian constitution adopts the particularity by providing restrictions on the realisation of human rights, as outlined in the 2nd amendment, article 28J. This imposition of this restriction, he notes, could be warranted in instances where human rights concerns infringe upon religious values, morality, and public order. Hence, for Mahmud MD, the criminalisation of 'LGBT behaviour' in Indonesia

⁵⁹ This declaration was proposed in 1997 by the InterAction Council – an independent international organisation of statesmen who have held the highest office in their own countries – to complement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. InterAction Council (1997) formulates the central idea of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibility to balance between freedom and responsibility. The declaration argues that “humans deserve the greatest possible amount of freedom, but also should develop their sense of responsibility to its fullest in order to correctly administer their freedom” (p.7). Hence “the idea of a human right only makes sense if we acknowledge the duty of all people to respect it” (p.8). In contrary to Mahmud MD's statement, I believe that this declaration is not intended to restrict the basic rights of individuals stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but to designate that respecting human rights of others is the duty of every individual.

does not constitute a violation of human rights, as such behaviour is deemed to contravene the prevailing cultural and religious norms in the country.

The second panellist is Rizki Edmi Edison, who delivers his perspective on LGBT as a neuroscientist. Being a scientist, he provides a disclaimer at the outset of his talk, stipulating that while “a scientist may be wrong, they may not lie.” Edison’s talk centres on challenging the societal acceptance of LGBT, as viewed through the lens of medical and neurobiological perspectives. He begins his presentation by providing an overview of the distinctions between sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Within these distinctions, according to him, the primary concern faced by LGBT people is their homosexual orientation, which he perceived as a potential disruption of the social structure of Indonesia. Edison cites a study conducted by Dick Ferdinand Swaab, a Dutch physician and professor of neurobiology at the University of Amsterdam, to substantiate his claim. It is noteworthy that he introduces Swaab as an atheist to the audience, which could be interpreted as an attempt to convey the notion that homosexuality is not only disapproved by religious communities but also by atheists.

Edison highlights Swaab’s (2004) research on the correlation between brain anatomy and sexual orientation, noting that while disparities in brain anatomy exist between gay and straight men and between lesbian and straight women, these differences could be attributed to perceptual mechanisms or neuroplasticity. It means, as he notes, homosexuality is formed through repetitive actions that eventually cause alterations in brain anatomy. To simplify his explanation, Edison employs an analogy about a painter who, despite being born without arms, is able to produce beautiful paintings using only his feet. He posits that the painter’s proficiency in this regard is attributable to his extensive experience and habitual practice.

Do humans have a predisposition (*bakat*) to be born homosexuals? Edison provides an analysis of risk factors (*faktor resiko*) and triggering factors (*faktor pencetus*) in response to this inquiry. Referring to Swaab’s study, Edison elucidates that during the initial two months of gestation, a fetus acquires its biological sex,

either male or female, while the latter half of pregnancy is for the brain development crucial for the determination of sexuality and gender identity. However, following this explanation, he employs the narrative of homosexuality as a pathological condition. He draws a comparison between individuals who possess a predisposition for a heart attack (*punya bakat penyakit jantung*) and those who exhibit a homosexual inclination. The former may mitigate their risk of developing heart disease by adopting a healthy lifestyle and avoiding specific causes, while the latter, he suggests, may also avoid becoming homosexuals by avoiding the triggering factors.

Edison concludes his talk by presenting two propositions. First, he suggests homosexuality is determined by social factors; therefore, it is the responsibility of parents to protect and educate their children accordingly. Secondly, although homosexuality is not considered a mental disorder that physicians and psychologists may not treat as such, he suggests that based on the theory of neuroplasticity, LGBT can be cured through conversion or repetitive therapy. This is where Edison's opinion differs from Swaab's. While it is true that Swaab (2004, p. 308) discusses the possibility of social factors influencing human sexual orientation, he stated that there is no solid evidence that can support this assumption. He underlines that there is no scientific evidence for the idea that social environment is the determining factor of sexual orientation, nor is there empirical evidence that homosexuality can be explained with psychoanalysis, psychology, or social learning. Instead, Swaab argues that sexual orientation is innate as it is already programmed in the brain (see also Williams, 2014).

The panel is interrupted by a question-and-answer session because the third panellist is not yet present. While waiting, there are two participants, a woman and a man, who share their personal experiences and ask questions to the panellists. The personal experience shared by the male participant stood out. He told the forum that once he had a male neighbour who was 'normal' in the sense that he exhibited traditionally masculine traits, but after a *salon kecantikan* (beauty parlour) was opened next to his house, he started to socialise with the staff and his behaviour started to change. He said that his neighbour transformed from a masculine man to

a feminine person within three years. However, other than calling his neighbour 'feminine,' this male participant did not use other specific terms such as transgender or *waria*. He then asked the second panellist about the potential catalysts for this transformation, to which the second panellist responded by alluding to his talk on neuroplasticity. He emphasises the pivotal role of socialisation and habitual exercise in such transformation.

The *pengajian* resumes upon the arrival of the third panellist. Zulkifli Hasan delivers his talk in his capacity as a politician and a member of the Indonesian parliament. He begins his presentation by narrating a story about a symposium organised by the parliament in 2015, which discussed the issue of Indonesia's egregious human rights violations. Hasan claims that he has been accused by LGBT activists of committing human rights violations during his tenure as the speaker of MPR. The accusations were made on the grounds of his refusal to acknowledge same-sex marriage in Indonesia. Following this encounter, he extended invitations to several 'leading experts' in Indonesia to discuss LGBT issues. Hasan tells the audience of the *pengajian* the results of the discussion, highlighting the potential hazards associated with LGBT and its potential effect on national resilience. He claims that those experts appraised the risk of sexually transmitted disease in same-sex relations is 6000 times higher than that of heterosexual relations. Additionally, he added, the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission in homosexual relations is 2.5 times higher. Based on these figures, Hasan argues that LGBT poses a significant risk to the overall public health and resilience of the Indonesian nation, akin in magnitude to that of illegal drugs and alcohol.

Concluding his remarks, Hasan informs the audience that there are over 120 officially registered non-governmental organisations in Indonesia that advocate for LGBT causes. He implies that these organisations are affiliated with a global network that aims to promote secularism in society. In this context, his observation regarding Russia's effective resistance to the global LGBT movement is noteworthy. He finishes his talk by emphasising that the LGBT movement represents a common enemy for Indonesia and that it is the responsibility of the Muslim society to take measures to stop it.

Due to the time limit, the moderator opts to forego the second question-and-answer session and instead gives the podium to the general secretary of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mukti, to deliver the closing speech. In his speech, Mukti elucidates the genesis of human existence, positing that humankind was fashioned by God with two different sexes, male and female, to facilitate procreation. He suggests that the two concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ emerged from this creation. The concept of nature denotes the biological distinction between males and females, while the notion of nurture pertains to the social and cultural factors that shape the development of gender identity as either masculine or feminine. According to Mukti, gender identity is established by specific traits, characters, and personalities that are acquired through socialisation and education. Hence, he asserts that Islam teaches humankind to uphold their nature (*fitrah*) through nurture, thereby ensuring that males retain their masculinity and females retain their femininity. In this light, Mukti argues that parental involvement is crucial in ensuring their children grow within the boundaries of the normative genders, e.g., by selecting suitable attire and toys. He also underlines the role of the state in regulating, cultivating, and guiding the moral values of the nation through education. Closing the *pengajian*, Mukti acknowledged that the issue of LGBT poses a novel and arduous challenge for Muhammadiyah. He suggests that if the organisations advocating for the ‘legalisation of LGBT’ in Indonesia are utilising the constitutional approach, it is imperative that counter efforts adopt the same approach.

4.7.2. Suara Muhammadiyah

Another Muhammadiyah media outlet that emerges as a fierce voice promoting anti-LGBT sentiment is Suara Muhammadiyah. This periodical publication was founded by Ahmad Dahlan himself and published for the first time in 1915. Employing a similar method as that utilised for tvMu, by typing the keyword ‘LGBT’ on the search bar on the magazine’s website, a corpus of 20 articles pertaining to the topic of LGBT with publication dates ranging from 2016 to 2021 were retrieved, which were published between 2016 to 2021. Unlike tvMu, where most of the related videos were published in 2018, the concentration of LGBT-

related articles in Suara Muhammadiyah was published in February 2016, just as the national controversy began.

Table 4. LGBT-related articles on Suara Muhammadiyah

Nr.	Article	date
1	<i>Drs. H. Tafsir, M. Ag: Anak-Anak Harus Dilindungi Dari LGBT</i> (Drs. H. Tafsir, M. Ag: Children Must Be Protected From LGBT) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/21/drs-h-tafsir-m-ag-anak-anak-harus-dilindungi-dari-lgbt/	21.01.2016
2	<i>Muhammadiyah Sumbar: LGBT Adalah Penyakit Bukan HAM</i> (Muhammadiyah West Sumatra: LGBT is a disease not human rights) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/05/muhammadiyah-sumbar-lgbt-adalah-penyakit-bukan-ham/	05.02.2016
3	<i>PWM Sumbar Gelar Seminar Nasional Gerakan Sempalan dan Launching Pusat Studi Islam Kontemporer</i> (PWM West Sumatra Holds National Seminar on the Separation Movement and Launches Centre for Contemporary Islamic Studies) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/15/pwm-sumbar-gelar-seminar-nasional-gerakan-sempalan-dan-launching-pusat-studi-islam-kontemporer/	15.02.2016
4	<i>Haedar Nashir: LGBT itu fenomena liberalisasi kehidupan</i> (Haedar Nasir: LGBT is a phenomenon of liberalization of life) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/16/haedar-nashir-lgbt-itu-fenomena-liberalisasi-kehidupan/	16.02.2016
5	<i>IPM Pekalongan Tolak LGBT Lewat Stiker</i> (IPM Pekalongan Rejects LGBT Through Stickers) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/17/ipm-pekalongan-tolak-lgbt-lewat-stiker/	17.02.2016
6	<i>Alimatul Qibtiyah, PhD: Cegah LGBT menjadi gerakan social</i> (Alimatul Qibtiyah, PhD: Prevent LGBT from becoming a social movement) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/22/alimatul-qibtiyah-ph-d-cegah-lgbt-menjadi-gerakan-sosial/	22.02.2016
7	<i>Dr. Khairuddin Bashori: Cegah LGBT, kita harus aware pada orientasi seksual anak</i> (Dr. Khairuddin Bashori: To prevent LGBT, we must be aware of children's sexual orientation) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/22/dr-khairuddin-bashori-cegah-lgbt-kita-harus-aware-pada-orientasi-seksual-anak/	22.02.2016
8	<i>Ahmad Yasser Mansyur, S.Ag., S.Psi., M.Si; Gunakan Istilah Fitrah Seksual untuk Edukasi Masyarakat</i> (Ahmad Yasser Mansyur, S.Ag., S.Psi., M.Si; Use the term Sexual <i>Fitrah</i> (natural) for Public Education) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/22/gunakan-istilah-fitrah-seksual-untuk-edukasi-masyarakat/	22.02.2016

9	<p><i>Prof. Drs. Koentjoro Soeparno, MBSc. PhD: Waspadai Jadi Gerakan Sosial</i> (Prof. Drs. Koentjoro Soeparno, MBSc. PhD: Beware of Being a Social Movement)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/27/prof-drs-koentjoro-soeparno-mbsc-phd-waspadai-jadi-gerakan-sosial/</p>	27.02.2016
10	<p><i>Prof. Bambang Cipto; LGBT Bagian dari Politik HAM Amerika Serikat</i> (Prof. Bambang Cipto; LGBT Part of United States Human Rights Politics)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/28/prof-bambang-cipto-lgbt-bagian-dari-politik-ham-amerika-serikat/</p>	28.02.2016
11	<p><i>Deklarasi 'Aisyiyah Kota Sukabumi Menolak dan Melawan Aktifitas LGBT</i> (Declaration of 'Aisyiyah Sukabumi to reject and to fight against LGBT Activities)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/29/deklarasi-aisyiyah-kota-sukabumi-menolak-dan-melawan-aktifitas-lgbt-2/</p>	29.02.2016
12	<p><i>Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah Ambil Sikap Terkait Kontroversi LGBT</i> (Central leadership of 'Aisyiyah Takes Position Regarding the LGBT Controversy)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/03/25/pimpinan-pusat-aisyiyah-ambil-sikap-terkait-kontroversi-lgbt/</p>	25.03.2016
13	<p><i>Dai Ujung Tombak Atasi LGBT, Polda Sumbar dan Muhammadiyah Gagasan Penyelamat LGBT</i> (Dai spearheads overcin dealing with LGBT, West Sumatra Regional Police and Muhammadiyah Initiate LGBT Rescue Forum)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/05/14/dai-ujung-tombak-atasi-lgbt-polda-sumbar-dan-muhammadiyah-gagas-forum-penyelamat-lgbt/</p>	14.05.2016
14	<p><i>Mengenal Lebih Dekat LGBT dan HIV/AIDS dari Perspektif Islam</i> (Getting to Know LGBT and HIV/AIDS from an Islamic Perspective)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2017/03/25/mengenal-lebih-dekat-lgbt-dan-hiv-aids-dari-perspektif-islam/</p>	25.03.2017
15	<p><i>Gelar Diskusi, Pemuda Muhammadiyah Sulteng Tegas Tolak LGBT</i> (Holds Discussion, Pemuda Muhammadiyah Central Sulawesi Firmly Rejects LGBT)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2017/05/22/gelar-diskusi-pemuda-muhammadiyah-sulteng-tegas-tolak-lgbt/</p>	22.05.2017
16	<p><i>Haedar Nashir: Agama dan Pancasila, Alasan Mengapa LGBT Tidak Bisa Dilegalkan</i> (Haedar Nasir: Religion and Pancasila, The Reason Why LGBT Can't Be Legalised)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2018/02/05/haedar-nashir-agama-dan-pancasila-alasan-mengapa-lgbt-tidak-bisa-dilegalkan/</p>	05.02.2018
17	<p><i>LGBT dalam perspektif Islam</i> (LGBT in Islamic perspective)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/12/01/lgbt-dalam-perspektif-islam/</p>	01.12.2019
18	<p><i>LGBT Mempertuhan Hawa Nafsu</i> (LGBT worship lust)</p> <p>https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/03/21/lgbt-mempertuhan-hawa-nafsu/</p>	22.01.2020

19	<i>Paham Demokrasi dan HAM Liberal</i> (Liberal Democracy and Human Rights) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2020/03/11/paham-demokrasi-dan-ham-liberal/	11.03.2020
20	<i>Ro'fah, PhD; Hormati dan Perlakukan Mereka secara Manusiawi</i> (Ro'fah, PhD; Respect and Treat Them Humanely) https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2016/02/22/hormati-dan-perlakukan-mereka-secara-manusiawi/	02.01.2021

Much like the videos on tvMu, the articles featured in Suara Muhammadiyah exhibit a strong bias against the LGBT community. Through these articles, the magazine employs the same tripartite approach, encompassing religious, political, and cultural perspectives, to construct an anti-LGBT position.

Nevertheless, although the majority of these articles produce and reproduce negative attitudes towards LGBT people, at least one article presents a balanced viewpoint on portraying the community. The article under the title “*Ro'fah, PhD: hormati dan perlakukan mereka secara manusiawi*” (Ro'fah, PhD: respect and treat them as humans) was written based on the magazine’s interview with Ro'fah, a faculty member at the State Islamic University in Yogyakarta (Ro'fah, PhD, 2021). In this article, she argues that the existence of the LGBT movement advocating for the protection of their civil rights is entirely understandable, given that the community, as a marginalised group, frequently experiences discrimination and aggression from the broader society. Although she disagrees with the legalisation of same-sex marriage, she insists that such disagreement should not be accompanied by stigmatisation and violence. She notes that any disagreement must not rely on emotional appeals but should employ logical reasoning communicated through constructive dialogue. She emphasises that as human beings and fellow citizens of Indonesia, LGBT people also have the same right to live that must be respected.

In addition to the website, I was able to access some printed editions of Suara Muhammadiyah. There are noticeable differences between articles published online and articles published in printed editions. Online articles are typically concise, whereas the articles featured in the print edition provide a more comprehensive narrative of LGBT. The perspectives offered are derived from diverse sources,

encompassing academics, politicians, social activists, doctors, and psychologists. To examine the construction of this narrative, I selected the 05/101 edition due to the fact that this edition was published during the period when the LGBT controversy was at its peak in 2016. Hence, it is possible that this edition was the immediate response to the controversy. The articles featured in this edition appear to be elaborations of the online articles published in the preceding month of February 2016, as they utilised identical data and interviews. There are three essential articles, one of which is a public plea, and the other two are analytical articles. To establish context, the editorial of this edition defines LGBT as a new societal problem associated with the growing awareness of liberal democracy and human rights in post-reform Indonesia (Problem sosial, 2016).

The first article serves as a public appeal directed particularly toward human rights activists. Under the title “*Lindungi anak dari LGBT*” (Protect children from LGBT), this article builds a narrative on LGBT by using two contradictory points (Lindungi anak, 2016). On the one hand, it claims that LGBT is a disease caused by a genetic disorder that impacts biological and psychological development, and on the other hand, it also claims that LGBT can be transmitted to other people, especially to children, through association. The article haphazardly cites scientific research on epigenetic markers conducted by a scientist from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), which was presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics in Baltimore in 2015 (see ASHG, 2015).⁶⁰ The utilisation of scientific data to accompany the religious perspective is common in Muhammadiyah, owing to the organisation’s sizeable proportion of highly

⁶⁰ The research was conducted by Tuck C. Ngun. by “examining patterns of DNA methylation across the genome” in 47 pairs of identical male twins, this research claims that “the methylation patterns in nine small regions, scattered across the genome, could be used to predict study participants’ sexual orientation with 70 percent accuracy” (ASHG, 2015). I tried to find more information about this research, but it seems that this study has not been published in any peer-reviewed journal despite the presentation of the research was already conducted in 2015. Instead, I found some articles that indicates this research was met with skepticism from the scientific community with one critique said it was premature to draw any conclusion on the predictive power of epigenetic markers and another critique said the sample size was too small (Berkrot, 2015; Reardon, 2015). Nevertheless, from all information I could gather, this research did not in any ways claim that homosexuality is a result of genetic disorder, let alone transmittable. While I believe that the research on epigenetic markers was intended for human advancement, it has unfortunately been appropriated to support the negative narrative against LGBT people in Indonesia.

educated members. Therefore, the incorporation of scientific data lends credibility to the discussion. The article's concluding statement urges human rights advocates to refrain from endorsing the LGBT community, citing potential harm to children as a consequence of such support. The call reads, "Human rights activists should understand this. Do not defend someone's human rights but at the same time violate the rights of others. Moreover, this violation is against the rights of our innocent children, which must be protected" (Lindungi anak, 2016, p. 6).

The second article, titled "*Penyakit bukan HAM*" (Disease, not Human Rights), presents a perspective that the LGBT movement is utilising the current momentum of democratisation and burgeoning consciousness of human rights concerns in Indonesia to normalise homosexuality (Penyakit bukan HAM, 2016). This article presents conflicting assertions akin to the plea, wherein LGBT people are purported to exhibit symptoms of a mental disorder that can be transmitted to others. Thus, as it is argued, the discussion of LGBT cannot be approached through the framework of human rights.

This article references four interlocutors who, based on their professional and educational backgrounds, have substantial authority in influencing public opinion. The first two interlocutors, Koentjoro Soeparno and Khairuddin Bashori, provide their perspectives as psychologists and highlight the hazards associated with the normalisation of LGBT in Indonesia. Koentjoro Soeparno is a psychologist and faculty member at Universitas Gadjah Mada, one of Indonesia's most prestigious state universities. Meanwhile, Khairuddin Bashori is a psychologist and faculty member at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), both of which are highly regarded Muhammadiyah universities located in Yogyakarta.⁶¹ In this article, Soeparno provides a background analysis of the cultural shift in human sexuality. He argues that the 1975 Cairo conference, which calls for human population control, has expanded the meaning of sexual activity beyond its reproductive function to encompass

⁶¹ Bashori is also a former rector of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

recreational purposes, thereby prompting the emergence of free sex culture.⁶² As such cultural transformations are an inevitable aspect of human society, he warns that the normalisation of LGBT is a possibility, provided that there is no resistance. Meanwhile, Bashori suggests that LGBT is not a new issue in Indonesia, but due to advancements in information technology and globalisation, LGBT people are exhibiting a greater level of bravery in showing themselves. For him, exposure to such display could potentially pose a risk to the formation of children's sexual orientation. To mitigate this risk, he suggests that parents should pay attention to parenting methods that adhere to the established gender roles. In this way, according to Bashori, the children's sexual orientation will develop normally.

Subsequently, the other two interlocutors provide their perspectives in their professional capacity as medical doctors. Muhammad Arifudin is an orthopaedic and traumatology specialist at PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital Yogyakarta, and Sukadiyono is the Rector of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya. Regarding their professional backgrounds, it is not an obvious choice that the magazine opted for these two professionals to provide their medical perspectives pertaining to LGBT issues. Nonetheless, they highlight the social environment as a crucial factor in the formation of non-normative gender and sexuality. Sukadiyono provides an overview of the anatomical structure of the human brain, wherein he elucidates that the prefrontal cortex is responsible for regulating behaviour, which is greatly influenced by the social environment. Therefore, he posits that there exists a presupposition whereby education is believed to have a significant impact on children's behaviour. In other words, Sukadiono suggests that the normalisation of LGBT will affect the development of children's sexual orientation and gender identity. Meanwhile, Arifudin offers a contextual examination of the removal of homosexuality from the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) by the APA (American Psychiatric Association) in 1973 and suggests that this removal has allowed some countries to legalise same-sex marriage. While he did not try to disprove this removal, he implies that homosexuality could be

⁶² I suspect what he meant with the 1975 Cairo conference is the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt, on 5-3 September 1994.

cured because “LGBT is not genetically given but socially acquired.” As written in the article, Arifudin makes a biased assertion by associating the LGBT community with the transmission of HIV. He highlights explicitly that transgender women and gay individuals has become the primary contributors to the rising statistics of HIV/AIDS patients at Yogyakarta’s Dr. Sardjito Hospital without providing any other comparative numbers.

The third article, titled “*Ancaman itu kian nyata*” (The threat is getting real), employs a combination of religious and political arguments to construct a narrative that portrays the LGBT community as a ‘social virus’ posing a threat to social order in Indonesia (Ancaman itu, 2016). The article begins by making a reference to the story of Lot as a foundational premise to substantiate the assertion that all religions reject LGBT. The article proceeds to provide information pertaining to the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the United States and several European countries. This passage appears to reinforce the notion that LGBT is a by-product of Western liberal culture. The controversy on the foreign funding in support of LGBT organisations is then attached to this story as evidence of the proliferation attempts of Western culture in Indonesia.

This article cites perspectives from diverse sources, encompassing scholars, policy makers, and social activists. Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim, the head of the Education Commission of MUI, suggests that foreign funding is instrumental in the success of the LGBT campaign. This assertion is further substantiated by information pertaining to the allocation of US\$ 8 million by UNDP to various Asian countries, including Indonesia, for the purpose of capacity-building projects for LGBT organisations. The article presents success stories from the Philippines and Vietnam to demonstrate the impact of funding on improving public perception of the LGBT community. The Chairman of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), Asrorun Niam, and the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Yohana Yambise, are also cited in this article. Both public officers emphasise the negative impact of LGBT on Indonesian children, with Niam portraying LGBT as an ‘assassination of Indonesian identity’ and Yambise likening LGBT to a contagious ‘social virus.’

Despite having previously identified LGBT as a perceived social threat, this article advocates for a non-violent approach toward LGBT people. Alimatul Qibtiyah, a faculty member at Yogyakarta's Islamic State University and a member of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Muhammadiyah, contends that the optimal course of action is for parents to protect their children against the negative influence of LGBT by imparting appropriate sex education. Meanwhile, as cited by the article, Hamim Ilyas, a faculty member at Yogyakarta's Islamic State University and a member of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Muhammadiyah, suggests that society must avoid violent and discriminatory treatment towards LGBT people. Subsequently, he emphasises the importance of guiding LGBT individuals towards adhering to the prevailing societal norms.

From the illustrations above, it appears that Muhammadiyah's soft approach in addressing LGBT has been contradicted by its own media outlets. The contents disseminated through tvMu and Suara Muhammadiyah exhibit a predominantly biased perspective against LGBT people. The manner in which these two media outlets construct LGBT narratives conforms to the grand narrative in Indonesia, whereby LGBT is juxtaposed against religion, the nation, and public health in binary opposition. Hence, these media outlets since 2016 have turned into a platform for a public judgment of the LGBT community, disregarding Muhammadiyah's initial objective to address LGBT with constructive dialogue.

The Cambridge dictionary defines dialogue as "a serious exchange of opinion, especially among people or groups that disagree."⁶³ Nevertheless, the sole interaction observed in tvMu and Suara Muhammadiyah is limited to the exchange of identical viewpoints that serve to bolster each other, with no indication of any opposing perspectives. Despite possible disclaimers through the distinction between official and unofficial opinions (Latief, 2017) or the pretext that personal opinions should not be conflated with organisational opinions (Nashir, 2022), it remains the case that when organisational figures express uniform opinions through the organisation media outlets, without any presentation of dissenting opinions,

⁶³ See <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dialogue>.

may lead the public to infer that such opinions are representative of the organisation. Thus, at this point, the organisation's soft approach remains a promise lacking practical implications.

4.8. Islam in the LGBT discourse in Indonesia

Given that the predominant population in Indonesia is Muslim, Islam permeates Indonesia's social and political affairs in every possible way. It establishes the norms for interpersonal interactions and plays a significant role in shaping public opinions. It is seen as rightful, and its principles serve as a foundation of the social order that must not be shaken. Hefner (2017, p. 83) notes that Islamic ethical ideals can carry 'criteria of validity' in Indonesian socio-political affairs as they are "always mediated through an array of state and societal authorities, popular and elite ethical imaginaries, and media of representation, transmission, and performance." The significant role of Islam in setting social norms and values is, however, not only in the Indonesian Muslim community but also in Muslim communities elsewhere. Ali (2016, p. xxi) highlights that in Muslim communities, the acceptance of a particular faith or practice, especially concerning women, gender, and family, depends on whether they are 'legitimately Islamic.' As Reinhart (2003) notes, 'Islam' has become the most significant feature in discussions among Muslims regarding controversial issues.

The topics of homosexuality and transgender identity have been widely debated on a global scale, eliciting diverse public opinions. In Indonesia, the prevailing public sentiment towards these issues is predominantly unfavourable, as evidenced by the marginalisation and animosity directed toward individuals identifying as LGBT. The unfavourable perceptions of LGBT people are substantiated by the construction of a comprehensive narrative that amalgamates tripartite duality that portrays them as adversaries of religion, the nation, and public health. Based on my observations, especially in the context of Muhammadiyah, it appears that the duality of LGBT versus Islam stands out as a fundamental element within the grand narrative.

The utilisation of duality in such a radical manner is a frequent occurrence within the Islamic tradition. The domain of Islamic ethical ideals tends to divide human qualities into a radical dualism such as good and evil, wrong and right, and *halal* and *haram*. This dualism implies that human values in Islam are to be measured by an absolute standard. This tendency is inextricably linked to the Quranic outlook, in which there is a significant dualism regarding human moral values throughout the Quran, i.e., the fundamental dualism of believers and unbelievers. According to Izutsu (2002), the radical dualism in the Quran cannot be separated from the history of its revelation to Arab society. He believes this dualism was highly beneficial to the moral development of Arabs, who did not have a consistent, practical code of conduct prior to Islam. He suggests that pre-Islam Arab tribes based their moral values almost entirely on an irrational sort of moral emotion, or rather a blind and violent passion for the way of life passed down through generations as a valuable tribal asset. As a result, Izutsu claims, the radical dualism in the Quran enabled Arab tribes to judge and evaluate all human behaviour in terms of a theoretically justifiable moral principle for the first time.

However, in contemporary times, characterised by a growing trend towards globalisation and pluralism, the inclination to address societal issues by means of a radical dichotomy of ethical principles is proving to be problematic. Social issues frequently occupy ambiguous areas that cannot be assessed through a dichotomous framework of right and wrong. Nevertheless, the utilisation of radical dualism has emerged as the predominant framework for constructing LGBT narratives in Indonesia, whereby LGBT is consistently positioned within a negative context. Most notably, Islamic religious authorities employ their influence to categorise gender and sexual minorities through the interpretation of Islamic texts that establish Islam as the ultimate veracity and LGBT individuals as the embodiment of malevolence. In the event that there exist different interpretations that challenge the established construction, it will likely be perceived as a perilous force that has the potential to fracture and dismantle the Muslim community in its entirety (see Boy ZTF, 2016, p.186). For example, when Musdah Mulia, a women's rights activist and a professor at Jakarta's State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, expressed her accepting views on the legality of same-sex marriage, she was

labelled as a liberal Muslim (see Munir, 2010, p. 68). In Indonesia, the label of liberal occupies a negative position among Muslim communities.⁶⁴

Hence, the claim that Islam serves as the primary source of authority in determining the morality of contentious societal matters may lead to the establishment of a monopoly on truth, particularly by those who perceive themselves as the authentic embodiment of Islam. In this light, Bauer (2011) notes that Islamic fundamentalists, critics of Islam, and even Islamic reformers are involved in the competition of claiming to be the one who knows the true nature of Islam and authentic Islam, thus leaving out the tradition of tolerance of ambiguity. Whereas differing views and opinions among earlier generations of Islamic thinkers, whereby many differences or even contradictions could exist simultaneously in the way they interpreted the Quran and hadith, were a common occurrence. Kugle (2010, pp. 98-110) illustrates this tradition of ambiguity in interpreting the hadiths pertaining to the punishment of homosexual acts. According to him, Islamic jurisprudence has an immediate basis on the report that prescribes legal punishment for homosexual acts. However, he insists that the reliability of this legal recommendation is subject to scrutiny due to the credibility of the narrators. If this is the case, I believe it is strongly advisable to approach the construction of a duality, particularly that which positions LGBT and Islam in opposing binaries, with prudence and sagacity.

⁶⁴ The negative connotation of being liberal can be seen, for example, in the publication of a special edition of Tabligh Magazine by the Majelis Tabligh Muhammadiyah to attack the Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network (JIMM). In an article "Laisa Minna: Liberalisme, Pluralisme, and Inklusivisme," the magazine considered that JIMM activists were involved in the introduction of liberal Islam so that they were no longer members of the Muhammadiyah family. See <https://aik.umj.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/1abad-Muhammadiyah-Istiqomah-Membendung-KristenisasiLiberalisasi.pdf>.

“As Muslims, we adhere to the religious conviction that the morality of the Quran will always exceed the morality of its interpreters. In other words, I do not believe that human beings can claim to have understood the message of the Quran perfectly and completely. Falling short of the Quran’s moral message is inevitable, but it is also an impetus to engage in a never-ending dynamic of moral exploration and interpretation.”

(Abou El Fadl, 2002, p. 83)

Chapter 5. Disputing LGBT

While the previous chapter examined Muhammadiyah’s public discourse on LGBT, this chapter delves deeper into the thoughts of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah leaders. I use this investigation to situate Muhammadiyah in a broader discourse in the Islamic, Indonesian, and global contexts. Based on the interviews conducted, it became evident that my interlocutors held divergent perspectives on the topic of LGBT, with some individuals espousing a doctrinal standpoint while others embraced a humanist perspective. In addition, I also explored the potential impact of the discourse that took place at the central leadership on social practices at the grassroots level. Through my exploration, I have discovered variations in the perception and social practices concerning LGBT issues among the regional leaders of the three regions: Yogyakarta, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi. This observation aligns with previous studies indicating that religious thoughts and practices in Muhammadiyah exhibit a range of a spectrum. Unfortunately, such dynamics went largely unnoticed in the media.

In general, the interviews with interlocutors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah indicate that the most significant factor influencing their opposition towards the LGBT community stems from the perception that the community seeks to legalise same-sex marriage. In this context, same-sex marriage is regarded as a fundamental challenge to Muhammadiyah's family ideology of *keluarga sakinah*, which I have discussed in chapter three. To verify the perception regarding the legalisation of same-sex marriage, I interviewed some representations of the LGBT community. These interviews reveal that the objective of the Indonesian LGBT movement does not primarily revolve around the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Hence, in this chapter, I also explore the perspective of the LGBT community on the accusations and suspicions levelled against them.

All the interviews, whether with interlocutors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah or the LGBT community, reveal varying perspectives on LGBT issues in Indonesia, which ultimately reflect the intricate nature of diversity in Indonesia. In the context of Muhammadiyah, these differences additionally serve to illustrate that the organisation is not a self-contained entity but rather a domain where various positions intersect. Consequently, individuals may integrate religious, cultural, and political components in shaping their comprehension of specific matters within a given context. To illustrate this phenomenon, the subsequent sections of this analysis delve into the influence of religious, cultural, and political factors on the formation of Muhammadiyah's position towards LGBT people in Indonesia.

5.1. LGBT in Islam: Differences in interpreting the words of God

In Indonesia, the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity is widely presumed to be a sin. This supposition is derived from a longstanding Islamic framework that has been in existence for centuries. While this presumption stems from the Quran, it is imperative to acknowledge that employing diverse interpretive frameworks when analysing this source yields varying perspectives on the social ethics pertaining to LGBT people. Many Muslims may express support for stringent measures as a means of addressing the issue at hand, while others may advocate for a more empathetic approach. Such divergent viewpoints are also evident in

Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, albeit without questioning their shared perspectives to restrict the public expression of the sexual orientation and gender identities of LGBT people. To explore these differences, I examine the interpretation of Islamic norms pertaining to homosexuality and transgender identity and how they are employed to address LGBT within the organisation.

5.1.1. Contesting the interpretation of *kodrat* and *fitrah*

From my interviews, it becomes apparent that most of my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah relied on the concepts of *kodrat* and *fitrah* as their foundational justifications when addressing LGBT. In the context of Muhammadiyah's construction of gender, as discussed in Chapter 3, my interlocutors engaged with the concepts of *kodrat* and *fitrah* within the framework of heteronormativity. This approach resulted in the formation of a narrative dichotomy between what is perceived as natural versus unnatural or normal versus abnormal. In broad terms, this narrative can be succinctly summarised as follows: it is inherent to human nature to obey God's commandments, to engage in heterosexual relationships for the purpose of procreation, and to fulfil the mission God has given to humankind as *caliph* (vicegerent) on earth to bring truth and prosperity. The act of disobeying God is regarded as a transgression against the inherent nature of humanity. Thus, in this context, the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity are perceived as deviations and, therefore, unnatural, as they transgress the margins of heteronormativity. To disentangle this line of reasoning, it is necessary to scrutinise the underlying conceptions of *kodrat* and *fitrah* as espoused by my interlocutors.

Kodrat or *qadar* is a term that is quite difficult to understand because it refers to a concept that cannot be defined clearly and concisely. It is the last item of the six articles of faith in Sunni Islam after belief in God's existence and oneness, the existence of Angels, the existence of the holy books, the existence of the prophets, and the resurrection day. Literally, *kodrat* means power, but as an Islamic term, it invites many variants of interpretation. Some scholars, for instance, define *kodrat* as predestination where all the things that happen on earth, good and evil, have been

determined by Divine decrees, while some others question this notion and argue that humans possess free will to determine their own actions. Such debate thus indicates that there is no single precise meaning of *kodrat*. Although the discussion of *kodrat* originates from authentic classical Islamic interpretation and is based on the Quran and hadith, every effort to define this term will inevitably involve some subjective interpretation. To discuss the term *kodrat* in this section, I draw upon the insight of Fazlur Rahman, who holds a prominent position within the Muhammadiyah intellectual community.⁶⁵

According to Fazlur Rahman, the concept of *kodrat* can be defined as the act of measuring out. This definition is grounded in the notion that “while God alone is absolutely infinite, everything else bears the creaturely hallmark of being measured” simply because all creatures are created with limited potentialities (Rahman, 1994, p. 16). Rahman suggests that when God creates something, God gives it its nature, potentialities, and laws to follow. In contrast with the deterministic nature of the universe, which operates in accordance with its inherent laws and dutifully adheres to the divine will, Rahman posits that human beings possess the capacity for free will, allowing them to exercise their agency in deciding whether to comply with or defy God’s directives. This exception, he says, represents a unique privilege and potential hazard bestowed upon human beings due to the purpose of their creation as God’s vicegerent on earth, tasked with creating a morally upright societal order. Rahman argues that this privilege of free will becomes a constant struggle, for it always presents moral choices for human beings in carrying out their mission. Thus, he suggests humans must “hearken and hearken well to their nature” to not stray from God’s path (p. 16). In this struggle, Muslims generally believe that God will accompany and guide them to stay true to the divine path as long as they make the necessary efforts.

⁶⁵ Fazlur Rahman was a Pakistani Muslim scholar and Islamic philosopher. He is renowned for his Islamic liberalism and his devotion in reviving independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). He was the teacher of Syafi’i Ma’arif and Amin Rais at the University of Chicago. Both are former chairmen of Muhammadiyah who brought about significant changes within the organisation by mainstreaming scholars in the management structure at the central leadership board.

In addition to *kodrat*, *fitrah* also came up during my interviews.⁶⁶ Similar to the notion of *kodrat*, the concept of *fitrah* also eludes a precise and succinct definition. *Fitrah* is usually translated as a natural disposition. According to Islamic scholars Ali Sabani and Faruqi, *fitrah* is something that is innate in human beings yet susceptible to corruption (as cited in Mohamed, 1995). They suggest that goodness, purity, and obedience to God are inherent traits of human beings, but these natural dispositions are easily altered due to the influence of the pervasive social environment. Given this comprehension, Muslims would subsequently consider evil doings and defiance against God as unnatural. For an individual to exhibit disobedience towards God's commands, they must first be influenced by their external environment and let those external influences prevail over their innate constitution. Hence, to summarise these two concepts, in my understanding, *kodrat* is the command given by God to his creations, while *fitrah* is the natural disposition of those creations to obey God's commands.

The understanding of *kodrat* and *fitrah*, as I have outlined above, is widely shared in Muhammadiyah. From the interview with my interlocutors and my observation from many different discussions online and offline, Muhammadiyah members tend to interpret *kodrat* as a divine decree bestowed upon all beings created by God, in which this decree is measurable. As an analogy, for example, the *kodrat* of the sun is to be the source of earth's energy, and the *kodrat* of the moon is to moderate earth to be a more liveable planet for humankind. The sun and the moon automatically and without fail obey God's command: the sun always shines on the earth, and the moon always orbits the earth. However, unlike the sun and the moon, human beings possess the unique ability of free will, enabling them to exercise their discretion in obeying or disobeying God's command.

If God grants human beings the capacity for free will, is exercising it to disobey God's commandments part of God's own will? My interlocutors stressed that human beings, in their role as God's vicegerent on earth, are tasked to promote goodness, prosperity, and justice among both humanity and God's other creatures.

⁶⁶ While Islamic scholars define the two terms differently, based on my observation, many Indonesian Muslims often use *kodrat* and *fitrah* interchangeably.

The proposition posits that the accomplishment of such a task requires human beings to create a moral and societal order, a feat that can only be achieved by certain rules. For this, Pak Hikam explicitly said it is humans' *fitrah* to be obedient creatures. This statement suggests that the exercise of free will does not encompass the freedom to disobey God's rules, as such disobedience would entail a transgression against the inherent disposition of humanity and jeopardise its mission as the harbinger of goodness and prosperity on earth. Hence, for Muslims, the existence of free will can be interpreted as a moral test and struggle, which requires humans to provide the best necessary effort to hold onto their innate nature and to control themselves against the bad and the evil.

Despite the agreement among my interlocutors regarding the centrality of *kodrat* and *fitrah* in the discourse surrounding LGBT in Indonesia, variations emerge in their narratives when addressing this matter. Some explicitly argue that LGBT violates *kodrat*, while others took a more balanced argument by considering its social context. For example, Pak Hikam and Pak Yunahar were two interlocutors who directly expressed their opinion that LGBT is a gross violation of *kodrat*, hence putting LGBT in direct opposition to Islam. The narrative from Pak Hikam shows this exemplarily:

Using religious considerations, I disagree [with LGBT] because of the argument of *kodrat*. So, humans' *kodrat* is to be law-abiding creatures. As law-abiding creatures, humans are responsible for reproducing and continuing their existence on earth. To fulfil this responsibility, humans must undertake heterosexual marriages to give birth to offspring. Same-sex marriage between men or between women cannot produce offspring. Hence, I see gays and lesbians as people who do not conform to their constitutional nature as responsible, law-abiding creatures.

According to Pak Hikam's statement, there are three key aspects to underline: firstly, reproduction is perceived as a societal duty; secondly, reproduction is exclusively permissible within the confines of heterosexual marriage, and therefore, thirdly, homosexuality is perceived as being contrary to the natural order of reproduction, thereby irresponsible. Nevertheless, Pak Hikam acknowledged that being LGBT can potentially contribute to psychological suffering in an individual.

He gave an illustration of the challenging circumstances faced by *waria*, whom he characterised as a woman trapped in a man's body. He observed that this gender incongruity between self-perception and biological reality often causes psychological distress for them. However, he instantly stated that this gender dysphoria and all suffering that follows could not be used as justification to live a life as transgender because, according to Islamic norms, men who imitate women, and vice versa, commit transgression. In fact, he argued, this gender dysphoria should be seen as a divine trial, wherein *waria* are compelled to navigate a resolution without straying from God's path.

A similar argument was conveyed by Pak Yunahar, who also explicitly expressed his opinion that homosexuality as a deviation of *kodrat*. He expressed his perspective by engaging in a theological discourse pertaining to the notion of human creation in Islamic tradition. He argued that the creation of humankind, as depicted in the story of Adam and Eve, adhered exclusively to a binary construct of a male and a female. He suggested that such biological distinctions serve as a divine signifier, indicating that reproduction is intrinsic to human nature and is both a right and an obligation bestowed by God upon humanity. For Pak Yunahar, biological sex assumes the role of both a signifier and regulator of an individual's sexuality. He vehemently insisted that in Islamic teachings, it is prescribed that men should exclusively experience sexual attraction towards women and women towards men, with any other form of sexual attraction being deemed impermissible. He argued that heterosexuality is the only morally justifiable form of sexuality because it serves as the foundation upon which society is built.

Meanwhile, on the topic of transgender identity, Pak Yunahar underscored the notion that biological anatomy is a sacred endowment bestowed by God that may not be altered as it carries a distinct responsibility upon humanity. According to him, any attempt to refuse or modify this God-given anatomy constitutes an act of ingratitude that violates *kodrat*. He said:

In Islam, human beings are created as male and female. If one is created as a man, he may not change into a woman; he may not undergo genital surgery to alter his biological sex to become a woman. Likewise, a

woman may not become a man (...), and a man cannot replace a woman in their reproduction role. Menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breastfeeding can only be done by women. So, women may not refuse their reproduction roles; they are not to refuse menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breastfeeding. Because if they refuse these roles, the threat is the extinction of humankind.

While his statement exhibits a disproportionate allocation of reproduction responsibilities towards women, it also targets the specific case of transexuals. Beyond these two points, similar to Pak Hikam, Pak Yunahar also proposed the notion that the act of reproduction comes with a moral responsibility for individuals, both to God and society. Refusing this responsibility, he suggested, not only constitutes disobedience to God's command but also threatens the established social order.

While expressing disapproval towards the practice of sex change for transexuals, Pak Yunahar found justification for the procedure of sex reassignment in the context of intersex individuals, whom he referred to as *musykil*. To elucidate this reality, he employed the story of Dorce Gamalama, an Indonesian pop singer and actress who underwent sex reassignment surgery. He said:

In *fiqh*, a sex reassignment procedure is allowed for *musykil*, born with both male and female genitals. If that is the case, surgery may be performed. For example, we can refer to Dorce's case. She had two genitals, male and female. However, because her female tendency was dominant, she removed her male genital. This procedure is called sex affirmation surgery (*operasi penegasan kelamin*).

Pak Yunahar's opinion on this matter is in line with Sunni Islamic thought in general, which distinguishes between 'sex change,' which refers to gender-affirming surgeries for transgender people, and 'sex reassignment' or 'sex correction,' which refers to surgeries conducted on intersex individuals who are born with both male and female genitals. While sex change is strictly forbidden in Sunni jurisprudence, sex reassignment is allowed. A ruling on this case is, for instance, stipulated in the Al-Azhar fatwa: "it is permissible to perform the operation for a biological need, to reveal any hidden male or female organs," but not "at the mere wish to change one's sex from woman to man, or vice versa" (see Skovgaard-Petersen, 1995).

Indeed, the case of intersex was already recognised during the period of medieval Islamic jurisprudence, which explicitly recognised four genders among human beings: female, male, intersex (*khunsa*), and the effeminate male (*mukhannath*) (Haneef, 2011). For *khunsa*, there are two types of the condition: *musykil* (intractable) and *wadhih* (discernible). *Khunsa wadhih* refers to a person with both male and female genitals, with one of them being more dominant than the other; thus, a specific sex can be assigned. *Khunsa Musykil* refers to a person with both male and female genitals, but a specific sex cannot be easily assigned because both genitals function equally. Presumably, this definition refers to external genitalia appearance as this definition predates modern medical science.

While Pak Hikam and Pak Yunahar were quick to judge that LGBT is a violation of *kodrat*, Bu Susi showed some reservations. During our interview, she explicitly dismissed the notion that LGBT people violate *kodrat*, provided that the comprehension of this human nature is solely predicated on reproductive functions. Instead, she suggested that the act of reproduction is a multifaceted issue that is intricately intertwined with social and political dynamics. She elucidated:

I am not at all convinced that reproduction is the nature of human beings because numerous factors influence it. If, for example, and it does not have to be LGBT, I marry a man, and it turns out that I am or my husband is infertile, and thus we cannot have children. Will my husband and I bear the sin? Many people do not want to reproduce. Do they sin as well? Then, how many do we want to reproduce? If the world's population is already too much, do we still want to reproduce, or do we have to limit it? I do not believe [the notion that LGBT] discourages human beings from reproducing so that humanity will become extinct. I think that is an absurd thing to say.

In her attempt to refrain from passing judgment, Bu Susi critically examined the fundamental nature of human sexuality by raising the question of whether sexuality, both homosexuality and heterosexuality, can be considered predetermined. This inquiry emerged from her belief in the fluidity of sexuality and its potential to undergo change as influenced by various factors. Hence, the conceptualisation of sexuality as an inherent predisposition poses a challenge to her comprehension. To discuss the fluidity of sexuality, she gave an example from her first-hand observation. When she studied at an only-girl boarding school, she witnessed some

of her friends engage in same-sex romanticism. However, she said, these relationships did not last forever as eventually, the people involved married heterosexually:

Is sexuality, sexual orientation, something that cannot be changed? It is based on my own life experience. While studying, I lived in an only-girl dormitory, and I saw some girls were in relationships. It was more than just friendship. It may have involved deeper emotions and so on. It happened in the boy's dormitory as well. However, as they grew older and the environmental circumstances changed, these people also changed. They got married. The women married men and the men who used to date other men, after graduating and landing a job, married women. So, based on this experience, I concluded that sexuality or sexual orientation could actually change.

Indeed, the situation described by Bu Susi is not an uncommon case in Indonesia. However, does this reality reflect the fluidity of sexual orientation? In his anthropological studies, Tom Boellstorff observed that among his gay and lesbian interlocutors, many have had a heterosexual marriage (Boellstorff, 2005 & 2007). He coined the term 'marriage imperative,' which is formed by the interplay of religion, nation, and gender/sexuality (2005, p. 111), in which it situates heterosexual marriage and procreation as "a foundational unit of the nation, piety, and proper citizen selfhood" (2007, p.144). However, many of these gay and lesbian individuals maintain their same-sex relationships despite their heterosexual marriage. Besides homosexuality, there is also bisexuality, the disposition to have a romantic and sexual attraction to multiple sexes or genders. Just like gays and lesbians, for bisexuals who are confronted with the marriage imperative, heterosexual marriage would be a straightforward decision. Therefore, for these individuals, heterosexual marriage serves as a means to establish a sense of belonging in society while simultaneously maintaining their non-normative sexuality rather than primarily reflecting sexual fluidity.

Unlike Pak Hikam and Pak Yunahar, who implied that *kodrat* is a domain solely pertaining to the divine, Bu Susi established a connection between *kodrat* and the discourse of social norms. This linkage serves as the foundation for her examination of the subject of sexuality. She proposed that the concept of *kodrat* is a feature that guides people's imagination toward particular sexual virtues. For her,

discussing sexuality only by using the discourse of the inherent nature of human beings is somewhat insufficient because it would fail to adequately address the intricate connection between sexuality and socially constructed norms. She said:

We acknowledge that God created human beings with organs and feelings to love and build a family to continue our species. However, what can we call as *kodrat*? In my opinion, we will never know our destiny. It is difficult for us to immediately digest whether or not we are destined to be homosexual, heterosexual, or transgender. The question is not about that but about what we have done to fetch that destiny. What efforts have we attempted? That is the first. The second is what kind of environment? Just like Aisyiyah's view on the ideal family that is not one but various, the so-called ideal society or the best society is also not just in one form. It is not singular. Hence, what we call ideal is relative. Now, when it comes to sexuality, I think that sexual orientation is closely related to society. You said that norms are a social imagination to achieve what we call a good society. If we start from this thesis that we do not know the destiny of our sexuality, then what we can do now is try to align with what society imagines. So, for example, I grew up in a Muhammadiyah community that considers heterosexual marriage the ideal marriage. I was trained, educated, and familiarised with such a value since I was a child, so it is internalised in me.

Furthermore, Bu Susi suggested that the imagination of an idealised form of sexuality, coupled with a profound emphasis on communal values in Indonesian society, transforms sexuality into a social affair that dictates the lives of its individual members. Drawing upon her recent experience in Denmark, where she saw a same-sex marriage ceremony, she pointed out that the pronounced contestation of homosexuality in Indonesia is an embodiment of the conflict between individualistic and communalistic values. She believed that the individualistic nature of Danish society fosters a greater degree of social freedom, allowing individuals to live according to their own preferences. Consequently, homosexuality is not so much problematised in Denmark. In contrast with the prevailing circumstances in Indonesia, Bu Susi explained that pursuing a life according to personal desires can present challenges and complexities even though the Indonesian people are generally tolerant. She asserted that religious and traditional communities in Indonesia, characterised by their adherence to conservative norms, tend to establish hegemonic norms and imaginations that exert

pressure on their members to conform. The refusal to accept this hegemony will consequently lead to societal repercussions.

Bu Alimatul expressed a similar opinion as Bu Susi in that she established a link between the discourse of homosexuality and prevailing societal norms and legal frameworks rather than solely perceiving it through a religious lens. In her explanation, she specifically addressed the topic of same-sex marriage, which also emerged as a prevailing assumption among my other interlocutors regarding the underlying impetus driving the LGBT rights movement in Indonesia. Bu Alimatul asserted that besides religious values, the opposition to same-sex marriage is also grounded in societal and legal conceptions of rights, morality, and health. She argued that “social health is also a consideration because in Indonesia the mainstream is heterosexual, same-sex marriage is considered socially unhealthy (...) and also the law does not allow it.”

In summary, my interviews have unveiled at least two differing opinions among my interlocutors regarding the manner in which religious beliefs intersect with issues pertaining to LGBT. The first is the opinion that emphasises reproduction as God’s command to human beings that may only be appropriately fulfilled through marriage. In this view, heterosexual marriage is considered a responsibility and commitment to God and society. Meanwhile, the second opinion views marriage and reproduction as more political and social issues and recognises that sexuality may change due to surrounding circumstances. However, all my interlocutors stressed the importance of heterosexual marriage as the ideal way of managing human sexuality. They saw marriage as a social commitment between two individuals by which the foundation of society is laid out. As a social commitment, marriage must be carried out by following the normative standards that apply in society. In Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, this understanding is an attribution of their ideology of *keluarga sakinah*, which is the organisational source of guidance in sexual relationships, marriage, and establishing a family.

5.1.2. Contesting the interpretation of the story of Lot

In the Indonesian context, the term LGBT is synonymised with defiant sexual behaviour. Therefore, the discussion on this issue is, more often than not, accompanied by refusal and condemnation. This negative attitude can be attributed to the interpretation of several passages in the Quran that recount the story of the people of Sodom, to whom Prophet Lot was sent. This story has been construed as historical evidence that God condemns and punishes homosexual acts, to the extent that Indonesian Muslim communities employ this story as a justification for censoring and penalising LGBT people.

In this context, my interlocutors also referenced the story of Lot and his tribe to characterise LGBT people. For instance, Pak Hikam alluded to the story as his introductory point in our discussion. Upon introducing my research topic, my first question to him pertained to Muhammadiyah's perspective on the issue of LGBT in Indonesia, to which he responded:

Before going there, before talking about the view of Muhammadiyah, Muslims are harsh [against LGBT people] because there is a historical reason in the Quran. The story of the people of Prophet Lot is scary. There were *homo* and *lesbi*, who received horrible punishments as we understand them. God overturned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and this story is firmly engraved in the minds of Muslims and prompted the formulation of judicial punishments for homosexual acts in the *fiqh*.

Pak Hikam's remark exemplifies a prevailing pattern in Indonesia, wherein the narrative of Lot and his tribe serves as a fundamental theological analogy in discussing LGBT issues. However, can this story be unequivocally employed as the analogy for the condemnation and punitive measures imposed upon LGBT people?

Islamic scholars disagree sharply in interpreting the Quranic perspective on same-sex intimacy and desire as presented in the Lot story. Some of my interlocutors at Muhammadiyah confidently interpreted the Lot story as a factual basis for the condemnation, hence punishment, of LGBT people. Pak Hikam, as in the excerpted interview above, presented the conventional view that interprets the Quranic message as an explicit condemnation against homosexuality, leaving

scarcely any loophole for a theological accommodation of homosexuals in Islam. In contrast, other contemporary scholars, such as Kugle (2010) and El-Rouayheb (2009), argue that the Quran does not address homosexuality, let alone LGBT. If it does, then it is highly ambiguous, as there is no specific terminology in the Quran that directly corresponds to homosexual or homosexuality (see, for example, Quran 7: 80-81).⁶⁷ This is entirely different from the case of heterosexual adultery, which is clearly addressed in the Quran (see, for example, Quran 17: 32).⁶⁸

Despite the fact that the Quran narrates the story of Lot's tribe, according to Kugle (2010, p. 50), the term *liwat*, which is defined as male-to-male anal penetration and used to address homosexual acts in the present days, was a legal term created by the medieval Islamic jurists. He suggests that the creation of this legal term cemented the close association of Lot's tribe with anal intercourse between two men. Likewise, El-Rouayheb (2009) examines the problematic use of the Lot story to capture the contemporary discourse of homosexuality. He argues that the tendency of modern scholars to align the homoeroticism registered in the Islamic sacred text, including the Quran, hadith, and classical jurists' writings, with the modern term homosexuality is 'anachronistic' (El-Rouayheb 2009, p. 147). In other words, for these scholars, using the sexual transgression from the Lot story as an analogy to condemn LGBT people is unsuitable or at least highly debatable. This argument stems from the assertion that the conceptualisation of homosexuality is a modern invention encompassing a broad spectrum of human identity. Consequently, they contend that the specific act of *liwat* cannot capture this modern notion.

The condemnation that refers to the peculiar transgression of the Lot's tribe appears in several verses in the Quran.⁶⁹ The story of Lot's tribe, as narrated in these

⁶⁷ These verses read “⁽⁸⁰⁾We sent Lot and he said to his people, ‘How can you practise this outrage? No one in the world has outdone you in this. ⁽⁸¹⁾You lust after men rather than women! You transgress all bounds!’” (The Quran, 2004, p. 100).

⁶⁸ This verse reads “and do not go anywhere near adultery: it is an outrage, and an evil path” (The Quran, 2004, p. 177)

⁶⁹ These verses include the Quran (7:80-84) that reads “⁽⁸⁰⁾We sent Lot and he said to his people, ‘How can you practise this outrage? No one in the world has outdone you in this. ⁽⁸¹⁾You lust after men rather than women! You transgress all bounds!’ ⁽⁸²⁾The only response his people gave was to say [to one another], ‘Drive them out of your town! These men want to keep themselves chaste!’ ⁽⁸³⁾We saved him and his kinsfolk— apart from his wife who stayed behind— ⁽⁸⁴⁾and We showered

verses, can be summarised as follows: God sent Lot to rectify the moral degradation among the inhabitants of the city of Sodom, including men lusting after men. However, the townspeople resisted Lot's prophetic duty. Confronted with the rejection of his tribe, Lot prayed to God to bring down punishment for the townspeople. In response, God sent His messengers to Lot, commonly believed to be two angels in the form of handsome human males. Upon learning that Lot had received two male guests, the townspeople hurried to surround his house with the intention of committing forced sexual acts against Lot's guests. To protect his guests, Lot offered his daughters to the marauding townsmen instead but refused. Thereafter, God destroyed the city and its inhabitants with a rain of stones of baked clay, and by making their high parts their low parts, the later was usually interpreted to mean that their land had been raised up to the sky and then turned upside down.

Interestingly, the relevant passages of the Quran do not specify which sexual acts had been committed by the people of Lot. Nonetheless, from an early period, Muslim Jurists have conceptualised the sexual transgression of the people of Lot with *liwat* to the extent that in juridical terminology, *liwat* could also be used to refer to anal intercourse between a man and a woman (El-Rouayheb, 2009, pp. 118-128). In the context of this medieval Islamic law, the perpetrator of *liwat* is called *luti*. The punishment given by God to the Lot's tribe, as illustrated in the story above, is then interpreted as punishment for the perpetrators of *liwat*: burning the

upon [the rest of] them a rain [of destruction]. See the fate of the evildoers" (The Quran, 2004, p. 100). The Quran (26:160-175) that read "⁽¹⁶⁰⁾the people of Lot, too, called the messengers liars. ⁽¹⁶¹⁾Their brother Lot said to them, 'Will you not be mindful of God? ⁽¹⁶²⁾I am a faithful messenger to you: ⁽¹⁶³⁾be mindful of God and obey me. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾I ask no reward from you, for my only reward is with the Lord of the Worlds. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾Must you, unlike [other] people, lust after males ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾and abandon the wives that God has created for you? You are exceeding all bounds,' ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾but they replied, 'Lot! If you do not stop this, you will be driven away.' 168 So he said, 'I loathe what you do: ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾Lord, save me and my family from what they are doing.' ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾We saved him and all his family, ⁽¹⁷¹⁾except for an old woman who stayed behind, ⁽¹⁷²⁾then We destroyed the others, ⁽¹⁷³⁾and poured a rain of destruction down upon them. How dreadful that rain was for those who had been forewarned! ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾There truly is a sign in this, though most of them will not believe: ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful" (The Quran, 2004, p. 236). The Quran (27:55-58) that reads "⁽⁵⁴⁾We also sent Lot to his people. He said to them, 'How can you commit this outrage with your eyes wide open? ⁽⁵⁵⁾How can you lust after men instead of women? What fools you are!' ⁽⁵⁶⁾The only answer his people gave was to say, 'Expel Lot's followers from your town! These men mean to stay chaste!' ⁽⁵⁷⁾We saved him and his family—except for his wife: We made her stay behind—⁽⁵⁸⁾and We brought rain down on them. How dreadful that rain was for those who had been warned! And several more other passages in the Quran refer to the story of Lot's tribe" (The Quran, 2004, p. 242).

perpetrators alive, throwing them down from the highest building of the city, or demolishing a wall over them. Although *liwat* refers to a very specific sexual act (i.e., male-to-male anal intercourse), Indonesian Muslim scholars tend to confuse it with homosexuality and *luti* with homosexuals (see, for example, Yanggo, 2018; Ayub, 2017; and Zaini, 2016). As a result, the discourse on homosexuality in Indonesia, to the extent that homosexuality is equated with LGBT, is based on confusion about the interpretation of these two Islamic legal terms.

While the Quran provides a strong rationale for the complementary nature of males and females, the interpretation of Lot's story to condemn homosexual identities remains a subject of considerable scholarly debate. Kugle (2010) argues that reading Lot's story with a singular focus on homosexual acts distorts the story itself. Building on the interpretation from Ibn Hazm, a jurist and a leading proponent and codifier of the Zahiri school of Islamic thought in the 10th century, Kugle analyses that the narrative primarily revolves around the theme of infidelity against God and how Lot's tribe schemed for ways to undermine God commands. The scheme extended to the point where they plotted coercive sexual acts against God's messenger. From this standpoint, according to Kugle, the allegedly same-sex act perpetrated by Lot's tribe can be interpreted as an act of sexual violence aimed at establishing dominance over others, and this act was only one of many actions that constituted their infidelity against God.

Nevertheless, upon introducing this alternative interpretation, some of my interlocutors were quick to dismiss it. This dismissal can be read as an illustration of the tendency of exclusivity within Muslim communities. The apparent reluctance to acknowledge different interpretations of Islamic sacred texts diminishes what Bauer (2011) called the tradition of ambiguity in Islam. For Muhammadiyah, such dismissal, to some extent, is also indicative of a tendency among its leaders towards, to use of Ali's (2016, p. xxxiii) term, 'doctrinal authoritarianism.' One of my interlocutors, who vehemently opposed this alternative interpretation, was Pak Yunahar. When I asked him about this inclusive reading of Lot's story, he expressed dissent:

That is haphazard! He interprets the Quran arbitrarily. If he argued that Lot's tribe was punished not because they were homosexual but because they were against Lot's orders, what difference would that make? Lot conveyed God's message for his people to avoid homosexual acts, but they did not follow it. Were they punished because they opposed Lot or because of their homosexual acts? In Islam, it makes no difference. If an act is prohibited, it must be abandoned.

As Pak Yunahar mentioned about punishment, I asked him further about the circumstances of immediate punishment received by Lot's tribe, to which he answered:

If Lot's tribe were immediately punished for being homosexual, people might ask why homosexuals in America or in Europe are not being punished right now. Well, in my opinion, this question is irrelevant because not all human sins are immediately punished. In Islam, we believe that most sins are punished in the hereafter, and only a tiny part of them is punished here on earth. We would be finished if God would immediately punish human beings for their wrongdoings in this world. For example, if every adultery resulted in divine destruction, human beings would be extinct by now.

According to Pak Yunahar, the small number of sins whose punishment can be carried out in this world are sins that disturb social life. By using the case of adultery, he suggested that this prohibited act may disrupt social life by, among others, casting doubt in lineage, wrecking the family, transmitting various venereal diseases, and causing other crimes such as murder due to jealousy. Even so, Pak Yunahar suggested that the State can only carry out such punishment through evidence of witnessing or confession. In this context, he mentioned, individuals must not seek to persecute those known to engage in prohibited acts. He went on to imply that if the punishment is impossible to carry out because the transgression is unknown or cannot be proven, the perpetrators will be held accountable in the hereafter before God. Obviously, this elaboration implies that homosexual acts, as other forms of sexual relations outside marriage, are prohibited because they disrupt social life. Like adultery, the perpetrators should also be persecuted, although he suggested that such punishments remained in the hands of the government, according to the conditions mentioned above.

In a less direct manner, Pak Syamsul also expressed dissent with the attempt to reinterpret the specific passages of the Quran to be more inclusive for LGBT people. He argued that such efforts merely serve to validate mistakes without making an attempt to rectify them. Ultimately, he asserted that such efforts would only stir a more immense controversy in society. He said:

Sometimes, we tend to reinterpret [the Quran] only to look for the legitimization of our current state of being. We are not trying to correct what we are going through, but what we are doing is looking for a theorem to legitimise it (...) the greater our efforts to seek legitimacy, the greater the controversy that will arise from the surrounding community.

Unlike Pak Yunahar and Pak Syamsul, Bu Alimatul acknowledged the possibility of different interpretations of Lot's story, albeit refraining from directly accepting the emerging inclusive interpretation. She admitted that she followed the ideas developed by the Al-Fatiha Foundation, a registered non-profit organisation in the US that dedicated itself to advancing the cause of LGBT Muslims and combating homophobia within the Muslim communities. This foundation was dissolved in 2011. In response to the Quranic reinterpretation efforts, Bu Alimatul emphasised the complexity of comprehending homosexuality, owing to the dichotomous nature of categorising it as either natural or unnatural and the prevailing discourse surrounding sexual orientation as a social construct. In light of these intricacies, Bu Alimatul argued that the emphasis should not lie solely on achieving consensus regarding certain interpretations. Rather, it is imperative to prioritise efforts aimed at mitigating the potential oppression that may emerge from these differences. Regarding homosexuals, she suggested that it is crucial to acknowledge their shared humanity and accord them the respect and dignity they deserve. Therefore, she noted, it is vital to listen to their arguments to understand their feelings and problems.

5.1.3. Contesting the Islamic jurisprudence on LGBT

The central concept of organising sexuality in Indonesian Muslim communities is that of heterosexual marriage, which is considered not only as a contract between two individuals but also as a contract between their families. This can be observed

in the procedure of marriage, which typically involves a series of social events from proposing (*pinangan*) to the wedding party, which usually involves the two extended families and their immediate neighbours. Within this framework, *zina* (extramarital sexual relationship) is considered an offence that violates not only religious norms but also cultural ones. The denunciation of LGBT people in Indonesia is closely intertwined with this notion of organising sexuality. The widespread assumption among Indonesians is that LGBT people are invariably associated with sexual acts, thereby fostering the perception that their capacity to establish relationships is exclusively rooted in sexual lust. Thus, akin to *zina*, being LGBT is also associated with a violation of religious and cultural norms in Indonesia.

In the context of Islamic tradition in Indonesia and elsewhere, a comprehensive compilation of major sins is defined, wherein sexual offences occupy prominent places. In this compilation, *zina* and *liwat* are two primary sexual transgressions, with gravity being only less superior to the greatest sin of infidelity against God (*shirk*) and murder. By referring to the work of Noah Keller, who compiled the medieval Islamic scholars' lists of sins, Ali (2016) examines the list of the 14th-century hadith scholar Al-Dhahabi, 10th-century Abu Talib Makki, and 17th-century Ibn Hajar, who categorised *zina* and *liwat* as the primary sexual offences. While *zina*, defined as illicit sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, is subject to *hadd* (punishments already prescribed in the Quran or the hadith), *liwat*, defined as anal intercourse between two men, is subject to *ta'zir* (discretionary chastisement by the rulers). The lists of sins compiled by these medieval Islamic scholars are still influential among Islamic communities, including in Indonesia and in Muhammadiyah.

During my interviews with my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah, it became apparent that their disapproval of the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity was a matter of degree. When asked about their perspective on the issue, they most immediately associated LGBT with sexual transgressions, with a subset explicitly equating them with *liwat* and/or *zina*. While some interlocutors expressed their denunciation of LGBT by focusing on their sexual activities and their alleged

movement to promote same-sex marriage, some others rejected their existence altogether. Bu Susi, for instance, suggested that homosexuality, in and of itself, is not an offence but an offence occurs when homosexual sexual relationships are committed. In contrast, Pak Yunahar seemed to believe that homosexual attraction already constitutes an offence. He argued that the lawful sexual orientation is that which follows Islamic teaching, i.e., “males can only be [sexually] attracted to females; likewise, females can only be attracted to males.” He then associated the prohibition of homosexuality with the interpretation of *kodrat*, which suggests that human beings are created in pairs, male and female, to mate with each other as narrated in the Quran (42:11).⁷⁰ With this assumption, Pak Yunahar established a conclusion to prohibit LGBT because the homosexual relationship may not produce offspring thus violates humans’ *kodrat*.

Although Muhammadiyah does not strictly follow any classical *madhab* (school of thought within Islamic jurisprudence), some of my interlocutors referred to the classical *fiqh* to discuss the prohibition of LGBT. For instance, Pak Yunahar stated that in Islam, the perpetrators of same-sex sexual relations, both active and passive, are punishable by death. He clearly referred to anal intercourse, which in the language of classical *fiqh* is called *liwat*. According to him, such severe punishment is linked to the possible catastrophe if homosexuality is allowed to flourish: “homosexuality threatens humanity in a way that if it is allowed, it might encourage human beings to practice it and thus deprive their procreation function.” Pak Hikam also conveyed a similar argument.

The punishment [for homosexuals] in the *fiqh* is the death penalty for the perpetrators, regardless of whether they are active or passive. Indeed, in Islam, there is a tradition that is firmly against it. Likewise, in Muhammadiyah, we do not accept [homosexual relations]. The only justified sexual orientation is heterosexuality, and lawful marriage is heterosexual. Hence, the orientation and the behaviour are wrongful.

⁷⁰ The verse reads “the Creator of the heavens and earth.’ He made mates for you from among yourselves—and for the animals too—so that you may multiply. There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing” (The Quran, 2004, p. 311).

The statement above indicates a conflation in interpreting homosexuality and *liwat*, where many of my interlocutors interpreted both terms as the same. While it is true that classical *fiqh* prescribes severe punishment, one thing that should be noted is that Islamic jurisprudence does not talk about homosexuality or any other non-normative gender identity. What it does talk about is a very specific act of *liwat*. The conflation of these terms does not only happen among Indonesian Muslim scholars but has become something common among modern Muslim scholars globally (see El-Rouayheb, 2009).

Given that my interlocutors referenced rulings from the classical *fiqh*, I believe it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the legal opinions of classical Islamic jurisprudence pertaining to the matter at hand. However, it is important to note that Muhammadiyah and most Indonesian Muslims are associated with the Sunni. Therefore, the focus of this overview will be limited to the *madhab* within this branch.

Four *madhabs* dominate the Sunni, i.e., Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Maliki. They all emerged between the ninth and tenth centuries of the Common Era, and by the twelfth century, almost all Islamic jurists aligned themselves with a particular one of them. Nevertheless, these four schools have historically interacted with each other over the centuries respectfully and recognise each other's validity (see Bauer, 2011). In same-sex sexual acts, all four schools of thought prescribe severe penalty for *liwat*, but the degree of severity is different.⁷¹ The Hanafi school, for instance, is different from the other three schools as they do not consider *liwat* as a type of *zina* that affects the prescribed punishment. Unlike *zina*, whose punishment is subject to *hadd*, Hanafi school rules that *liwat* is subject to *ta'zir*; in which the punishment is usually less severe. On the other hand, the Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Maliki schools consider *liwat* as a variant or subtype of *zina*, which makes it liable to *hadd*. Yet, again, the details of the punishment for *liwat* in these three schools differ.

⁷¹ In summarizing the juridical opinions of these four madhabs, I refer to the work of El-Rouayheb (2009) and Kugle (2010)

These four schools define *zina* as illicit vaginal intercourse between a man and a woman. The offenders, if married, were liable to death by stoning, and if unmarried, liable to 100 lashes and a year of banishment. However, in the case of anal intercourse, regardless of whether between two men or between a man and a woman, the Shafi'i school prescribes the same punishment as for *zina*, except that the passive or penetrated partner was never liable to stoning. Meanwhile, the ruling of the Hanbali school initially recommended that the perpetrators of *liwat* be punished as illicit vaginal intercourse. However, the present-day Hanbalis have adapted more severe punishment in which offenders, regardless of marital status, are to be executed. On the other hand, the ruling of the Maliki school has another detail to which they differentiate the punishment of anal intercourse between a man and a woman (who is not married to each other) and between two men. The former was to be punished for illicit vaginal intercourse, while the later made the offenders liable to unconditional stoning. This summary is to illustrate that there are inconsistencies behind the death penalty prescribed in medieval Islamic jurisprudence. Subsequently, far from absolute, this inconsistency shows that the punishment of *liwat* is a matter of interpretation among jurists, who were undoubtedly influenced by various social factors of their time.

While classical Islamic jurisprudence prescribes harsh punishment for *liwat*, it is improbable that Muhammadiyah would ever adopt or support that. Pak Hikam, for instance, asserted that although Muhammadiyah does not condone the expression of homosexuality, it will still recognise the right of LGBT people to live. He said:

As far as I understand, Muhammadiyah will still recognise the rights of LGBT people to live, including but not limited to their education rights. What Muhammadiyah will not recognise is the right of LGBT people to have same-sex marriage. It is just impossible. However, for other civil rights, of course, they should have the same access.

Despite the assurance that Muhammadiyah will never support the death penalty for the perpetrators of *liwat*, the question remains: can the condemnation and prohibition of LGBT people by using the analogy of *zina* and *liwat* be justified? First, the prohibition of *zina* and *liwat* is situated in the actions. In the case of *zina*,

the offence occurs due to the lack of a legal basis between the perpetrators. There will be no transgression and sin from the sexual intercourse between a man and a woman if both are married to each other. On the other hand, in the case of anal intercourse, the act itself is considered a transgression regardless of who engages in it, with or without the legal basis of marriage. This prompts a question how about a homosexual relationship that does not involve anal intercourse? How about same-sex love relationships in general? Secondly, it is essential to note that none of those schools operate with the concept of homosexuality, let alone LGBT, because these concepts are a modern invention.

From the perspective of medieval Islamic jurisprudence, *liwat* refers to a very specific act of anal intercourse between men. Hence, it is narrower than homosexual attraction and homosexual acts in general, such as kissing, caressing, and intercrural intercourse between males. Although these acts were considered reprehensible and resulted in chastisement in medieval Muslim societies (El-Rouayheb, 2009), they were definitely not cases of *liwat*. On the other hand, sexual relations between women were considered an independent transgression as it was not integrated terminologically or in terms of punishment for anal intercourse between men (Ali, 2016). So is the case of transgender identity, which absolutely cannot be analogous to *zina* or *liwat* because transgender represents an expression of subjectivity and not sexual acts. In this context, we must highlight that classical Islamic jurists based their legal opinion on acts and did not touch the identity discourse. If the concept of being LGBT is more than just an act of anal intercourse, then to address the question posed in the previous paragraph, I argue that the condemnation and prohibition of LGBT people based on the analogy of *zina* and *liwat* are fundamentally misguided and thus unjustified.

5.2. LGBT in the nation: The cultural and political justifications

Islam is public and permeates all aspects of social life in Indonesia (Hefner, 2019). However, blatantly using Islam as the sole basis of public policies is improbable due to the fact that Indonesia is not an Islamic state. To effectively promote religious values in societal affairs, politicians and interest groups translate and reframe

religious narratives into civil contexts. In this scenario, religious objections to LGBT are consistently accompanied by social and cultural propositions to form a comprehensive political discourse. It is not enough to use the conception of sin to prohibit the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity without providing complementary socio-cultural justification. In this instance, the term 'disease' is employed as a denomination to bridge and render religious arguments to become political, whereby characterising LGBT people as afflicted with illness carries both literal and metaphorical meanings.

The literal meaning of disease attached to LGBT cannot be separated from the global discourse of homosexuality. Although the rejection of homosexuality in Indonesia can be traced back to Dutch colonialism and the spread of Islam in the archipelago (Blackwood, 2010), the current view that considers homosexuality an illness refers to the historical development of the study of psychiatry. In 1950, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) published the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which classified homosexuality as a sexual deviation within the personality disorder category. Because the APA has been an organisation with global authority in the field of psychiatry, this classification has had a significant impact on the homosexual community and public views of homosexuality around the world. Two decades later, after an intense fight from the gay movements in the USA, APA removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1975. However, many Indonesians have utilised this historical fact to reinforce their presumption and hostility towards LGBT people. The success of the gay movements in influencing APA has prompted many Indonesians to perceive the political and cultural objectives of the gay movement as the global dissemination of homosexuality.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of homosexuality as a pathological condition can also be linked to the historical context of its introduction in Indonesia. The linguistic terms homosexuality, gay, and lesbian were introduced as modern constructs in Indonesian public discourse in the late 1970s. During this time, Indonesians learned the possibility of naming those with same-sex desire as a distinct sexual identity for the first time (Boellstorff, 2005; Wijaya, 2020). In the

late 1980s, homosexuality began to be associated with public health issues when the first case of HIV was found in Bali in 1987 with the death of a gay Dutch tourist at Sanglah Hospital, Bali (see Harahap, 2019). Within a decade, the intervention of global humanitarian organisations with financial support and the discourse linking sexual health issues with sexual orientation and identities began to grow significantly in Indonesia (Wijaya, 2020, p. 80). In our interview, Pak Dédé Oetomo, an esteemed Indonesian human rights and gay activist, elucidated that this global financial support encouraged the formation of many new local gay and lesbian organisations focused on HIV/AIDS prevention. Predictably, such association led to further stigma of homosexuals as spreaders of HIV/AIDS and reinforces today's presumption of LGBT as an issue closely related to public health and Westernisation.

However, in Indonesia, LGBT is not only associated with disease in medical terms but also in social terms. Given the intricate topic of gender and sexuality, the classification of LGBT as a social disease is a convenient approach to reconcile religious, cultural, and political perspectives. In this context, Islam, as the predominant religion, has emerged as a significant influence on public ethics and societal norms. Consequently, the classification of social disease also draws upon the conceptual framework of sin, which encompasses transgressions against God and society. As Indonesian society defines social disease as persistent violations of societal norms that cause conflict, social disease is tantamount to crime or sin. A quick internet search will give us examples of social diseases, such as drinking alcohol, drug abuse, extramarital sex, and pornography, with which LGBT people are often associated. Hegarty (2022), for instance, highlights that even though homosexuality is not a crime in Indonesia, the state and media perceive LGBT people as a dangerous threat to society due to their association with same-sex sexual activities, which are deemed as a grave sin in Islam and if left unchecked will cause moral decay and ignite societal conflicts. Yet, viewing same-sex relationships as a sin, crime, and sickness is not unique to Indonesia. Similar attitudes can also be observed in Western society, where Christian ideals become the fundament of social norms (see Baughey-Gill, 2011).

The LGBT community resists the portrayal of their identity as a pathological condition. Their argument is based on the global recognition within the medical community that homosexuality and transgender identity are no longer classified as mental disorders but rather as a variance of human identity. Through an examination of public discourse, I found that the LGBT community's opposition to this portrayal has been channelled through two major discourses: cultural discourse and human rights discourse. By utilising these two avenues, I delve further into the internal discourse in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah.

5.2.1. Incompatible cultural practices

The acronym LGBT emerged as a modern terminology originating in the United States during the 1980s. Hence, the association of LGBT as a product of Western culture in the narrative of various media outlets in Indonesia is pervasive. The Indonesian LGBT community refutes this association by producing a discourse that posits the historical presence of the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity within traditional Indonesian cultures. Indeed, scholars have examined the social construction of gender and sexuality in the historical context of the archipelago, revealing that it was not confined to the binary framework of heterosexuality. In fact, certain local traditions acknowledge and embrace the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity.

However, the acknowledgement and acceptance of homosexuality and transgender identity in the local cultural productions are also expressed through the local language. For example, non-binary gender identity is termed differently in different ethnic groups, such as *wandu*, *calalai*, *calabai*, and *tomboi*. These cultural practices and languages are specific to certain ethnic groups, which mostly did not eliminate the power of heteronormativity (Boellstorff, 2005); thus, they may have little direct relevance for the present-day Indonesian LGBT in general (Wijaya, 2020). In other words, the strategy to connect these specific local cultural practices and languages with the modern discourse of LGBT rights in Indonesia is far from simple. Nevertheless, the intricate discourse presented by the LGBT community is

perceived as inconsequential by the broader Indonesian Muslim community, as they view this issue as fundamentally incompatible with Islamic principles.

All my interlocutors in Muhammadiyah concurred that religion and culture are innately interconnected and cannot be disentangled. This perspective is grounded in the argument that human beings possess a propensity for generating ideas, customs, habits, values, norms, symbols, and physical activities that have specific meanings. This tendency becomes a sphere where religion and culture meet in symbiosis. Pak Syamsul and Pak Yunahar, for instance, pointed out that in Islam, the relationship between the two can be explained through the concept of *urf* (*adat/custom*), which views that any societal principles and practices can serve as a foundation for formulating religious provisions. However, Pak Syamsul asserted that amid this symbiotic relationship, one must distinguish between Islamic values, which are universal, absolute, and eternal, from the cultural ones, which are particular, relative, and temporal. To ascertain the legitimacy of a custom as a religious authority, Pak Syamsul and Pak Yunahar suggested that said custom must satisfy certain conditions, i.e., the customs do not fundamentally conflict with the Quran, hadith, and the consensus of Islamic scholars (see also Zain bin Haji Othman & Al-Muti'i; 1981). If a custom satisfies these conditions, then it can be absorbed and used as a source of religious provisions. Likewise, a custom ought to be rejected if it fails to meet the necessary conditions. Departing from this assumption, it becomes apparent that the effort to connect LGBT with the cultural discourse of local traditions may not significantly affect the prevailing viewpoint in Muhammadiyah or in the Indonesian Muslim community in general.

In the context of Muhammadiyah, examining the compatibility of local tradition with Islam has been an organisational practice since the beginning. One could even argue that this practice served as a significant impetus for Ahmad Dahlan to establish Muhammadiyah in the early 20th century. Historically, Muhammadiyah was founded as a cultural movement to overhaul elements of Javanese customs that were not in accordance with Islamic principles. After successfully becoming a national movement, Muhammadiyah, with its adherence to the Quran and hadith, maintains its motivation in examining the compatibility of

Indonesian culture with Islam. That being said, it is not uncommon for Muhammadiyah to reject traditions already alive and rooted in society. However, as my interlocutors argued, it is also an error to perceive Muhammadiyah solely as a movement that opposes local culture. In reflecting on the claim that Muhammadiyah is incapable of embracing local cultures, Pak Syamsul insisted that this allegation lacks factual basis: “the statement that we do not accept local culture is unacceptable. We accept the local culture, but there are certain limits to that acceptance.”

It is quite intriguing to observe that in this cultural context, most of my interlocutors did not conform to the prevailing narrative that depicts LGBT as a product of foreign influences. Instead, they underscored that their opposition to the LGBT community stems from the community’s insistence on the public acknowledgement of their individualism and expression of their non-normative sexuality and gender identities. It is in this context that my interlocutors perceive the notion of same-sex marriage as a means of public acknowledgement of the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity as the product of Western thought. Such a line of thinking indicates that they recognise the presence of local traditions in Indonesia that embrace and accommodate non-normative gender and sexuality in Indonesia.

However, recognition did not mean acceptance, as all my interlocutors insisted that these local traditions were incompatible with Islamic values and, therefore, unjustifiable. For instance, Pak Syamsul provided an account wherein Muhammadiyah’s position on LGBT is unlikely to be receptive despite the presence of certain local cultural traditions that embrace homosexuality and transgender identity:

After all, if people practice same-sex sexual relationships, it certainly does not meet the principle of Islamic teachings outlined in the concept of *urf*. Moreover, because three conditions must be satisfied, the tradition in question must comply with the Quran, hadith, and the agreement of *Ulama*. These traditions [that accommodate homosexuality and transgender expressions] contradict Islam. Therefore, we find it difficult to legitimise them.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these local cultural traditions constitute an integral component of Indonesia's social diversity. Given this reality, my inquiry pertaining to Muhammadiyah's approach toward these cultural traditions resulted in two overarching responses. Some suggested that Muhammadiyah *da'i* (preachers) formulate *dakwah* programs aimed at those local communities with the intention of gradually discouraging the continuation of those specific cultural practices. Meanwhile, others suggested that Muhammadiyah ought to adopt a passive position towards these cultural practices, anticipating that modernisation will ultimately render them obsolete and disappear. In this sense, Muhammadiyah's attitude toward local culture reflects what Roy (2013, p. 33) refers to as *exculturates*, which occur when a religion withdraws from a culture of which it was a part but suddenly sees them as negative or irreligious and thus destructive.

However, there was a notable and unequivocal objection when the discussion touched on same-sex marriage. The consensus among my interlocutors indicates that Muhammadiyah ought to refute and impede any endeavours aimed at legalising same-sex marriage in Indonesia. Undoubtedly, the topic of same-sex marriage has emerged as a prominent concern among my interlocutors. For some, this concern has formed the basis of their unequivocal opposition towards the LGBT community, as they perceive the pursuit of legalising same-sex marriage is the central tenet of the LGBT movement in Indonesia. Can this suspicion be verified? I will address this question in a subsequent section of this chapter.

5.2.2. The dichotomy of human rights

In addition to engaging in cultural discourse, the LGBT community in Indonesia employs the human rights narrative as a means in their endeavours to gain social recognition and acceptance. The primary objectives of the Indonesian LGBT movement revolve around advocating for equal access to civil rights and the implementation of non-discrimination policies across various domains, including education, healthcare, employment, and other public facilities. Unfortunately, rather than fostering acknowledgement and inclusion, the use of human rights narrative engenders a phenomenon termed 'reverse discourse,' in which both the government

and the public employ the same vocabularies to uphold their preconception and simultaneously attack the positionality of LGBT people. This reverse discourse is created through the process of dichotomising human rights, wherein Indonesian human rights are defined in relation to Islamic values, and Western human rights are categorised in relation to liberalism and secularism. In this vein, the inclusion of religious values as a basis for restricting the enforcement of human rights, as stipulated in the Indonesian constitution, constitutes a significant contributing factor to the marginalisation experienced by LGBT people in Indonesia.

In the context of Muhammadiyah, the distinction between Western and Islamic human rights has also gained significant influence. In commemoration of the international day of human rights on 10 December 2020, Suara Muhammadiyah published an article entitled *Pesan ketua umum Muhammadiyah di hari HAM internasional* (Muhammadiyah chairman's message on international human rights day) in which the chairman of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nasir, said "it is our shared obligation to uphold human rights, both universal and those that have become a constitutional commitment in Pancasila and the UUD 1945" (Pesan ketua umum, 2020). Scepticism should be reserved in examining this statement, as it suggests a distinctive categorisation between International human rights and Indonesian human rights. In this instance, the categorisation employed by the chairman of Muhammadiyah serves to emphasise the significance of religious values in the enforcement of human rights in Indonesia. This emphasis becomes more apparent when he asserts that "the noble values that exist in the religions that live in this country and in Pancasila, as well as the noble life of the nation, must be the frame for Indonesia in upholding human rights." From this statement, it appears that he is negating the universality of human rights because the interpretation of the noble values of religions and the noble life of the nation can be relative, in which different communities may have different standards.

In our conversation, Pak Syamsul also conveyed a viewpoint that aligns with the statement made by the chairman of Muhammadiyah above. He suggested that the concept of human rights often used by the LGBT community in their movement stems from a Western liberal society that is characterised by an 'anthropocentric'

perspective. In contrast, he continued, some Muslim communities exclusively prioritise their ‘theocentric’ philosophy of life. Amid these two opposing perspectives, Pak Syamsul asserted that it is crucial for Muhammadiyah to integrate the anthropocentric and theocentric perspectives in its discourse on human rights. He argued that favouring the one and eliminating the other is fundamentally impossible as it contradicts the identity of Muhammadiyah as a modern socio-religious movement. He expounded on the importance of combining anthropocentric and theocentric perspectives in the discourse of human rights as follows:

In Islam, believing in God is something absolute, and we must not dispute it anymore. But regarding an issue like this [LGBT issue], the interpretation of human rights can also vary. Where does the interpretation come from, and what is the basis of that interpretation? We often hear that Islam is an anti-human rights religion, but I don’t think that is the case. I think the concepts of human rights should address concepts that are theological in nature because, in Islam, there are things that we cannot just ignore (...) we should not seek God’s revelations only to legitimise something that we do, but it is refused by the general society.

Pak Syamsul’s statement above was corroborated by Bu Atiyatul from Aisyiyah, who asserted that Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah have consistently endeavoured to amalgamate Islamic and international perspectives when discussing human rights issues. She claimed that this effort represents the shared aspiration of both organisations to foster and become a bridge for the integration of religious and secular viewpoints in addressing human rights issues. The purpose, she suggested, is to embody the organisation’s philosophy as a moderate Islamic organisation, which is “not to the extreme right or left but to look for the point of *wasathiyah* (moderation).”

The dichotomisation of human rights in Indonesia presents a platform for the development of reverse discourse, producing a narrative that essentially attacks the existence of LGBT people. The reverse discourse that occurred in Muhammadiyah, for instance, can be observed from Pak Yunahar’s statement:

So, the highest violation of human rights is homosexuality. Why? Because it threatens humanity with extinction. If a man [is paired] with another man, they definitely can't have children. If it becomes a global symptom, humankind will be finished, extinct. Hence, homosexuals violate human rights more severely than any other violations.

Pak Yunahar vehemently insisted that human rights should not be unlimited, particularly in the context of LGBT. He suggested that the state should intervene in the affairs of its citizens' sexuality because sexuality is directly related to human survival. He pinpointed that this intervention is what distinguishes the concept of Islamic human rights from the liberal West.

The desire to define the self by creating a dichotomy between the Western and Islamic conceptions of human rights became even more pronounced when Pak Yunahar expressed an opinion that conflate freedom of expression and hate speech. This disconcerting statement is expressed as follows:

It [the public acceptance of LGBT people] is a liberal human right. Muhammadiyah rejects that, and so does the state [of Indonesia]. Each country has its own boundaries. In our Constitution, the enforcement of human rights is not unlimited. It may be limited by law, regulations, and religion to ensure public order. No human rights guarantee us complete freedom. Can you tell me where in the world we have complete freedom? There are limits in England. If you insult Queen Elizabeth, you will be arrested. In Europe, if you deny the Holocaust, you will be arrested. No one is truly free. As for Muhammadiyah, in accordance with the Islamic view, we do not adhere to the philosophy of liberal human rights. However, human rights are limited by the values we find in the Quran and Sunnah.

However, I should note that this opinion that homosexuality constitutes a violation of human rights was refuted by several other interlocutors. Emphasising that homosexuality is a social reality, Bu Susi and Bu Alimatul suggested that while engaging in same-sex sexual relations constitutes a sin, it does not necessarily infringe upon human rights. Hence, they contended that it is the responsibility of the state to guarantee the right to life of every citizen, including LGBT people. Although they supported the protection of civil rights such as the right to education, healthcare, security, and welfare, they opposed the recognition of same-sex marriage as a fundamental right. In this vein, the opposition towards LGBT people

in the context of human rights discourse is also focused on the disapproval of same-sex marriage. For them, the legalisation of same-sex marriage entails the legalisation of a sin, which they found fundamentally incompatible with their beliefs and, therefore, could not endorse.

If what Muhammadiyah denies is the right to same-sex marriage, will they still implement non-discriminatory policies in other aspects of life for LGBT people at their various business institutions? For example, if an openly gay or transgender woman is applying to study at Muhammadiyah universities or works at one of its enterprises, will Muhammadiyah accept him or her? This question appeared to present a dilemma for my interlocutors as they avoided giving a straightforward answer. Some suggested that Muhammadiyah universities and enterprises should be open to anyone, including LGBT people, as long as they have the necessary qualifications. Meanwhile, several others proclaimed that Muhammadiyah universities and enterprises are private institutions, which means that, unlike public/state institutions that may not apply discriminatory policies, Muhammadiyah may independently determine their own internal regulations. Regarding the discussion on non-discriminatory policies, it is worth noting that during the 2016 controversy, there have been numerous reports of student demonstrations and verbal rejection from teaching staff at Muhammadiyah campuses against LGBT people (see, for example, Sholikah, 2016). They essentially urged Muhammadiyah to exclude LGBT people from its campuses.

Further to the dichotomy of human rights in Islamic and Western perspectives, there is an alternative voice in Muhammadiyah on the universality of human rights that seeks to avoid this dichotomy. For instance, Bu Susi argued that the universality of human rights is guaranteed in Islam, and there should no longer be any questioning on this matter. She pointed out that the concept of human dignity to all human beings is stipulated in the Quran (17:70).⁷² The issue that should be debated, she proposed, is how to shift the emphasis of this discourse so that it does

⁷² This verse reads “We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created” (The Quran, 2004, p. 179).

not only revolve around the subject of rights but also the subject of obligations. She elucidated:

When we [in Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah] discuss human rights, we often forget to talk about responsibilities. For example, everyone has rights, but who is responsible for guaranteeing those rights? Is it appropriate if we only talk about rights without talking about obligations? Indeed, this is not an easy topic. In Islamic texts, there is the term *karamah insaniah* or human dignity. There is a verse in the Quran that says *walaqad karamna bani Adama* -and we have honoured children of Adam- meaning that dignity or *karamah* must be for everyone, all humankind. But yes, there should be a balance between rights and obligations. We talk too much about rights without mapping out who should guarantee them, and if someone gets the right, what obligations does he have to the community?

In the context of the LGBT controversy in Indonesia, Bu Susi posited that the violence and hate speech experienced by Indonesian LGBT people stem from the failure of an understanding of human rights, which prioritises rights without paying attention to obligations. Bu Susi suggested that in the midst of such controversy, it is imperative for both parties to identify and fulfil their societal responsibilities in order to mitigate conflicts. Subsequently, this prompts the following question on what measure can be employed to balance between rights and obligations, to which she answered:

Among other things, for example, we need to uphold the safety of our fellow human beings, preserve the safety of the natural environment, and maintain peace and public order. However, even this is relative, depending on whose perspective. According to an authoritarian government, different opinions might be considered a disruption to public order. So, it's not easy to find a one-size-fits-all rule. Things like this that we need to learn. We need to take notes on how someone can have dissenting opinions but still be respected. Whether that opinion can be accepted or rejected does not matter because the most important thing is that those who have a different opinion are not marginalised or ostracised. I think things like public order, public safety, and public peace can be a measure.

The interview excerpts above show the tension around the conceptualisation of human rights, not only in Muhammadiyah but also in Indonesia in general. The Indonesian Muslim community tends to reject the universality of human rights by creating a dichotomy of meaning between Western liberal human rights and Islamic

human rights. The incorporation of the Islamic perspective into the human rights discourse may strengthen the motivation to protect human rights for other minority groups, such as groups with disabilities, women, and children. Muhammadiyah, for example, has formulated several *fiqh* to address the problems faced by these groups. Thus, for them, Islam provides theological justification and encouragement to uphold and enforce the implementation of human rights. However, for LGBT people, the use of the Islamic perspective in the human rights discourse becomes a stumbling block.

Furthermore, the use of the international human rights discourse to address the LGBT issue in Indonesia results in a contradiction. On the one hand, this discourse gives the LGBT community a sense of empowerment in their fight for identity and sexual rights. On the other hand, it magnifies the suspicions and fear amongst the larger Muslim communities as they deem that the utilisation of international human rights discourse is undermining Islamic values. In light of such paradox, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, a Sudanese American Islamic scholar, suggests that, in principle, there is no permanent contradiction between Islam and universal human rights except for differences in interpretation and implementation. As such, he argues that ongoing dialogue is necessary to foster mutual understanding between the two perspectives. Nonetheless, he also suggests that the rejection of universal human rights principles in the name of Islam is often just a pretext to strengthen repressive power (An-Na'im, 1996).

5.3. The non-violent approach

The very fundamental aspect in the discourse surrounding LGBT issues in Muhammadiyah pertains to the organisation's position, which entails the disapproval of same-sex relationships and transgender expression. However, it is noteworthy that Muhammadiyah unequivocally condemns physical violence towards LGBT people. Such firm discouragement, for instance, was conveyed by Pak Syamsul:

Any violence is something that cannot be justified. That is the first thing. That their [LGBT] activities are prohibited depends on the impact

of the activities, but they should not be harmed. Perhaps this is the task of our *da'i* (preacher), who have not yet targeted them. To try to invite them back again. For me, the most important approach is to try to get closer to God and try to understand God's instructions on what we should do in such a situation. So, individually, they must be invited and guided to improve their spirituality by focusing their minds back on what we have understood as divine guidance.

The interview excerpt above shows two important things. Firstly, Pak Syamsul emphasised that the rejection of LGBT people must not involve physical violence. This statement aligns with the consistent messaging of Muhammadiyah to the public regarding the adoption of non-violence approaches. However, there have been instances where this emphasis on a non-violence approach is contradicted by aggravative statements from the organisation's leaders (see chapter 4).

This contradiction was acknowledged by Bu Alimatul as she highlighted the lexical choices used in articles published in Suara Muhammadiyah. Referring to some articles in Suara Muhammadiyah published in 2016 that label LGBT as a disease (see Chapter 4), she contended that such language was a detriment to constructive discourse. Although Muhammadiyah's position clearly rejects homosexuality, she criticised the magazine for using stigmatising rhetoric. She suggested that Suara Muhammadiyah should implement the Javanese wisdom of *iso menang tanpo ngasorake* (winning without degrading). This suggestion is based on her assessment that the magazine has the power to control the narrative while the LGBT community is a marginalised group already suffering from public condemnation and persecution.

Secondly, the interview excerpt with Pak Syamsul also highlights Muhammadiyah's inclination to return LGBT people to the normalcy of heterosexuality. In this particular context, several ideas emerged from my interlocutors regarding approaches to address matters pertaining to LGBT people, encompassing both preventive and curative measures. Bu Alimatul, for instance, proposed the implementation of proper sex education for children, aligning with Islamic principles as a preventive measure. Subsequently, she also suggested heterosexual marriage for LGBT people as a curative measure:

Sexual relation is an imagination. It means that, yes, we recognise the existence of other sexual orientations. This is my interpretation of this [the Aisyiyah press release on LGBT]. Ok, the least acceptable option is same-sex marriage. So, if they (gay men) cannot change into full heterosexuals, then they can marry heterosexually even though their sexual orientation remains. But, then, don't go out for *jajan* (having sex outside the marriage with another man); stay with the lawful partner! Sexual relation does not have to be penetration. It can be done in various other ways.

Bu Alimatul's suggestion aligns with Boellstroff's (2007) notion of 'marriage imperative' and Wieringa's (2016) theorisation on the 'discrepancy of heteronormativity.' Bu Alimatul's suggestion can be interpreted in the way that heterosexual marriage is becoming a responsibility for LGBT people to embrace their *kodrat* and to fulfil their obligation to society, religion, and the state. This suggestion can also be construed as endeavours to suppress homosexuality and transgender identity from destabilising the heteronormative social order. In this light, Wieringa (2016, p. 30) elucidates that while gender binary as the core of heteronormativity establishes the categories of 'normal' and 'abnormal,' it does not necessarily translate into a rigid classification of act and behaviour because "as long as the gender binary is presented as coherent, contradictions are glossed over."

Meanwhile, Pak Hikam suggested the curative measure of conversion therapy.⁷³ In expounding his viewpoint, he took an example of conversion therapy for *waria*. In this context, Pak Hikam differentiated between biological and

⁷³ The so called "conversion therapy," or sometimes known as "reparative therapy," is a set of practices that claim to alter a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, multiple studies have challenged the validity, efficacy and ethics of clinical attempts to alter sexual orientation (see, for example, James, 1978; McConaghy, 1976; Drescher, 2001). Multiple studies have also reported anecdotal cases of individuals claiming that conversion therapy was harmful to them, as well as individuals who claimed to have changed but subsequently retracted these claims (see, for example, Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Haldeman, 2002; Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002). The practices of conversion therapy have raised concerns and criticism from medical and mental health organisations. Since 1998, for instance, the American Psychiatric Association has opposed any psychiatric treatments to change sexual orientation and gender identity, stating that such therapies are based on the false premise that homosexuality is a mental disorder or that homosexual patients need to change their orientation. In 2007, the American Psychological Association appointed a task force to do a comprehensive review of existing research on the efficacy of conversion therapy. Based on this assessment, the report found that there was little methodologically sound research on sexual orientation change efforts. The American Psychological Association concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation.

psychosocial causes; if the cause is psychosocial, he believed *waria* could be cured.

He said:

We realise that they are experiencing tremendous suffering. These *waria* define themselves as a woman who is trapped in a man's body. So, they experience tremendous suffering. The treatment? We can see whether the cause is psychosocial or biological. Biological is related to chromosomes and hormones. If the cause is psychosocial, I believe it can be cured. (...) There is a testimony. There was a person who lived here near Gajah Uwong [a village in Yogyakarta]. So, he had a tendency to be transgender. He is a man with a tendency to be a woman. He tried to pray and fast, and finally, he could be normal. Well, that's the psychosocial one.

In conjunction with the two recommendations above, the notions of returning LGBT people to heterosexual norms that received the most attention were preventive actions through legal avenues and cultural mechanisms. While the former was met with controversy and subjected to critical examination among my interlocutors, the latter garnered widespread consensus and was embraced without much contention.

5.3.1. The criminalisation of same-sex relations

In 2016, AILA submitted a petition to the Indonesian Constitutional Court requesting an amendment to the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) with the aim of expanding the definition of *zina*. The final goal was to outlaw and criminalise all forms of extramarital sexual relations. To expand this definition, they proposed amendments to three specific articles, which include article 284 on adultery, 285 on rape, and 292 on same-sex relations with a minor. At the time, these three articles stipulated that a sexual offence was committed if married persons engaged in sexual relations outside their marriage, if sexual relations took place without consent, or if same-sex sexual relations took place with a minor. In other words, consensual sexual relation between two unmarried adults, including same-sex sexual relationships, was not a criminal offence. In their argument, the KUHP was a legal product of the Dutch colonial government, characterised by a perceived excess of liberalism, thereby rendering it incompatible with the cultural values and morality of the Indonesian nation. Historically, the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) was

indeed an adaptation of the Indonesian government to the criminal code of the Dutch colonial government *Wetboek van Strafwet Nederlandisch Indie*, with slight revisions made after Indonesia's independence in 1945.

After the AILA petition, several court proceedings were carried out by the Indonesian constitutional court between 2016-2017, where the representation of both sides gave an opinion on the object of the dispute. Ultimately, the court disapproved of AILA's petition. Nevertheless, AILA managed to achieve their goal of expanding the definition of *zina* when the revised criminal code, which criminalises all forms of extramarital sexual relationships, was approved by the Indonesian parliament in December 2022. AILA's achievement can also be observed in their influential role in demonising LGBT people. They have successfully propagated the ideas and arguments that depict the LGBT community as the cause of a public health crisis, population decline, and moral decay of the younger generation (Wijaya, 2020).

Based on AILA's case, I asked my interlocutors about their opinions regarding the criminalisation of same-sex relations. While there was a consensus that Islam upholds heterosexual relationships as the ideal form of sexual partnership and strictly prohibits extramarital sexual relations, there was a lack of unanimity regarding the question of legal criminalisation of same-sex relations. Those who agreed with the criminalisation of same-sex sexual relations underscored their argument on the aspect of religious morality. They formulated the opinion that legal prohibition of same-sex relations is an effort to prevent the destruction of the nation's morality, wherein such legal prohibition would instil fear among LGBT people from propagating their 'homosexual behaviours.' Meanwhile, those who disagreed believe that consensual sexual matters are of a personal nature and should remain beyond the purview of state intervention. This perspective stems from the belief that state intervention will likely exacerbate societal discord.

Nevertheless, seen from a broader perspective, the attempt to outlaw same-sex relations entails a part of the larger political agenda to maintain the conservative religious value of family and marriage in the country. The expansion of the

definition of adultery to encompass all forms of extramarital sexual relations, regardless of consent or sexual orientation, is regarded as an embodiment of Islamic principles. This expansion is believed to offer a measure of protection, especially for women and children, against potential instances of sexual violence. Such argument was conveyed, for example, by Pak Hikam:

The Islamic values are clear that extramarital sexual relationship is not justified, and the benefits are also clear, including the clarity on lineage and protection for women. Personally, I see the prohibition [of extramarital sex] brings more benefits. I acknowledge that in Indonesia, so far, we use civil law that is influenced by Roman law. Indonesia only criminalises illicit sexual relationships if one of the perpetrators is married. Whereas, sociologically, the norms that live in Indonesia are norms that come from Islam, which prohibits sex outside of marriage. So, I think it's actually a good idea [to prohibit extramarital sex].

Given that Muhammadiyah is a *dakwah* movement, my interlocutors adamantly emphasised the need to distinguish between law and *dakwah*. They argued that law is the authority of the state, and as such, Muhammadiyah is committed to adhering to legal regulations enacted by the state. Consequently, despite the existence of Islamic laws pertaining to *zina* and *liwat*, my interlocutors claimed that Muhammadiyah would never independently enforce these laws. However, in accordance with the principles of a democratic society, as my interlocutors underscored, Muhammadiyah will exercise its political interests through lawful means. This includes utilising its influence in shaping legislation and policies, as well as raising objections in the event of perceived violations of the Constitution and/or religious principles. These endeavours constitute an element of what Muhammadiyah has referred to as *dakwah*.

Therefore, for Muhammadiyah, *dakwah* entails broad activities, including active participation in the formulation, endorsement, and evaluation of public policies through democratic avenues. In this context, for instance, Muhammadiyah played an active role in the formulation of the RUU PKS (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual*/Eradication of Sexual Violence Bill), a subject of high controversy. On 10 March 2019, Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid held a seminar and focus group discussion to examine the bill in Yogyakarta. The primary

objective of this forum was to solicit feedback and input regarding the content of the bill, with a specific focus on the perspective of Islamic law. The inputs obtained from this forum will subsequently be presented to the parliament as a recommendation for change and improvement.

Following a thorough deliberation, the forum arrived at the conclusion that “Muhammadiyah did not fully accept but also did not completely reject the PKS bill” (Respon Majelis Tarjih, 2019). The rationale behind this conclusion comprises two primary concerns. Firstly, Muhammadiyah supports and celebrates the objectives of the bill, which promotes the protection of victims of sexual violence. The organisation considers that the intention is genuinely notable and distinguished. However, secondly, Muhammadiyah views, and thus criticises, that the bill fails to balance secular and religious principles. Muhammadiyah draws attention to the omission of religious values and social norms in Article 2 of the bill as consideration factors in promoting the protection of the victims of sexual violence. The article stipulated that the eradication of sexual violence is based on the principles of a) respect for human dignity, b) non-discrimination, c) the best interests of victims, d) justice, e) benefit for the victims, and f) legal certainty. For Muhammadiyah, the exclusion of religious and social norms is unacceptable because legal regulations must not conflict with religious values as a source of social norms. It is important to note that such controversy also came from NU (see Paat, 2019).

The controversy surrounding the omission of religious values in the PKS bill inevitably impeded its deliberation in the parliament. In light of the potential postponement of the bill’s enactment, Aisyiyah took the initiative to address this matter through formal correspondence with the parliament. A letter bearing reference number 195/PPA/A/IX/2019 dated 25 September 2019 was sent to the leadership of the parliament requesting that the PKS bill ought to be carried over as the priority agenda for the next parliamentary session in 2019-2024. In the letter, Aisyiyah also underscored the importance of synchronising the bill with other legislation to prevent overlapping provisions, a definition of sexual violence that clearly takes into account the protection of the victims, and the legal procedures that provide certainty in the enforcement of the law.

The unwavering commitment of Muhammadiyah to include religious values and social norms as factors to be considered in the PKS bill demonstrates its political position on the inseparability of religious morality and legal regulation. Although the controversy of the PKS bill may not directly nudge the LGBT discourse, the inclusion of religious values as a principle in the eradication of sexual violence will directly affect the LGBT community as same-sex relations occupy a precarious area in the discourse of sexual offences in Indonesia. In this light, the inclination in Muhammadiyah to classify same-sex relations as a criminal offence is notably more conspicuous in another contentious regulation, namely the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology number 30/2021 concerning the Prevention of Sexual Violence at Higher Education Institutions, wherein the organisation seeks to make extramarital sex illegal in all its forms.

On 8 November 2021, Muhammadiyah's Majelis of Education, Research, and Development issued a press release addressing the controversial regulation.⁷⁴ It conveyed a message that the *majelis* supports the ministry's objectives to eradicate sexual violence in Indonesian higher education institutions. However, it strongly urged the ministry to revoke and revise the regulation. According to the *majelis*, the ministry failed to adhere to adequate formal procedure, as they neglected to properly engage civil society in the formulation process of the regulation. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah argued that this ministry's regulation would curtail the autonomy of higher education institutions due to the imposition of excessively stringent and intrusive guidelines by the government.

However, the most crucial issue in which Muhammadiyah could not accept the ministerial regulations is the consensual principle to define sexual violence as stipulated in Article 5 (2). Muhammadiyah's Majelis of Education, Research, and Development viewed that the phrase 'without the victim's consent' implies sexual activity can otherwise be justified if there is 'consent of the victim.' In this context, the *majelis* considered this article to be contrary to Islamic principles because it

⁷⁴ The press release can be obtained at <https://diktilitbangmuhammadiyah.org/id/siaran-pers-diktilitbang-pp-muhammadiyah-terkait-permen-dikbudristek-no-30-tahun-2021/>.

seemed as if the ministerial regulation allowed extramarital sex as long as there was consent. The secretary of the *majelis*, Sayuti, says “in our opinion, the sentence, the phrase ‘without consent’ of the victim, degrades the regulation itself, that extramarital sexual relations can be justified if there is consent from the victim” (as quoted in Afandi, 2021). The rejection of the phrase ‘without the victim’s consent’ indicates the organisation’s intention to alter the fundamental principle of the regulation, shifting the focus from eliminating sexual violence to completely prohibiting extramarital sexual relations altogether, which certainly includes same-sex relations.

As a ‘big tent’ organisation, Muhammadiyah is home to a diverse range of ideological perspectives, spanning from conservatism to liberalism (Brown, 2019). Therefore, it is unsurprising that a dissenting perspective exists in the organisation that refuses the notion of criminalising consensual sex relations, including same-sex relations. The primary rationale behind this refusal emphasises pragmatic considerations and the promotion of societal cohesion. Some of my interlocutors argued that the enforcement of excessively stringent laws pertaining to the regulation of citizens’ private affairs would pose significant challenges. For them, the questions of what boundaries and indicators could be used to prove that extramarital sex had occurred would be too complex to formulate and implement. One of my interlocutors, Bu Susi, threw a rhetorical question: “is living together in a house enough to accuse someone of committing extramarital sex? What if they are just housemates?” She then pinpointed the communal character of Indonesian society, which tends to give social judgment on the basis of rumours and presumptions. According to Bu Susi, the criminalisation of such private issues coupled with the communal character of Indonesian society will lead to more considerable social discord and division where neighbours may turn against each other.

Bu Susi proposed that instead of a legal approach, Muhammadiyah should consider employing a cultural strategy to address the issue of illicit sexual relations. She believed that this approach would be more advantageous as it has the potential to yield more tremendous success without creating societal divisions. What she

meant by cultural approach includes education and interpersonal communication. She argued that without criminalisation, Indonesian people already have an imagination of an ideal sexual relationship that is within the framework of heterosexual marriage. With this framework, she added, any form of violation will also result in social punishment. However, she insisted that this ideal must not oppress those who do not live their life within the framework. Bu Susi presented an anecdote regarding Muhammadiyah's experience in using a cultural approach to address the issue of polygamy:

In the case of polygamy, many of our friends [women activists] in early 2000 made a counter-legal draft to forbid and outlaw polygamy. Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah did not participate, but instead, we carried out internal education to revitalise the role of marriage and family through *keluarga sakinah*. So, what are the consequences? Well, in Muhammadiyah, the number of polygamies is insignificant compared to other organisations that initially wanted to outlaw the practice.

Drawing upon the anecdote, Bu Susi posited that cultural and educational movements yield more favourable outcomes compared to the utilisation of legal procedures. She suggested that even in the case of LGBT, employing cultural approaches through interpersonal communication and education would bring better results. She believed that opening up safe spaces for dialogue and trying to understand each other's different views would foster empathy and mitigate the likelihood of societal clashes between the majority and minority.

5.3.2. *Dakwah kultural* embracing LGBT

Compared to the criminalisation of same-sex relations, *dakwah kultural* appears to be the preferred approach to address LGBT issues among my interlocutors. The concept of *dakwah kultural* was first introduced in 2003 through the *sidang tanwir* (the highest deliberation assembly for when there is no *Muktamar*) session in Makassar. The concept was developed as a methodological framework and strategic approach by Muhammadiyah to address social diversity and navigate the evolving complexities of local, national, and global situations. A year later, the

Muhammadiyah published this concept through a book entitled “*Dakwah Kultural Muhammadiyah*.”

Muhammadiyah defines *dakwah kultural* as an effort to instil Islamic values in all dimensions of life by paying attention to the potential of humans as cultural beings (PP Muhammadiyah, 2016). In the midst of social diversity, Muhammadiyah views *dakwah kultural* as the most sensible tool in order to realise its mission of establishing a truly Islamic society. In its implementation, *dakwah kultural* emphasises two aspects: dynamisation and purification. Dynamisation pertains to the acknowledgement and appreciation of human’s capacity as cultural beings, wherein cultural advancement leads to progress and enlightenment in life. Meanwhile, purification endeavours to steer clear of cultural preservation practices that deviate from Islamic teachings, which include idolatry, superstition, and heresy. For Muhammadiyah, the proposition of *dakwah kultural* necessitates a focus on conveying the message of Islam *rahmatan lil-alamin* and on adopting approaches that uphold humanistic values (e.g., justice, equality, social harmony, and peace).

Muhammadiyah perceives its *dakwah* endeavours as a means to promote and enhance societal well-being across multiple dimensions of life. Consequently, the scope of *dakwah* extends beyond religious matters to encompass diverse domains such as economics, culture, politics, and the environment. The fundamental principle of Muhammadiyah’s *dakwah* revolves around the promotion of virtuous conduct, *amar ma’ruf nahi mungkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil). According to Muhammadiyah, the act of *dakwah* is considered a fundamental duty for all Muslims. Hence, Muhammadiyah encourages each of its members to engage in *dakwah* activities in accordance with their individual professions and abilities.

Muhammadiyah proposes three methods in their *dakwah kultural*: *dakwah bi al-hikmah*, *bi al-mauidhah al-hasanah*, and *bi al-mujadalah bi allati hiya ahsan* (PP Muhammadiyah, 2016). *Dakwah bi al-hikmah* means that *dakwah* can only be performed with a comprehensive understanding of the intended purpose, as well as a thorough and accurate knowledge of the individuals or communities being targeted. The target of *dakwah* can be divided into *ijabah* (those who have embraced

Islam) and *ummat dakwah* (those who have not embraced Islam). *Dakwah bi al-mauidhah al hasanah* emphasises the importance of conveying religious teachings in a positive manner, such as offering advice, sharing knowledge, and setting good examples. It is associated with the characters of *dakwah* that are simple, pleasant, and motivating. Finally, *dakwah al-mujadalah bi allati hiya ahsan* pertains to the act of exchanging ideas in the best manner according to the conditions and capacities of the targeted audiences.

Given the unanimous consensus among my interlocutors that LGBT people should return to heterosexual norms, I inquired whether there has been any concrete program of *dakwah kultural* directed at the LGBT community. Apart from being recognised as a special target for community *dakwah* in the 47th *tanfidz muktamar* (PP Muhammadiyah, 2015, p. 108), my interlocutors suggested that there was no program specifically tailored for the LGBT community yet. Nevertheless, some of them proposed an idea that Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah establish safe spaces for dialogue with the LGBT community, with the purpose of listening to their reality and problems. Bu Ari from Aisyiyah, for instance, elucidated how such a space could work:

We cannot generalise because each person's case is very specific, but if we find a case, let's say, a student in Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, I think we need to invite him/her for a dialogue. We must listen to his/her problem. In accordance with the values in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, we need to explain that [the correct and ethical] sexual orientation is heterosexual (...). Furthermore, for example, we provide assistance to women victims of violence so that they do not turn to the extreme. Yes, for example, then hating men and thinking that those who can provide happiness are other women. Well, in such a case, we should also provide education. Something like this is preventive efforts towards cases of violence against women. This is just an example.

Furthermore, Bu Ari also highlighted the potential of *dakwah kultural* to be effectively conducted through existing programmes. For example, she referenced the *keluarga sakinah*, which serves as a comprehensive platform for promoting

Islamic family values and gender ideology espoused by Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah.⁷⁵

However, is Muhammadiyah prepared to establish spaces where dialogue with the LGBT community can take place in a safe and equal manner? A decade ago, in Yogyakarta, the regional leadership of Muhammadiyah reprimanded Muhammadiyah's student association for their involvement in a discussion concerning the issue of sex education for teenagers and LGBT. The argument behind this reprimand was based on the perception that the topic of LGBT was one that elicits controversy and sensitivity (IPM chairman as cited in Dzuhayatin, 2015, p. 229). Despite the intention of the organisation to address the issue of LGBT through open dialogue, recent negative statements from Muhammadiyah leaders and tendentious news reports in *Suara Muhammadiyah* and *tvMu* may still not offer an optimistic trajectory (see Chapter 4). Rather than fostering a conducive atmosphere where the organisation could embrace the LGBT community through its inclusive *dakwah kultural* approach, these statements and news reports exacerbated prejudice against the LGBT community and increased its marginalisation in society.

Nevertheless, given that the subject of LGBT has just recently gained tremendous public attention, such a contradiction was inevitable. In Muhammadiyah, as the topic of homosexuality and transgender identity appeared to emerge from a state of 'incommensurability,' discussions on this matter are also still limited to attempts to understand the reality and its problems. Based on my observation and interviews, it is evident that Muhammadiyah, as an Islamic organisation, prioritises the assessment of the compatibility, or lack thereof, of LGBT with Islam. They have not yet delved into the comprehensive exploration of sociological and psychological aspects associated with this matter. Moreover, it

⁷⁵ Aside from being an ideological conceptualisation of gender and family, *keluarga sakinah* also covers a variety of activities. such as the GACA (Aisyiyah Loves Children Movement) which work to raise awareness on child rights, child health, and standardization of child-friendly services in various Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah charities. It also works on education for reproductive health, women empowerment, workshop for entrepreneurship, social care for disability groups, and empowerment for elderly. All these activities are efforts to realize harmonious families according to Islamic values.

should be noted that while the LGBT issue has garnered attention and discourse at the central leadership, it has not been a priority topic. Consequently, there is a lack of established guidelines in place to address this issue. Coupled with the presence of organisational figures with a wide range of perspectives, the contradiction between embracing or condemning LGBT is not an unexpected outcome.

5.4. Grassroots *dakwah kultural* towards the LGBT community

If the central leadership holds the authority to develop concepts, policies, and guidelines, the leadership at the regional level downwards is authorised to formulate programmes and activities that directly engage with the community. Hence, I approached the regional leaderships of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah to inquire about the potential implementation of *dakwah kultural* directed at the LGBT community. For this purpose, I interviewed the regional leaderships of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, South Sulawesi, and East Kalimantan.

In terms of religious perspective, the three regional leaderships unanimously expressed their commitment to adhering to the directives set forth by the central leadership. For example, when I asked whether there was a discussion on issues of non-normative gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah in East Kalimantan, my interlocutor Pak Sugiyono said, “we don’t discuss things like this. That’s the authority of central leadership. We, at the regions, don’t discuss it. We usually just follow the central leadership.” The same answer was also conveyed by my interlocutors from South Sulawesi, Bu Nurhayati and Bu Rahmah, who both confirmed that Aisyiyah South Sulawesi will always follow the directives from the central leadership. Bu Nurhayati specifically affirmed that “we [Aisyiyah South Sulawesi] just implement their (central leadership) policies.” These responses at least demonstrate the centralisation of Islamic thought development in Muhammadiyah, particularly under the authority of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid.

However, when asked about their practical experiences in addressing the issue of LGBT, the three regional leaders provided different responses. My discussions in East Kalimantan, for example, indicate a notable hesitancy in acknowledging the

presence of the LGBT community in the region. Pak Sugiyono conveyed such reluctance:

There is none. Well, I don't know. I don't know if there are *waria* communities in Samarinda. We have so many *pengajians* here in Samarinda. I myself teach at the *pengajian* in thirteen places. But I don't know. I don't know if there are communities of *waria* here. Maybe there are, but I just don't know. Usually, they are hiding. They don't do activities in the open, so I don't know.

Conversely, in my conversation with Herliati, my interlocutor who worked at LARAS, an organisation dedicated to social advocacy and rehabilitation for individuals with HIV/AIDS and illicit drug users, it was revealed that *waria* communities have notable social engagement in the city. In this light, according to Herliati, LARAS had been actively engaged in collaborative efforts with the *waria* community to reach out to transgender sex workers who are prone to HIV infections. Similar information was also conveyed by Kurnia, my interlocutor, who self-identified as a gay man and recounted the socially active presence of the gay community in Samarinda, East Kalimantan.

Meanwhile, in South Sulawesi, my interviews with the regional leaderships of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah have shed light on the differences in perceiving non-normative gender and sexuality narrated in local and global contexts. When asked about the presence of the LGBT community, my interlocutors strongly reject their existence due to the perception that their sexual conduct constitutes a significant transgression of Islamic norms. The primary basis for this rejection centred on concerns regarding the LGBT community's purported intention to advocate for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Indonesia. However, when asked about the existence of gender diversity in the local Bugis tradition, i.e., *calalai*, *calabai*, and *bissu*, all my interlocutors tended to refrain from passing judgment because they have been there all along. They appeared to have a consensus that Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah do not interfere in these traditions unless they have the necessary cultural capacity. Responding to my question about the Bugis' conceptualisations of gender diversity, one of my interlocutors, Pak Akhsan, said:

We don't pay attention to them. We just leave them in their own place because there is that. We don't interfere. There should be a particular *dakwah* unit that should handle special issues like this. But the institution here is a bit weak, so there is no one who does special preaching there, unlike the one in Central Java, which seems to be active in providing guidance.

Unlike in East Kalimantan and South Sulawesi, who were relatively reserved, my interlocutors in the regional leadership of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah in Yogyakarta displayed a notable level of openness when discussing their perspectives and experiences pertaining to LGBT issues. Such openness was also reflected in their emphasis on a realistic and pragmatic attitude. For instance, although they hold the belief that engaging in same-sex sexual relations and expressing transgender identity are contrary to Islamic norms, it did not affect their perspective toward LGBT people. They assert that, as integral members of society, it is imperative to afford LGBT individuals just and respectful treatment.

However, in Yogyakarta, Aisyiyah appeared to be more active than Muhammadiyah on the issue at hand. In this context, Aisyiyah has applied the concept of *dakwah kultural* in their social activity that touches on issues surrounding the LGBT community. Through the Tuberculosis/HIV care program, Aisyiyah has been engaging with gay and transgender communities in Jogja. This healthcare program, initiated by the central leadership of Aisyiyah in 2003, has been implemented on a national scale. The initiative is a community-based movement aimed at the prevention and mitigation of the spread of tuberculosis and HIV. Through this initiative, Aisyiyah prepares their cadres for two important tasks: to educate the public about the two infectious diseases and to find patients and provide them with counselling and assistance in undergoing therapy. In addition to its partnership with the Indonesian Ministry of Health, Aisyiyah was also a principal recipient of the Global Fund Community TB/HIV grant between January 2017 and December 2019.

Although Aisyiyah in South Sulawesi and East Kalimantan also implement Tuberculosis-HIV care, it was Aisyiyah Yogyakarta who could describe their comprehensive approach to engaging with the gay and transgender communities.

This engagement was established through collaborative efforts with other HIV prevention organisations in Yogyakarta, including Kebaya Foundation, Victory Plus Foundation, and Viesta Foundation, many of whose personnel identify as gay men and *waria*. Aisyiyah's collaboration with these organisations primarily on the screening and providing assistance to the patients, as recounted by Bu Zulaikha:

The collaboration through the HIV program is only a few years old. We used to be specific in TB issues. But then, later, we found that people with TB, if their sexual behaviour is not healthy, may get infected with HIV. So, we provide assistance for TB and HIV patients at the same time. If those whom we assist are from the poor, we accompany them to the health centre or hospital, we find a shelter house, and then we also help them with nutrition from the donations of Aisyiyah women, such as eggs, milk, and other nutritious foods.

Bu Zulaikha's statement was confirmed by my interlocutor from Yayasan victory plus, Pak Yan:

If you ask about cooperation, yes, we are cooperating. Now, the system of the program is collaborative between TB and HIV. Aisyiyah was indeed focused on TB, but now they are expanding to HIV as well. So, the cooperation is that when they find a TB patient with HIV, the patient will automatically be referred to us. Now, the regulation is that when someone is diagnosed with HIV, they will have to be screened for TB as well, and vice versa. It doesn't mean that people infected with TB must be infected with HIV as well or vice versa, no. But, when we find cases of double infections, then we will work together to provide support to the patients.

How can this collaborative effort serve as a medium for dialogue with the gay and transgender communities? Bu Zulaikha argued that to foster a constructive dialogue characterised by inclusivity and equality, it was imperative to delineate religious convictions from fundamental human principles. While her religious convictions said that LGBT people should return to their *kodrat*, which is a life that conforms to heterosexual norms, she insisted that as fellow human beings, LGBT people have the right to live with dignity. For her, LGBT people are human beings created equally by God with the same right to live and thus deserve to be treated as such. If requested, she said, Aisyiyah will provide religious assistance such as *pengajian* and or religious counselling, but otherwise, the sole focus will be on the welfare of

the patients. She elucidated that this principle becomes the fundamental guideline for Aisyiyah Yogyakarta in running their tuberculosis/HIV care.

According to Bu Zulaikha, the collaboration with other HIV prevention organisations provides Aisyiyah a valuable opportunity to cultivate an understanding and respect for different viewpoints, even if they are not in line with the prevailing norms. She then narrated her personal experience of socialising with her transgender neighbour:

For me, they are human beings just like us, created by God. I don't look at them based on their behaviour or social class. As long as it is a matter of humanity, I have no problem with it. In fact, I have a neighbour who is like that. When she gets sick, I visit her. When she is in trouble, I help her. Meanwhile, I also try my best to invite her to return to her *fitrah*.

Pak Yan from Victory Plus Foundation substantiated Bu Zulaikha's description by examining the cooperation between Aisyiyah Yogyakarta and his foundation. He claimed that there has never been a problem with the cooperation. He emphasised that his staff, whether they are gay men or transgender individuals, can easily work together with the members of Aisyiyah Yogyakarta:

Our staff is 80% HIV positive. They are from different backgrounds; many are gay men and also transgender people. Aisyiyah remains open and accepting of them. There is no discrimination. Even in every activity, such as training for their cadre, they also involve us. Whomever we send to be involved in their events, they receive them well. Whomever it is. There have never been any complaints. So far, they have been open and never restrictive.

On a different note, my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta and South Sulawesi informed me that *dakwah kultural* to the LGBT community had been one of the priority programs in Muhammadiyah Central Java. Unfortunately, I was unable to follow up on this information with a direct visit. Nonetheless, I acquired some information pertaining to the program through online sources.

As cited in Afandi (2022), the chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Java, Muhammad Tafsir, has initiated a *dakwah kultural* aimed at the LGBT community in Central Java. This initiative is grounded in his comprehension of

Muhammadiyah's inclusive and egalitarian religious principles, which assert that every human being has the same rights and opportunities to live a good and happy life on earth and in the hereafter. In the context of *dakwah* towards LGBT people, Tafsir argues that the purpose of such *dakwah* is not only to guide them to return to the 'righteous path' slowly but also to offer them economic and social support. He contends that *dakwah* should be based on both divine values and humanism:

We reject LGBT as a lifestyle, but we should not abandon them as they are victims. We eradicate poverty, but we must not be cruel to the poor. Remember, they are still human beings who have the same right to heaven as us. So, *dakwah* should not only understand the verses of the Quran and hadiths, but *dakwah* must also understand humans. If you want *dakwah* to succeed, understand the human. (As quoted in Afandi, 2022)

5.5. On same-sex marriage: A response from the LGBT community

In Muhammadiyah, the issue of legalisation of same-sex marriage has emerged as the most contentious within the controversy of LGBT. The suspicion that the LGBT movement is pushing for the legalisation of same-sex marriage is evident both in the public statements of Muhammadiyah leaders and in my conversations with interlocutors. While the issue of the criminalisation of same-sex sexual relationships received mixed responses, the issue of same-sex marriage received unanimous rejection. The basis for this rejection frequently stems from the ideology of *keluarga sakinah*, which asserts that a truly Islamic society is built upon the institution of heterosexual marriage. In other words, the legalisation of same-sex marriage would be a direct attack on Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah's most fundamental and sacred family ideology.

The following two interview excerpts serve as an illustration of the resolute opposition that Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah express against same-sex marriage. The first excerpt is from my interview with Bu Susi, who considered that the legalisation of same-sex marriage is an unnecessary and unviable 'revolution':

Muhammadiyah or Aisyiyah have never issued a condemnation, for example, declaring that they [LGBT] are cursed individuals who deserve to be punished. Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah want everything

to go naturally; there is no need to incite revolutions. So, I think it will be ineffective if this group [LGBT] makes a move to make it [same-sex marriage] legal. I don't think it will be effective. Why? Forget about it! We want to raise the minimum age of marriage is very difficult, and we want to change the rules for interfaith marriage is very difficult. Let alone asking for this.

Meanwhile, in a parallel vein, Pak Hikam argued that the legalisation of same-sex marriage might not be in accordance with the Indonesian constitution and the Indonesian law concerning human rights. He said:

One of Muhammadiyah's personalities is upholding the law and regulation (...) Muhammadiyah accepts the 1954 Constitution, and it also accepts the Human Rights Law 39/1999. But, does the interpretation of these laws allow LGBT people to marry [in the setting of same-sex marriage] and form families? It could be that there is no opportunity for any interpretation that will allow same-sex marriage. So Muhammadiyah, I am sure, will try their best to oppose this because we only recognise heterosexuality as the proper sexual orientation, and the marriage is heterosexual marriage. So, for those who have problems with that, their human rights beyond that right [same-sex marriage] can be justified.

Bu Susi and Pak Hikam provided these responses spontaneously without prior solicitation. This spontaneity suggests that they perceive the growing visibility of the LGBT community and their advocacy for the recognition of their human rights as indicative of the community's objective for the legalisation of same-sex marriage. However, can this presumption be substantiated? What is the response of the LGBT to this presumption?

To find an answer, I met with Dilan and Bu Shinta in Yogyakarta. Dilan is a Muslim gay activist at the People Like Us Satu Hati (PLUSH), and Bu Shinta was the co-founder of Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah. Even though they are well-connected activists within the community, I acknowledge that their voices may not represent the entire community of Indonesian LGBT. Nonetheless, their voices provide insight into the motivation of the LGBT movement and a glimpse of what the Indonesian LGBT community feels and wants.

5.5.1. PLUSH: Legalisation of same-sex marriage in Indonesia is a ‘myth’

PLUSH is a community-based organisation formed as a forum to advocate and fight for equal rights for marginalised groups in Yogyakarta. It firmly states that they side with the underprivileged and marginalised people, including LGBT, from the lower economic class. Historically, the formation of PLUSH began with the attacks of FPI on several activities of the LGBT community in the early 2000s. Before the FPI attacks, according to Dilan, the need for self-advocacy had never occurred because it was still straightforward for the LGBT community to voice their aspirations. Departing from these attacks, the community took the initiative to advocate for their own community. Eventually, in 2006, PLUSH was formed from a merger of two communities: the People Like Us community, which was initially organised by PKBI (*Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia/Indonesian Planned Family association*) to focus on HIV/AIDS issues, and the Satu Hati community, which was an LGBT community focusing on social activities and charity.

When asked if their advocacy was directed towards the legalisation of same-sex marriage, Dilan immediately dismissed this suspicion and asserted that it is a ‘myth.’ He justified the notion that PLUSH is an LGBT political movement simply because “after all, we are a group, we gather, and we share a view of an ideal situation (...) we are political because we try to influence our own community, we want to influence society, and we try to influence other stakeholders.” However, he proclaimed that the legalisation of same-sex marriage has never been part of the demand. He elucidated that PLUSH’s political activities are focused on demanding equal access to and the fulfilment of civil rights, such as healthcare, education, employment, a place to live, and safety, for all Indonesian citizens. Thus, according to him, PLUSH’s ideals of equality extend beyond the scope of LGBT issues but fundamentally concern all Indonesian citizens regardless of gender, sexuality, or any other identities.

If the primary objective of PLUSH is to strive for equal rights, wouldn't same-sex marriage be a part of it? In response to this inquiry, Dilan did not dismiss this

notion by saying: “if it is related to equality, yes, the ending would include marriage as one of the issues, but that is not the case here because there are more pressing and fundamental issues to tackle.” He clarified that the LGBT movement in Indonesia has never demanded the legalisation of same-sex marriage. This statement is also corroborated by Pak Dédé. In a separate interview, he expounded upon the notion that if the primary objective of the Indonesian LGBT movement is to promote non-discriminatory policies, it is probable that the issue of same-sex marriage will eventually emerge as a topic of discussion. Similar to Dilan, Pak Dédé also maintained that the inclusion of same-sex marriage has never been prioritised within the movement. At the Asian level, he claimed, the Indonesian LGBT community is often excluded from the discussion networks regarding same-sex marriage due to the consideration that it is not a feasible matter in the Indonesian context.

Having dispelled the suspicion surrounding the legalisation of same-sex marriage, the subsequent question is: How did this suspicion become widespread among Indonesians? The formation of this suspicion was prompted by certain factors. In addition to its status as an imported acronym, the news coverage of LGBT in Indonesia is highly oriented toward the West. Indonesian media often engage in a practice of juxtaposing and contextualising events surrounding the LGBT issues occurring in the Western world with the ongoing LGBT movement within the country. Since the 1990s, the international gay and lesbian movement has employed the language of human rights to advocate for their pursuit of sexual rights and same-sex marriage. Nowadays, numerous countries in Europe and America have taken political decisions to legislate same-sex marriage. There has been a prevailing concern among Indonesians regarding the potential occurrence of a similar phenomenon within the country. Therefore, the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Brazil in 2013 and in the United States in 2015, along with instances of same-sex wedding celebrations that took place in Indonesia, garnered significant media coverage and captured the attention of the public.⁷⁶ For many Indonesians,

⁷⁶ Some examples of news coverage of same-sex marriages in Indonesia include the story of a gay couple's wedding that took place in 2015 in Bali (Cerita di balik, 2015) and multiple other

including those in Muhammadiyah, these news reports functioned as alerts and instilled concerns regarding potential attempts for the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the discourse pertaining to same-sex marriage in Indonesia can be attributed to the resistance against global liberalism. In our conversation, Bu Kamala Chandrakirana, a former commissioner at the Komnas Perempuan Indonesia (the Indonesian National Commission on Violence against Women), argued that the issue of legalisation of same-sex marriage is “a narrative that Indonesian conservative and religious actors have picked up from global politics.” She posited that in their struggle to maintain their religious-conservative ideas, same-sex marriage had become a convenient political instrument to influence and control domestic public opinion. From a broader perspective, she argued, this political instrument is not only to discourage the LGBT community but also to curtail the expansion of liberal human rights discourse in Indonesia. By making the issue of same-sex marriage a major national issue, these actors are effectively pitting human rights advocates against religious society. She said:

Indeed, the fact is that in some countries, the demand for same-sex marriage was on the agenda, and it turned out to be successful and celebrated. For example, in the United States (...), this picture is then taken by political forces [in Indonesia] that are against the discourse of human rights. They are looking for an easy political tool to play in this populism politics (...) Women’s rights activists who talk about sexual violence and domestic violence are also dealing with these people (...) When the LGBT issue becomes a political issue, they just pick it up and synonymise any support for LGBT rights with support for same-sex marriage, which directly hits the institution of marriage and the institution of family, which is in their political interest.

Based on Bu Kamala’s analysis, it can be posited that employing same-sex marriage as a specific illustration has facilitated the translation of abstract concepts of liberalism into a discourse that is more tangible and quantifiable. In this light, Indonesian conservative political factions employ the topic of same-sex marriage

documented instances of attempted same-sex marriages spanning from 2011 to 2021 (Lima pernikahan, 2022).

as a means to exemplify the perceived intrusion of global liberalism upon the established norms of Indonesian Muslim society.

In addition to refuting the suspicion that PLUSH's advocacy seeks to legalise same-sex marriage in Indonesia, Dilan also dismissed the notion that LGBT is a disease. Referring to Indonesia's PPDG (Guidelines for the Classification and Diagnosis of Mental Disorders), he argued that the assumption of LGBT as a disease from a psychological aspect is baseless. Furthermore, he also refuted the notion that LGBT constitutes a violation of religious principles and Pancasila. According to him, this belief stems from a heteronormative interpretation of the precepts of Pancasila and the Quran. He said:

I believe Islam is interpreted from a heteronormative perspective. Every verse has *asbabun nuzul*, a historical context. I don't know how they interpret [the Quran], but what I see is that most of the interpretations are very heteronormative, especially if we look at the verses of the prophet Lot about Sodom and Gomorrah (...) I think if the verses of the Quran can be multi-interpreted, in the end, things like this depend on who interprets them. Those who have the power will control the interpretation (...) And then we are also always juxtaposed with the first principle of Pancasila. It will never be finished. I mean, does LGBT violate the almighty God? It's funny and illogical. But then again, it's the interpretation of the powerful. So, it's hard to fight this. Obviously, our position will always be marginalised.

When discussing the attempts of Muslim scholars, especially those from Western countries, who advocate for an inclusive Islam through the reform of *fiqh* (see, for example, Kugle, 2010), Dilan expressed his scepticism. He believed that Islam in Indonesia represents a confined domain that is rigorously protected by certain factions who exhibit resistance towards Islamic legal reforms. He provided an example wherein a controversy arose concerning the proposal to formulate a *fiqh waria*. The reaction from Islamic factions at the time was notably harsh, and it led to persecution and closure of Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah, the institution where the idea of *fiqh waria* first emerged. Upon observing this event, Dilan argued that Indonesian Islamic political power is too exclusive, making it exceedingly challenging to incorporate discussions pertaining to the LGBT community, let alone initiate reforms of *fiqh*. Alternatively, he suggested that a more productive approach

would be to establish a religious guideline that encourages Muslims not to discriminate against differences. He said:

In my opinion, if the goal is to find acceptance in Islam, it should not be the LGBT that is being scrutinised, but rather the attitude of Muslims so that they can tolerate us. Tolerant means that initially, we do not like something, but then, okay, let's leave it alone, right? Actually, conflict is a normal thing. We don't mind if, for example, we are not accepted in certain groups, but if they don't want to accept us, at least they should not discriminate against us.

Globally, support for LGBT rights is increasing to the extent that this metric is used to measure social progress and democracy (Rahman & Valiani, 2016). Unfortunately, this global development appears to be sending ominous signals to Indonesian religious and conservative groups, giving them the impression that they are beginning to lose control over the preservation of conservative values in society. Given the prominence of the institution of marriage and family within conservative ideology, the notion of same-sex marriage presents a major challenge. In this ideological conflict, the presence of the LGBT community is regarded as a perceived threat and subsequently identified as a common enemy in Indonesia. However, based on interviews with my interlocutors from the LGBT community, the legalisation of same-sex marriage does not constitute a prominent aspect of their advocacy. The objective they are striving for pertains to the guarantee of equal rights and dignified life regardless of their sexual and gender identity. Therefore, the instrumentalisation of same-sex marriage as a political tool in Indonesia can be regarded as a pre-emptive measure without immediate domestic cause for concern, which, in the process, victimises a minority and vulnerable group.

5.5.2. Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah: Fighting for religious rights of transgenders

In contrast with PLUSH, which avoids religious issues in their movement, Pesantren waria Al-Fatah actively advocates for the religious rights of transgender people. Established in 2008, the *pesantren* operates on the fundamental idea that *waria* are human beings with rights to receive religious education and worship. According to its co-founder Bu Shinta, the *pesantren* serves as a safe space for *waria* to pray as well as to learn about Islam. Simultaneously, the presence of the

pesantren serves as an educational platform for the surrounding community, aiming to foster comprehension and eventual societal acceptance of transgender identities. The learning curriculum at the *pesantren* is straightforward, encompassing general learning about how to do prayers, reading the Quran and memorising its short verses, and discussions on basic *fiqh* in social affairs.

In our conversation, Bu Shinta told me a story about how she and the other co-founder came to establish a *pesantren* of their own. She saw the struggle of *waria* when praying in public mosques. They encountered discomforts, whether it was experienced by the *waria* themselves or other worshipers. Such discomfort, she said, becomes a barrier and a discouragement for *waria* to perform prayers in public spaces. In addition, she also learned that *waria* often abandon their religion for their own journey of self-discovery (*pencarian jati diri*), seeking acceptance from their family and community. When *waria* have found social and economic stability, Bu Shinta continued, they begin to remember their religion, the search for God, and the desire for spiritual peace. However, they are faced with the difficulty of finding a place where they can study religion to fulfil their spiritual needs. This is where Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah came into being and functions as a safe space for *waria* in their pursuit of spiritual peace.

In light of the ongoing LGBT controversy in Indonesia, Bu Shinta dismissed the characterisation of *waria* as either sinful or pathological. In regard to the accusation of *waria* as a sin, Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah examined the Quran under the guidance of local NU Ulama in order to situate themselves in Islam. They have found and studied the Quran (24:31),⁷⁷ which states that women may reveal their charms in the presence of “such men as attend them who have no sexual desire.” The phrase men who ‘have no sexual desire’ for women is what the *pesantren*

⁷⁷ This verse reads “and tell believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal; they should let their headscarves fall to cover their necklines and not reveal their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons, their brothers, their brothers’ sons, their sisters’ sons, their womenfolk, their slaves, such men as attend them who have no sexual desire, or children who are not yet aware of women’s nakedness; they should not stamp their feet so as to draw attention to any hidden charms. Believers, all of you, turn to God so that you may prosper” (The Quran, 2004, p. 222).

interpreted as *waria*. This verse serves to strengthen their conviction that the recognition of *waria* individuals exists within the Islamic tradition, suggesting that being a *waria* is not deemed sinful. Based on this Quranic verse, Bu Shinta argued:

We don't sin living as *waria*. We, fellow humans, will only sin when we stray from our religious teachings. Just like any other human being, whether male or female, when we abandon religious teachings, when we don't do our religious obligations, then we sin. However, we are not sinful just because we are *waria*. We have been [feeling and behaving] as women since childhood. And even when we try to refuse not to be *waria*, we cannot. We consider that life as *waria* is something given because we cannot deny it. How can we, then, sin and be blamed for something that we don't want either? Inevitably, we can only live as *waria*.

Since its establishment in 2008, Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah has received support from several local NU *ulama* who are willing to assist as educators and contribute learning materials. In addition to the active personal participation of *ulama*, NU has also engaged institutionally. One notable example is the collaboration between the University of NU Jepara and the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga of Yogyakarta, which have offered their expertise to the *pesantren* to formulate a *fiqh waria*.

However, this offer became a subject of controversy for Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah. The primary objective of the *fiqh* was to provide elucidation and clarification regarding the status of *waria* in Islam, particularly with regard to the prayer protocols. However, certain Islamic factions misinterpreted it as an attempt to legalise same-sex marriage, resulting in the persecution and closure of the *pesantren* by FJI (Front Jihad Islam) in 2016.⁷⁸ Obviously, this accusation was

⁷⁸ The closure process of Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah was carried out at the Jagalan village hall, Kotagede, Yogyakarta on 25 February 2016 at the insistence of FJI which was accommodated by the government represented by the police and village officials. According to Bu Shinta, in addition to the community leaders, the head of RT/RW, there were also members of Jagalan branch of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah who were invited as witnesses. Bu Shinta said that during the closure of her boarding school she experienced a moral trial: "Well, there I was. They gave me an invitation but forbade me to bring any support from the LBH and or any other NGOs. I could only come with my *ustadz* (teacher). Then that's where they put us on trial. They said that *waria* is like this and that, *waria* are contagious etc. One by one they talked as it was a set up. But there was no written document that our *pesantren* was closed. Anyway, the point is that the *pesantren* was sealed that night."

firmly dismissed by the *pesantren* for two underlying reasons. Firstly, the issue of same-sex marriage is an irrelevant topic for them, as they face more significant struggles in situating themselves within society's hegemonic gender binary system. Secondly, the primary focus of their concern revolves around establishing a safe space for *waria*'s religious education and prayer.

The controversy initiated by FJI on the notion of the *fiqh waria* was also criticised by *Ustadz* Arif. He is one of the teachers from NU who have been actively involved with religious education at Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah since 2010. In his criticism, *Ustadz* Arif argued that *warias* are human beings who have the right to study Islam and worship God. In our conversation, he stressed that such *fiqh* is a necessity due to its potential to offer clear guidance to people who identify as non-binary in religious affairs, especially in the context of congregational prayers. Therefore, he could not comprehend when the notion of the *fiqh waria* was construed as an attempt to legalise same-sex marriage. He said:

When there was a raid in 2016, even the sealing of the *pesantren*, it was because of the issue of *fiqh waria*. Well, the proposal to formulate the *fiqh* was actually not from us, but it was a collaboration of the sharia faculty of UIN Sunan Kalijaga and a NU university. The idea came from them. Then, when interviewed by the media, Bu Shinta conveyed the plan. But I don't know. Maybe those who have a perverted mind interpreted this plan of a *fiqh waria* as an attempt to legalise same-sex marriage. But we never went there.

Regarding the controversy surrounding the legalisation of same-sex marriage, *Ustadz* Arif viewed it as nothing more than an unfounded suspicion. Based on his engagement with the LGBT community in Indonesia, he has never heard of such a demand. *Ustadz* Arif observed that the LGBT community prioritises social acceptability as a more significant and urgent need. He provided an illustration of the frequent occurrence of terminations of individuals from their employment solely on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Despite fighting the same battle to eliminate prejudice and gain social acceptance, Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah wishes to distance themselves from the LGBT movement. In this context, for instance, Bu Shinta prefers to identify herself

as *waria* rather than transgender. Therefore, she made the deliberate decision to refrain from employing the acronym LGBT in her activism through the *pesantren*. Of course, this decision was received with a sense of disappointment by Dilan, a representative from PLUSH. He underscored the necessity of collaboration, cohesion, and collective support in the pursuit of equal rights. However, Dilan also acknowledged that in practical terms, the pronouncement of LGBT as a label often complicates and impedes their movement as it has been synonymised with immorality.

Nevertheless, for Bu Shinta, the dissociation of her *pesantren* from the LGBT movement was a tactical measure. She was of the opinion that the adoption of the acronym LGBT in Indonesia, which has Western origins, places her community in a greater disadvantaged position. According to her, when the topic of LGBT was introduced into the political sphere, the first one who received physical and verbal violence inflicted by society was *waria* due to their heightened visibility and ease of identification. Furthermore, she emphasised the locality of the term *waria*. She believed that, as a product of local construction, the term *waria* is easier for the local community to comprehend and accept. Additionally, religious compatibility played a role in this disassociation. By citing the Quran (24:31),⁷⁹ Bu Shinta argued that *waria* identity is clearly accommodated in Islam while homosexuality does not receive similar recognition. She elucidated:

We do not oppose the LGBT movement, but we also need to play a strategy. In our struggles and activities, especially in our *pesantren*, as you can see, we install a signboard *pesantren waria* and not *pesantren LGBT*. *Waria* has existed since long ago in Indonesia, but we were not identified as LGBT. Not many people know that *waria* is part of LGBT. Most people understand LGBT as gay and lesbian (...). Our experience is that the local community and traditional NU Ulama can better understand our struggle when we use the term *waria* rather than the term LGBT. In the Islamic context, acceptance of *waria* is also found in many religious texts. But when the issue is expanded to LGBT as a whole, the struggle for acceptance in Islam becomes even harder, especially for this sexual minority group.

⁷⁹ See footnote nr. 77

Bu Shinta's decision to distance her activism from the LGBT movement appears to follow the reality on the ground. Indeed, several of my interlocutors in Muhammadiyah separate *waria* from the LGBT discourse, in which they associate LGBT with immoral sexual behaviour, while *waria* with psychological struggles. Such distinction is also shown among the progressive Indonesian Muslims, as observed by Rodriguez (2022).

5.5.3. An expression of hope (for Muhammadiyah)

PLUSH and Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah are both located in Yogyakarta, which is also the location of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah headquarters. Based on this fact, I asked Dilan and Bu Shinta if they had ever met directly with representatives of Muhammadiyah or Aisyiyah to discuss issues of non-normative gender and sexuality, to which both answered that they had never met at all.⁸⁰ However, in the context beyond the formal organisation setting, interpersonal communication and discussion have been established.

In explaining this informal and interpersonal relationship, Dilan separated those who are official members of Muhammadiyah from those who grew up within the cradle of Muhammadiyah. He said that PLUSH had met several times with the younger generation of Muhammadiyah in public discussion, to whom he praised the openness of this young generation towards the diversity of gender and sexuality. He said:

A few years ago, we often met for discussions, and I think they were really cool. These young people from Muhammadiyah were quite open. But for the older generation, oh my God! It's very different. PLUSH had a research project and it involved young people from Muhammadiyah. Although they didn't say that they came from Muhammadiyah, this is Jogja. There are so many Muhammadiyah schools here. So, even though they were not members of Muhammadiyah, they were raised with Muhammadiyah teachings and principles from Muhammadiyah families.

⁸⁰ In this context, however, it is important to note that Aisyiyah Yogyakarta through their program of TB-HIV care has established cooperative relationships that, to some extent, involve the *waria* and gay communities.

Meanwhile, Bu Shinta responded to the same question with a similar answer. She elucidated that “institutionally, Muhammadiyah is at *zero point*. They do not support us, but they also do not condemn us.” She subsequently compared the position of Muhammadiyah with that of the NU, highlighting the proactive support extended by NU towards her *pesantren*. She clarified that in addition to providing educational assistance, NU also offered moral support to the *pesantren* during the persecution and closure by FJI in 2016. Bu Shinta said:

NU actually provides us with full support. We have a memorandum of understanding with the University of NU, and we have joint activities with Fatayat because what? *Waria* is a social woman. In 2012, KOMNAS Perempuan categorised *waria* as social women, and we were included in women’s issues. That’s why we have a lot of joint activities with Fatayat (...) When we were attacked by FJI, NU immediately offered us, “if Ibu wants to move to our place, there is a mosque, there is a classroom, Ibu can move.” But I answered, “*aduh*, no! We will think about it first.” Because at that time, we were also threatened that wherever we moved, we would be chased. FJI said something like that. That was our experience with NU. I think this because they have a strong background in local culture, and they believe that *waria* exists in Indonesian culture. So, they support us. They guide us in the path of Islam. That’s what we appreciate until now. And our *kyai* is also an NU *kyai* named Pak Abdul Muhaimin.

However, like Dilan, Bu Shinta also acknowledged that there had been interpersonal communication and dialogue with people from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah. For example, Bu Shinta informed me that her *pesantren* had received students from Muhammadiyah Universities who do research pertaining to gender issues, and she said this research went well. In this vein, one of my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, Bu Alimatul, delivered a *pengajian* at the *pesantren*, wherein she expressed her support of the *pesantren*’s practice of allowing their students to assume the gender identity of their preference during prayer. Furthermore, the location of the *pesantren* in Kota Gedhe, a town affiliated with the Muhammadiyah movement, allows communication between the *pesantren* and the Muhammadiyah community to occur organically, as described by Bu Shinta:

My friends also witnessed it [the meeting to seal the *pesantren* by FJI]. They gave me some encouragement. They told me to be strong. So,

personally, they support us. Yes, they are my friends in this village. So, they came to the meeting as invited members of Muhammadiyah, including my brother. Yes, my brother is also a Muhammadiyah member. They also complained [to FJI], “why would you ban people from *ngaji* [reciting and learning the Quran]?” My brother also said that.

The story of Dilan and Bu Shinta above shows that respectful and tolerant interpersonal relations are possible. Their story thus adds to the indication that the attitude towards non-normative gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah is anything but monolithic. In Chapter 4, I showed the contradiction between the official position of the organisation and the personal statements of some prominent figures in the media. Meanwhile, in this chapter, I show differing opinions among Muhammadiyah leaders at the central leadership as well as practices at the regional leadership. Although theological disapproval of LGBT is shared among my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, they conveyed different opinions regarding its social aspects. For example, the experience of Aisyiyah Yogyakarta with their Tuberculosis-HIV care program shows that interpersonal relations at the grassroots are based on mutual respect. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah's attitude in South Sulawesi towards its ethnic groups of Bugis who accommodate non-normative gender is forbearance.

Amid the diverse perspectives towards non-normative gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah, I asked Dilan and Bu Shinta about their expectations of the organisation. In response, Dilan recounted an encounter he had in 2013 with students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, where he was invited to discuss the issue of LGBT. He recalled that during the discussion, the students refused to discuss LGBT from the religious perspective but rather focused on the social aspects. These students, according to Dilan, showed him a different perspective in perceiving a highly controversial issue, in which “it is ok to disagree on something as long as this disagreement does not turn into discrimination.” This discussion also taught him that there was no need to fight over whether or not Islam accepts LGBT since the most important thing was that Islam should not be used as a pretext to discriminate against minority groups. Based on this anecdote, Dilan suggested that Muhammadiyah should shift its focus from scrutinising the

theological aspects of LGBT to determining how Muslims could embrace and appreciate diversity. In response to the same query, Bu Shinta expressed her aspirations for Muhammadiyah by reflecting on the figure of Ahmad Dahlan and his vision of an *Islam berkemajuan* (Islam with progress) that is open to progress and new development. She said, “If Muhammadiyah is truly a modern organisation, then think modern. Humans are diverse. Thus, accept that diversity!”

5.6. *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* and the challenge of diversity

In the previous section, Dilan and Bu Shinta expressed their hopes for Muhammadiyah. Dilan hoped for Muhammadiyah to practice toleration and to manage its disapproval in order to prevent it from manifesting as discrimination. Meanwhile, Bu Shinta hoped that Muhammadiyah would be able to adapt to the process of modernisation, enabling it to acknowledge non-binary gender identities as valid expressions of human diversity. Now, the question is whether Dilan's and Bu Shinta's hopes are reasonable. How would Muhammadiyah perceive these expectations?

In Indonesia, diversity is not only an inherent reality but also a valued constitutional principle. The national philosophical concept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* serves as a guiding principle that recognises and embraces the diverse nature of various aspects of life in the country. The phrase *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* has a historical significance as it pertains to a theological doctrine in 14th-century Javanese society. This doctrine aimed to establish a framework for peaceful and harmonious coexistence among Buddhism, Hinduism, and Shivaism.⁸¹ In other words, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* initially symbolised the concept of religious pluralism. However, in the context of modern Indonesia, the interpretation of this phrase has undergone a broadening, encompassing dimensions that extend beyond religious

⁸¹ The phrase *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is taken from a line in the poem *Kakawin Sutasoma* written by Mpu Tantular during the reign of King Hayam Wuruk of Majapahit kingdom in the 14th Century. The sentence reads: *Rwaneka dhatu winuwus Budha Wiswa, Bhinneki rakwa ein apan kena parwanosen, Manka ng Jinatwa kalawan Siwatawa tunggal, Bhinneka tunggal ika tan hana dharma mangrwa* (It is said that Buddhism and Hinduism are different substances, but the values of *Jina* (Buddhism) and Hinduism are one. Divided but one and the same). This means that there is no dual *dharma*, in which *dharma* can be translated as devotion, struggle, or sacrifice, but it can also be translated as truth or good deeds.

diversity. During the period of the New Order regime, the concept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* was employed to frame diversity within the framework of four categories, which encompassed ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group dynamics. However, this categorisation was aimed at homogenising various aspects of national life in order to safeguard the New Order's politics of stability.

With the end of New Order authoritarianism and the accelerating pace of globalisation, Indonesia's diversity has become increasingly complex. In today's reality, diversity encompasses a much wider range of issues. It exists and is understood at the deepest level of everyone's life in society. It is in this context that homosexuality and transgender identity are perceived as one of the many forms of human diversity that demand respect and recognition from society. Unfortunately, juxtaposed with religions, they are often considered a transgression. However, given that we often do not know the absolute truth in interpreting religious teachings and therefore cannot know the best way to live, is it justified to oppress a different way of living whose truth cannot be absolutely ascertained? Furthermore, in the context of expanding the meaning of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, religion is only one of many forms of diversity that are protected in Indonesia. On this basis, is it appropriate for religion to become a justification for prohibiting other forms of diversity?

As the most dominant religion in Indonesia, Islam plays a significant role in shaping the conceptualisation of morality. In this light, it is evident that while Indonesia acknowledges diversity, the prevailing social norms are predominantly shaped by the conscious and unconscious attitudes and beliefs of Muslims. This dominance leads to a proclivity for Muslim hegemony over other social groups. In Muhammadiyah, such a proclivity is reflected in the doctrine enshrined in Article Four of the organisation's Articles of Association, which states that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic organisation with the mission of *dakwah amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* based on the Quran and hadith. In other words, this doctrine mandates the application of the Islamic perspective in examining all aspects of life.

Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar is not a principle of coercion and violence. However, the social and political nature of it may potentially cause societal conflicts. Thus, in practical terms, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* should be based on knowledge and wisdom to avoid causing harm to society. It should not stand alone as a virtue, but there must be underpinning moral values. In this context, reading Rodriguez's (2022) study entitled "Who are the Allies of Queer Muslims? Situating pro-queer religious activism in Indonesia" might be helpful to situate *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* within the issue of non-normative gender and sexuality. He highlights how virtues such as social justice, compassion, liberation, and contextualism in religious activism may support the inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in society. This emphasis on moral virtues, Rodriguez suggests, would help religious leaders and scholars more concerned with orthopraxis than orthodoxy in their efforts to create a functioning and harmonious society.

In the context of LGBT, Muhammadiyah's opposition can primarily be attributed to the application of the principles of *amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar*. According to my interlocutors, these principles serve as the framework for the organisation's *dakwah* endeavours to uphold Islam for the benefit of the people. However, it appears that in the LGBT controversy, an emphasis should be directed toward the '*nahi munkar*' component. In this vein, Muhammadiyah's Secretary General, Abdul Mukti, highlights that "*nahi munkar* means against something foreign so that people are always behaving in accordance with the public consensus and the goodness that is widely accepted by the community" (Afandi, 2020). Yet, in a plural society, the conception of the good and the bad or the familiar and the foreign becomes relative. While some communities may not consider homosexuality or transgender expression as morally wrong or culturally foreign, others perceive them as transgressions. In response to such relativism, Pak Syamsul expounded Muhammadiyah's viewpoint:

So, the task of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid is to look at problems from the perspective of *ketarjihan* (activities in determining the strongest evidence or reasoning), which means the perspective of Islam. We at the Majelis Tarjih consider *keberagamaannya* (the religious factors) over *keberagamannya* (the diversity factors) (...) So, if we want to see the problems of diversity and the position of minorities, we have to see

it from that point of view. We recognise diversity (...), but in looking at it and also the interests of minorities, we cannot violate those basic principles. This includes the issue of LGBT, which we consider a very fundamental thing in Islam because, in the Quran and in the hadith, it is something that cannot be justified.

The statement above emphasises the importance of the Islamic perspective as the lens through which social issues are examined. Pak Syamsul highlighted that “the principle of religion cannot be sacrificed just for the sake of diversity.” In other words, Muhammadiyah consistently employs Islam as the primary ethical framework for comprehending and evaluating social ethics in relation to diversity. Thus, based on Pak Syamsul’s statement, if alternative social groups were to replace LGBT, a similar scenario would arise, wherein Islam would become a determining factor in the acceptance or refusal of said social groups. If this is the case, there are at least two issues to address. First, which Islamic perspective is legitimate to use since diversity itself exists in the understanding of Islam? Second, the use of Islamic morality typically forces society to perceive social issues within a dichotomous lens, categorising them as either *halal* or *haram*. This oversimplification disregards the intricate nature of social complexities, and therefore, it may inadvertently contribute to the marginalisation of specific societal groups that are deemed morally deviant.

In the context of Muhammadiyah’s opposition to LGBT, the application of Islamic morality operates on two levels. Firstly, Muhammadiyah evaluates the issue from the perspective of religious doctrine that determines homosexuality and transgender identity as transgression. Secondly, Muhammadiyah also evaluates the issue from a political perspective by juxtaposing Islam with Western liberalism, wherein the rejection of LGBT is often narrated as a rejection of liberalism. While my interlocutors insisted that Muhammadiyah recognise the demands for LGBT rights outside the right to same-sex marriage, they expressed apprehension towards the public display of homosexuality and transgender identity. They perceive this expression as a component of the Western liberal political agenda to ‘spread a sinful and destructive lifestyle’ to the Indonesian Muslim community.

The complexity surrounding the rejection of the expression of an individual's inner self arises when considering it from the perspective of both liberal and Islamic human rights frameworks. If our inner self is the basis of our dignity (Fukuyama, 2019, p. 10) and if a liberal society is one that protects human dignity by granting citizens an equal right to autonomy (Fukuyama, 2022, pp.1), denying LGBT people from expressing their subjectivity becomes a paradox for Muhammadiyah. Since human dignity is an embodiment of recognition of one's inner self and intrinsic worth by others, to prohibit one from expressing their inner self is to denigrate their dignity. Meanwhile, as one of my interlocutors from Muhammadiyah has pointed out, the concept of *karamah insaniah* in the Quran attributes dignity to all children of Adam (all humankind), which substantially imbues and acknowledges the basic principle of liberalism. Hence, prohibiting individuals from expressing their inner self is not only against the principle of liberalism, but it also seems to contradict the principle of *karamah insaniah*.

While many observers have characterised Muhammadiyah as a progressive organisation, during our conversation, Bu Alimatul suggested that Muhammadiyah's progressiveness is still case by case. She implied that the trepidation towards the public expression of LGBT identity might persist in Muhammadiyah, and it will still be a driving force in the implementation of its *da'wah amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar* towards gender and sexuality minorities. Bu Alimatul said:

In terms of [women as] imam *sholat* [in a mixed congregation], organisationally, Muhammadiyah is progressive, but many of its members are still moderate. (...) For the LGBT issue, however, I think Muhammadiyah is still moderate. I imagine, if I divide it into the three thoughts in Islam, the textual is clear that this [LGBT people] is condemned, haram, etc.; the moderate will say no legalisation [of same-sex marriage] but also no discrimination; the progressive perhaps will accept them because there are Muslims for Progressive Values in America, I think they allow it. So, on LGBT issues, I think Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah are still moderate or in a moderate position. I think this issue is still too sensitive. Muhammadiyah is actually progressive in nature, but this issue is very sensitive. I can't imagine if Muhammadiyah suddenly uses progressive lenses to look at LGBT issues. Yes, we need to strategise.

Bu Alimatul's statement that "Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah are still moderate or in a moderate position" suggests an ongoing process of reasoning in Muhammadiyah. If this is the case, this process would be consistent with Ahmad Dahlan's principle of modernisation through theological rationalisation. Dahlan once asserted that all religious doctrines must be subjected to rational examination rationalisation advocated by Ahmad Dahlan (as cited in Mulkham, 2000, p. 111; Burhani, 2016a, p. 63).

However, the advancement of modern science has given rise to numerous occurrences in which religious convictions clash with human reasons. In fact, the controversy surrounding LGBT is a display of this conflict. In this context, Bu Susi believed that Muhammadiyah would maintain its endeavour to reconcile conflicts between religious doctrine and modern science. With this opinion, she implied that through dialogue and scientific studies, someday, the controversy of LGBT will subside and disappear. She said:

I think from the beginning, one of the values of *berkemajuan* is looking forward. Furthermore, education was one of the core teachings of Kyai Dahlan during his efforts to advance religious life in the early 1920s. Among many of his efforts was giving women the opportunity to go to school. '*Bocah-bocah dimerdekaake pikire*' or we should liberate our children to think. Now, about LGBT, we need to see what the situation is like, what the conditions are, how it is done, and how the impact is, just like we examine the impact of people who do not follow family planning [referring to her opinion that reproduction is not human's nature]. In my opinion, it would be the same.

Throughout history, Islamic ethics have consistently expressed disapproval of same-sex sexual acts. However, despite disapproval from both religious and social perspectives, these practices have persisted, leading to a situation where the Muslim community chose to turn a blind eye (Boudhiba in Ali, 2015, p.106). Hence, in Muslim communities, 'don't ask, don't tell' was implemented to avoid persecution and prosecution, serving as an indication of willingness to overlook instances of same-sex sexual activities given that they are unnoticed, unnamed, and therefore unpunished (Ali, pp. 106-107). However, the demands of modern times have led to a shift in this characteristic, as there is a greater emphasis on accommodating individual differences. This has resulted in individuals seeking respect and

acknowledgement for their individual subjectivities. In the context of LGBT rights in Indonesia, the demand for social recognition has effectively eradicated the ‘incommensurability’ of same-sex relations. On the one hand, this situation has engendered consciousness among non-binary people to understand their subjectivity better. On the other hand, it has also fostered the exclusion and prohibition of LGBT people in society.

While Islam is a significant factor in evaluating diversity in Indonesia, determining the permissibility of an issue is far from simple. The most significant feature of this complexity, which effectively makes Islam a contested territory, is the inevitable differences in interpretation. In the midst of diversity, questions arise when Islam is used as a guideline for determining social ethics: Which Islam? To determine which cultural practices are acceptable or not, whose perspectives and definitions should be used? If there are different interpretations, who has the authority to decide? Perhaps for Muhammadiyah, the answers to these questions would be relatively simple since the authority to determine religious legal opinions lies in the hands of Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid. However, a question remains: what about those who are not members of Muhammadiyah or who are not even Muslims?

The questions above ultimately signify that the essential aspect of pluralism is not only interreligious but also intrareligious. Muslims cannot simply close their eyes to the fact that Islam contains a variety of interpretations, including those regarding homosexuality and transgender identity. This situation, then, requires Muslims the ability to acknowledge and respect interpretive diversity within their own community. Asma Barlas (as cited in Rahemtulla, 2017, p. 22) argues that the cultivation of a culture of mutual respect and understanding amongst Muslims is imperative. Former Chairman of Muhammadiyah Ahmad Syafii Ma’arif expressed a similar sentiment, stating that in order for a plural yet intact Indonesia to endure, diversity must be respected and not betrayed; this requires Indonesians to develop a genuine culture of tolerance, not forced tolerance or tolerance cloaked in pretence (Ma’arif, 2015, p. 24). As Indonesian society evolves towards greater religious, ethical, and cultural pluralism, it is neither possible nor desirable to sacrifice or demand the loss of the dignity of fellow human beings on account of their

differences. Likewise, if we cannot be sure of the absolute morality of certain ways of life, there is no legitimate reason to deny our fellow citizens from living them. In this regard, suffice it to say that social protection and acceptance of LGBT people is a reasonable demand that Indonesia should acknowledge and fulfil. In this respect, too, Muhammadiyah should finally address this issue wisely.

“Kebhinekaan hanya bisa bertahan lama manakala kita semua mengembangkan kultur toleransi yang sejati, bukan toleransi karena terpaksa atau toleransi yang dibungkus dalam kepura-puraan.”

(Ma’arif, 2015, p. 24)

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The primary aim of the present study was to analyse the position of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah on LGBT since it became a public controversy in Indonesia in 2016. In pursuit of this aim, this research sought to achieve four objectives, including an exploration of the organisation’s gender norms, an examination of the construction of the organisation’s public narrative on LGBT, an exploration of the organisation’s internal discourse on LGBT, and an investigation of the LGBT community’s response to the organisation’s position on LGBT. Drawing from qualitative analyses of empirical data gathered through observations and in-depth interviews, as well as data from written and visual sources, this study posits that Muhammadiyah has exhibited a complex position in the LGBT discourse. The organisation conveyed its position by navigating between its formal organisational stance and the informal personal opinions of its leaders. This manoeuvre practically encompasses both tolerant and intolerant positions, thereby demonstrating ambivalence on the matter.

This study examines gender and sexuality as a component of social diversity. While diversity in ethnicity, culture, and religion has been widely accepted as a beneficial component of Indonesian nation-building, diversity based on sexual orientation and gender identity is generally frowned upon. In 2016, for instance,

Indonesia experienced a phenomenon referred to by many scholars as a ‘sexual moral panic’ that has subjected the Indonesian LGBT community to a significant surge of animosity and rendered them the most hated demographic within the country. A range of societal actors, including politicians, religious leaders, academics, and journalists, were implicated in this controversy.

The prevalence of anti-LGBT sentiment across the country may leave some contradiction. Numerous traditional local cultures in Indonesia have established and incorporated customs pertaining to homosexuality and transgender expression. From this vantage point, the animosity towards the LGBT in Indonesia appears rather peculiar. However, the construction of Indonesia's national modern culture has been influenced by Islam, Christianity, and Western colonialism, which has also affected the formation of gender norms in the country, leading to the pervasiveness of heteronormativity. Since heteronormativity marginalises homosexuality and transgender expression, the hostility experienced by LGBT people in Indonesia becomes plausible. Thus, the rejection of LGBT in Indonesia is intricately linked to this prevailing historical and cultural context.

Heteronormativity is evidently pervasive in Muhammadiyah. Multiple sites, such as the gender discourse of Javanese culture, Dutch colonialism, Islamic modernism, and the Indonesian state, have contributed to the production of heteronormative thinking within the organisation. In the academic context, this pervasiveness is apparent in gender studies on Muhammadiyah, where gender issues are discussed within the confines of heterosexuality. Although gender and non-normative sexuality have gained significant attention in social and political studies at both global and national levels and in Islamic studies, this topic has been largely overlooked in Muhammadiyah studies. Therefore, the accomplishment of this thesis is to bridge this particular gap. With a specific focus on LGBT, the study offers an opportunity to critically reflect on the topics of non-normative gender and sexuality within Muhammadiyah studies.

To ascertain Muhammadiyah’s position on LGBT, I have employed the analytical construct of heteronormativity and toleration. I found that these two

constructs can adequately explain the complexity of the topic. Heteronormativity, as a social construct, reinforces the gender binary by means of social institutions. It radically normalises heterosexuality, mandates that gender serves the purpose of fulfilling reproductive functions, and stigmatises non-normative heterosexual existence. As a result, not only does heteronormativity prescribe norms to individuals who live within the heterosexual frame, but it also imposes itself on those who live outside of it. In Muhammadiyah, the gender regime is established through the lens of heteronormativity, which imposes strict regulations on the relationship between individuals of different genders. Furthermore, the scope of these regulations transcends the confines of the organisation's membership, as they are widely disseminated throughout the broader Indonesian society.

Amidst Indonesia's plural society, Muhammadiyah espouses a vision of Islam *berkemajuan* and positions itself as an organisation that upholds the importance of diversity. This prompts inquiry into their perspective as an Islamic organisation regarding LGBT rights, which are widely regarded as a secular but contentious emblem of progress and inclusivity. While toleration may not be a panacea for all diversity-related issues, it does offer the most comprehensive and rational approach to addressing differences. The paramount objective of toleration is to facilitate diversity within a given society. Toleration is indispensable in preventing conflicts that have the potential to cause irreparable damage to the fabric of society. The concept of toleration encompasses a range of attitudes, including indifference, forbearance, and respect for difference. This analytical construct effectively acknowledges the complexity of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT rights, which is shaped by the divergent perspectives of its own members.

The present study employs a methodological approach that integrates a historical exploration of the development of gender norms within the Muhammadiyah association with a discursive analysis of the organisation's LGBT narratives. These methodologies enable me to examine and construe the interplay among Islam, local culture, and politics in the viewpoint concerning homosexuality and transgender expression, both at the organisational and personal level. The

methodology has facilitated the paradigmatic construction of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT.

6.1. Muhammadiyah's ambivalent position

The ambivalence of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT in the aftermath of the 2016 controversy can be observed through, to use Latief's (2017) analytical framework, the mechanism of the organisation's official and unofficial perspectives. The term official position pertains to organisational decisions that arise from formal deliberation processes and are documented in writing and signed by the chairperson. Conversely, unofficial positions are derived from influential figures within the Muhammadiyah association, which, although personal, hold the potential to stir public opinion both within and beyond the organisation.

The position of Muhammadiyah on the LGBT controversy since 2016 is a notable illustration of the interplay between such official and unofficial positions. In contrast with other Islamic organisations in Indonesia, including the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Indonesian Ulama Council, Muhammadiyah refrained from issuing an official statement, citing concerns that such a statement may further intensify the existing controversy. The absence of such a formal statement has created an opportunity for influential figures to espouse divergent individual perspectives. The outcome of this strategic move was anticipated. While Muhammadiyah refrained from taking an official position, it projects its position to the public indirectly through the personal opinions of its leaders.

The present study has found that the central tenet of Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT is to oppose the practice of same-sex relationships and transgender expressions without violence. Differences of opinion among its leaders arise when the issue is linked explicitly to the fundamental rights of LGBT people as citizens. Apart from same-sex marriage, which is straightforwardly rejected, the question of conceding other rights, such as the right to education, health, employment, and access to other public services, received mixed responses. Some prominent figures publicly called for the criminalisation of LGBT people, which would automatically block LGBT people from enjoying their rights as citizens.

Others opposed such a radical position, asserting that LGBT people have the right to live in dignity, free from discrimination and violence.

Unfortunately, the prevailing perspectives circulated in public have been primarily characterised by intolerant voices that condemn and promote the criminalisation of LGBT. In this vein, Muhammadiyah's media outlets have been amplifying these voices, creating a cohesive yet overwhelmingly prejudiced narrative against LGBT. This narrative is framed and presented as if it is the official position of Muhammadiyah. From this narrative, the rejection of LGBT in Muhammadiyah can be attributed to a recurring theme of the three patterns of duality that situate LGBT as adversaries of the Islamic faith, adversaries of the Indonesian nation, and potential hazards to public health. Beyond the organisation, this tripartite duality is also reflected in the overarching narrative of anti-LGBT discourse prevalent in Indonesia.

The ambivalence of Muhammadiyah's position gets even more complex when the official statement of Aisyiyah is taken into account. Firstly, as Muhammadiyah's autonomous women's organisation, its statement occupies an unclear position within the association. Some of my interlocutors claimed that it could not represent the views of Muhammadiyah as a whole, while others said the opposite. Nonetheless, if Aisyiyah's official statement is viewed as representative of Muhammadiyah, it would imply a gendered topic within the association because Aisyiyah, a women's organisation, is assigned responsibility for gender, family, and sexuality issues, which are stereotypically viewed as women's issues.

Drawing upon Balint's (2017) analytical framework of toleration, I posit that the official statement released by Aisyiyah displays a certain degree of forbearance toleration. Despite the organisation's expression of disapproval towards homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage, there is no concurrent condemnation or institutionalised promotion to criminalise it through legislation. In contrast, it can be observed that Aisyiyah advocates for the equitable availability of civil liberties for individuals who identify as LGBT by affirming that any

aggression or discrimination towards citizens based on their sexual orientation constitutes a transgression against fundamental principles of humanity.

Similarly, Muhammadiyah's decision to refrain from issuing formal statements can also be categorised as forbearance toleration. Despite Muhammadiyah's disapproval of LGBT, it still offers opportunities for constructive dialogue. Muhammadiyah's lack of an official position could foster a culture of ambiguity that facilitates the existence of divergent perspectives within and beyond the organisation. I believe adopting such ambiguity as a deliberate strategy would enable Muhammadiyah to establish a rational and inclusive stance in Indonesia's heterogeneous society struggling with contentious social issues, thereby avoiding the risk of escalating divisions and disintegrations.

Regrettably, the ambiguity offered by the absence of an official organisational statement dissipated due to the prevalence of intolerant personal voices emanating from within the ranks of Muhammadiyah leadership. Muhammadiyah's media machines subsequently reiterated these intolerant voices, seemingly constituting an authorised organisation's perspective. Later, these voices constructed a coherent body of narrative for the public that was overwhelmingly biased against gender and sexual minorities.

6.2. (Traditional) gender belief in Muhammadiyah

As posited by scholars before me, a correlation exists between traditional gender beliefs and the repudiation of homosexuality and transgender identity. In my research, I have observed this correlation within the context of Muhammadiyah. Based on empirical data analysis, I found that heterosexuality is the pillar of gender norms within the organisation, encompassing a comprehensive understanding of the appropriate gender roles for men and women, particularly concerning their reproductive capacities. Within these norms, homosexuality and transgender identity are considered transgressions. Muhammadiyah's rejection of LGBT is, therefore, a logical consequence of the organisation's enforcement of its traditional gender belief.

I have investigated the gender concept in Muhammadiyah by exploring its historical evolution. This exploration began at the turn of the 20th century when Ahmad Dahlan founded the organisation. In its historical context, Dahlan's perception of gender was influenced by several competing discourses, including Javanese cultural gender discourses from the *priyayi* and *saudagar* communities, the Dutch colonial government, and Islamic modernism from the Middle East. If the *priyayi* gender doctrine positioned women as submissive and inferior subjects, the *saudagar* gender doctrine positioned women in a more open and egalitarian position as business partners with their husbands. In the meantime, the gender discourse of the colonial government and Islamic modernism encouraged women to pursue education. However, it is worth noting that the purpose of modern education, as promoted by the colonial government, was mainly to prepare women to become capable wives and mothers.

The present study has revealed that the prominent and fundamental understanding of gender in Muhammadiyah is based on the concept of 'equal but different.' This notion arose from the discursive contestation between various gender doctrines during Ahmad Dahlan and has persisted to the present day. The concept implies that men and women have equal rights but different natures that distinguish their social, cultural, and reproductive roles, thereby establishing hierarchies between the sexes in the public and private spheres. In practice, this gender belief encouraged and facilitated the establishment of Aisyiyah, the first modern Islamic women's organisation in Java. However, it also reinforced heteronormativity in Muhammadiyah. In addition to being enshrined in the organisation's family ideology, the *keluarga sakinah*, the 'equal but different' perspective is also institutionalised in the organisational structure, which mirrors the heterosexual family structure. Autonomous organisations, including Aisyiyah, are founded based on gender categories and age stratifications. With this structure, Muhammadiyah established itself as the preceptor of the association, mirroring the roles of a husband/father in a family.

Amid the consistency of the notion of 'equal but different,' it would be misleading to assume that there has been no change in the understanding of gender

in Muhammadiyah over time. On the contrary, much progress has been made. These advances align with the development of gender politics at both global and national levels and are also inextricably linked to the influence of Islamic and secular feminist discourses. The internalisation of the contestation of ideas beyond the organisation gave rise to a novel organisational culture centred around intellectual discourses. Through this contestation, Muhammadiyah witnessed the emergence of three distinct gender narratives: the moderate, textualist, and progressive. Today, these narratives compete with each other to determine their efficacy in promoting gender norms and practices, particularly within the organisation.

The moderate selectively embraced feminism developed by Muslim feminists and employed a contextual interpretation of Islamic texts when deemed necessary. Hence, despite acknowledging the socially constructed nature of gender, individuals within this group persist in upholding asymmetric gender dynamics between men and women, particularly within the familial context. The progressive discourse revolves around Islam's universal values and endeavours to incorporate said values into societal concerns. The group espouses the ideology of gender equality, which aligns with the international gender regime. Specifically, they advocate for equal status, position, and rights between the two sexes across various domains, including the family, public, and religious spheres. The gender narrative espoused by literalists is predicated upon the biological distinctions between males and females, which they contend are indicative of divergent societal functions. Therefore, they perceive gender roles as innate and intrinsic. The gender discourse of textualists is founded on their apprehension towards the infiltration of Western ideals. The individuals within this group exhibit a significant degree of resistance towards feminism, perceiving it as a manifestation of Western influence aimed at undermining the tenets of Islam.

Notwithstanding various challenges, it is evident that Muhammadiyah women presently experience increased levels of societal recognition with regard to their public roles and leadership. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah women have also attained a notable degree of acceptance in terms of religious leadership, whereby they are allowed, under certain circumstances, to lead mixed congregations as

imams. Despite these significant accomplishments, traditional gender norms persist in Muhammadiyah, with male leadership continuing to be favoured, particularly in familial and organisational contexts.

The present study has demonstrated that heterosexuality assumed a central position in Muhammadiyah's gender discourse, constituting an effort to consolidate heteronormativity. It reinforces a systematic and all-encompassing understanding of the appropriate gender roles assigned to men and women in relation to their reproductive capacities. Muhammadiyah disseminates and practices this knowledge through intricate networks of organisational policies, programs, and its vast array of philanthropic activities. Furthermore, not only does this gender construction establish moral codes that dictate men and women how to behave within the organisation, but it also dictates how they should act as Indonesian citizens and Muslims. As a result of the prevalence of heteronormativity in Muhammadiyah, the organisation has a rigorous heterosexual matrix that governs all aspects of life. In this matrix, homosexuality and transgender identities are regarded as unfamiliar and stigmatised. The emergence of the LGBT discourse advocating for human rights is, thus, perceived by Muhammadiyah as a worldview that is in direct conflict with its gender order. It presents a potential challenge that jeopardises Muhammadiyah's core mission of establishing a true Islamic community.

Gender in Muhammadiyah is principally linked to the discourse of human nature (*kodrat* and *fitrah*). This perspective posits that God endows human beings with inherent qualities that enable them to form pairs, procreate, and fulfil their God-given mission as vicegerent on earth, tasked with promoting truth and prosperity. Within this narrative, homosexuality and transgender identity are perceived as a discharge from the divinely ordained purpose of humankind because homosexual relationships cannot produce offspring. The claim that homosexuality and transgender identity are against human nature is also based on the premise that disobedience to God is a transgression that runs counter to the inherent characteristics of human beings.

It is noteworthy to mention that certain factions in Muhammadiyah, albeit in the minority, hold a view that challenges the notion of reproduction as a *kodrat*. Instead, they posit that it is primarily a matter of social and political significance. In this context, same-sex relationships are not necessarily a violation of human reproductive nature but a breach of sexual norms. Some voices in Muhammadiyah believe that sexuality can be modified and disciplined following current social standards. This argument then leads to an appreciation of the fluidity of sexuality, broadening the scope of LGBT concerns beyond religious issues to include social and legal considerations. In other words, in the context of fluid sexuality, there are voices in Muhammadiyah who believe that the fault of LGBT people lies in their deviation from the prevailing gender and sexual norms in society.

This thesis has shown that the most fundamental aim of Muhammadiyah is to create a truly Islamic society that adheres to Islamic principles in its entirety. In attaining this aim, the organisation places the family as the central unit. For Muhammadiyah, the family serves as an essential space for interaction between men and women, as well as for procreation and the intergenerational dissemination of religious and cultural norms and values. Since the family serves as the source of organisational regeneration and the foundation of the nation, Muhammadiyah's gender ideology was established to ensure the formation of Islamic families. It prescribes comprehensive and strict gender guidelines that set normative boundaries to determine good or bad and right or wrong.

There is a parallel between the centrality of marriage and family in Muhammadiyah's gender discourse and that of the Indonesian state. Marriage is an essential parameter in constructing ideal gender relations in Indonesia. Therefore, in this light, the institution of marriage represents the apex of the intersection between religious, national, and gender/sexual identities. Heterosexual marriage, which produces offspring, is regarded as a fundamental cornerstone of national identity, religious devotion, and proper civic participation, creating what scholars call 'marriage imperative.' Deviation from this normative construct, thus, entails dissociation from religion, society, and the state and may lead to ostracism or societal retribution. As the discourse surrounding LGBT rights in Indonesia is often

framed on the perceived promotion and legalisation of same-sex marriage, the existence of LGBT people is viewed as a direct threat to the institution of heterosexual marriage. The opposition to LGBT is, therefore, seen as an effort to uphold marriage as the culmination of the ideal gender norms. It is also perceived as an effort to enforce the moral righteousness of the nation and the sacredness of religious principles. My research findings indicate that Muhammadiyah is entangled in this line of thought.

6.3. An Islam of omnipresence

Islam is omnipresent in Muhammadiyah. It holds a pervasive position whereby all cognitive and operational methodologies are consistently scrutinised through an Islamic perspective. Islam's impact on gender beliefs extends to Muhammadiyah's position on the discussion of LGBT topics in cultural and political domains. In this light, the multifaceted role of Islam in both cultural and political domains is noteworthy due to its substantial contribution towards the ambivalent position of Muhammadiyah. Islam serves as a basis for rationalising both the toleration and repudiation of the LGBT community.

The Quran provides compelling justification to support the notion that men and women are created to pair and procreate. In Muhammadiyah, these verses serve as a normative reference for the development of gender belief. However, the Quran also provides a compelling rationale for the notion that Islam is a faith that upholds the *rahmatan lil alamin* principle, thereby ensuring all humankind's dignity. The Quranic interpretations presented here result in two simultaneous outcomes: it establishes a robust foundation for Muhammadiyah's opposition to same-sex relationships, but at the same time, it inspires the organisation to prohibit any manifestation of aggression or discrimination towards LGBT people. Hence, the ambivalent position of Muhammadiyah concerning the LGBT discourse can be perceived as a pragmatic demonstration of the organisation's attempt to negotiate the two conflicting perspectives.

The present study has illustrated that the interpretation of Quranic verses and hadith plays a pivotal role in shaping, justifying, and evaluating the position

adopted by Muhammadiyah. The rejection of the expression of homosexuality and transgender identity is primarily based on the discourse concerning the nature (*kodrat* and *fitrah*) of human creation and the interpretation of the story of the Prophet Lot. Meanwhile, the perspective to tolerate LGBT people is founded upon their interpretation of diversity, human dignity, and human equality before God. This ambivalent position also signifies that Muhammadiyah differentiates between the behaviour (same-sex relations) which should be circumvented and the individuals (LGBT people) who should be embraced. Since same-sex relationships and transgender expression are deemed as transgression, Muhammadiyah believes that toleration toward LGBT people should be employed with the ultimate objective of encouraging them to conform to the norms of heterosexuality.

The cultural influence of Islam is also evident in Muhammadiyah's rejection of same-sex relationships and transgender expression. There exists a prevalent discourse within Indonesian society that links homosexuality and transgender expression to Western culture. The Indonesian LGBT community refutes this discourse by positing that homosexuality and transgender expression have long been a part of Indonesian traditional cultural productions where numerous indigenous customs acknowledge and institutionalise same-sex relationships and gender nonconformity. Nonetheless, Muhammadiyah considers this cultural discourse to be of limited significance. As cultural practises must be assessed from an Islamic standpoint, Muhammadiyah believes Islam disapproves of these specific traditional cultural practices.

Muhammadiyah espouses the view that religion and culture are inherently intertwined and cannot be disentangled from one another. The correlation between the two entities can be elucidated by the notion of *urf* (custom), which posits that any societal norm can serve as a foundation for religious regulations. Amidst this mutually beneficial association, Muhammadiyah differentiates between Islamic values that are universal, absolute, and eternal and cultural values that are specific, relative, and temporal. For Muhammadiyah, a custom to be deemed a valid source of religious rulings must satisfy specific criteria, which include conformity with the Quran, the hadith, and the consensus of *ulama* (Islamic scholars). In the case that a

particular practise fails to meet these criteria, it must be declined. Given this premise, Muhammadiyah maintains its position of disapproval towards non-conforming gender and sexuality despite their acknowledgement within Indonesian traditional cultures. In this context, where Islam is the primary criterion for assessing the compatibility of indigenous cultures, it is not uncommon for Muhammadiyah to oppose established societal norms. However, it would also be inaccurate to view Muhammadiyah exclusively as a movement that is in opposition to local culture. In fact, Muhammadiyah's success and growth can be attributed to its adeptness in incorporating local customs and traditions, particularly evident in its establishment of gender systems that intricately merge with the element of Javanese cultural practises.

Apart from cultural discourse, Islam also influences Muhammadiyah's political views on the LGBT discourse. The LGBT community in Indonesia has endeavoured to attain acknowledgement and inclusion through the utilisation of the human rights discourse. Regrettably, this utilisation engenders a 'reverse discourse' in which the government and society employ identical terminology to defend and justify their prejudices to attack the position of LGBT people in Indonesia. This reverse discourse also occurred in Muhammadiyah. During my interviews, it became apparent that human rights are dichotomised into two distinct categories: Indonesian human rights linked to Islamic values and Western human rights associated with liberalism and secularism. This dichotomisation has become the fundament of the reverse discourse, where LGBT rights campaigns are viewed as an extension of liberal and secular Western culture and incompatible with Islamic cultural values in Indonesia.

Nonetheless, a contradiction exists within the political discourse surrounding LGBT issues in Muhammadiyah. While the dichotomisation serves as a basis for condemning LGBT rights campaigns, the association of Islam with human rights also provides the organisation with a rationale for protecting the rights of LGBT individuals. The present study has revealed voices within the organisation, which underscore that while engaging in same-sex sexual activities is deemed sinful, it is not a factor that justifies restricting the rights of LGBT people. Consequently, these

voices insist that, in accordance with the Muhammadiyah belief that Islam ensures the human dignity of all humankind, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the civil rights of gender and sexual minorities are protected equally with those of other citizens regardless of their sexual preference and gender expression. With regard to the matter of same-sex marriage, however, all my interlocutors in Muhammadiyah unequivocally oppose it. The rationale behind this opposition is rooted in the belief that its legalisation would equate to the legitimisation of sinful acts, which is impossible for Muhammadiyah to accept.

6.4. A challenge of diversity

Indonesia is a country where diversity is not only an inherent reality but also a constitutionally esteemed value. Despite this, religious viewpoints frequently stifle societal pluralities when they are perceived to be in opposition to religious doctrines. As the majority of Indonesia's population are Muslims, Islam represents a crucial element in delineating the notion of morality and ethics. Despite Indonesia's recognition of religious and cultural diversity, the attitudes and beliefs of Muslims continue to serve as the prevailing norms that shape social life, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This dominance leads to a proclivity towards Muslim supremacy over other factions.

Throughout history, Islamic ethics have disapproved of same-sex sexual acts, but neither religious nor social conscience has been successful in reducing or even eliminating them. As a result, the Muslim community eventually turned a blind eye. Therefore, in Muslim communities, 'don't ask, don't tell' was a strategy to avoid persecution and prosecution, and it indicated a willingness to disregard instances of same-sex sexual activities because they are unnoticed, unnamed, and thus unpunished. However, the evolving patterns of contemporary society have altered these habits. Contemporary society sees a growing demand for the accommodation of individual differences, whereby individuals assert their right to be respected and acknowledged for their individual authentic selves. In this scenario, it is imperative for Muslims to adjust their perspectives in the LGBT discourse. Dismissing this

social issue is no longer deemed sufficient; however, repressing it is not a sensible course of action either.

Muhammadiyah attaches great importance to adopting an Islamic perspective when examining social issues. It employs Islam as the supreme moral guide to perceive and identify social ethics in the context of diversity. However, the utilisation of Islamic ethics often compels society to perceive societal concerns within a highly inflexible dichotomous framework, thereby perpetuating the tendency to ostracise groups that are perceived as incompatible. That being said, the process of determining the acceptability of issues is a complex undertaking due to the inevitable differences in religious interpretation, which in turn renders Islam itself a subject of contention.

This thesis has shown how Muhammadiyah employs Islam as its fundamental ethical framework in its position on LGBT. However, different views on moral and ethical standards are inevitable in a highly pluralistic society such as Indonesia. In this particular context, the LGBT community views homosexuality and transgender identity as integral aspects of their authentic selves. Same-sex relationships and transgender expression have been acknowledged in several of Indonesia's traditional cultural settings and not viewed as 'foreign.' Furthermore, there is sharp disagreement among Islamic scholars in understanding and interpreting Islamic canonical texts regarding same-sex relationships and transgender expressions. Although not as glaring, these divergent views also exist within Muhammadiyah. It implies that the fundamental aspect of pluralism encompasses not only inter-religious but also intra-religious. It is, therefore, imperative for Muhammadiyah, and Indonesian Muslims in general, to recognise the diversity of religious interpretations in Islam. Simply disregarding this fact is not a viable option.

In the Indonesian context, the presence of such a wide range of interpretations necessitates a culture of mutual toleration. On a personal level, toleration is essential because if we cannot definitively know the absolute truth of certain ways of life, there is no reason to prohibit our fellow citizens from living them. On a broader scale, the harmony and unity of the Indonesian nation can only be

maintained if its people are tolerant towards one another. In this instance, I argue that LGBT issues have become a challenge to diversity in Indonesia that demands the ability of its citizens to practice toleration.

Human rights activists and members of the LGBT community have responded critically to Muhammadiyah's position on LGBT. They recognise that the hostile narratives disseminated by some of Muhammadiyah's leaders reflect an upsurge in religious conservatism aimed at curtailing the proliferation of liberal human rights discourse in Indonesia. However, they also acknowledge to experience compassion, particularly at the grassroots level. The activists emphasise the significance of interpersonal communication they have successfully established with members of the organisation in order to increase understanding. This suggests that there are opportunities to create spaces for dialogue to learn about each other and build genuine relationships based on the principles of openness and equality.

In light of Muhammadiyah's complex attitudes towards the non-normative concept of gender and sexuality, these activists hope that the organisation will commit to its role as one that promotes tolerance for the marginalised LGBT community. Perhaps the comment of Bu Shinta Ratri from the Pesantren Waria Al-Fatah on human diversity can be a critical reflection of Muhammadiyah. She pointed out that modern science has advanced human understanding of non-normative concepts of gender and sexuality as a component of human diversity. Hence, in her view, Muhammadiyah, as a modern Islamic organisation, should apply its progressive Islamic thought inherited from Ahmad Dahlan to respond to such a modern development.

Meanwhile, as pointed out by Bu Susi from Aisyiyah, the Quranic concept of *karamah insaniah* attributes dignity to all human beings. If dignity is a manifestation of the recognition of one's identity and intrinsic worth by others, prohibiting someone from expressing their identity is tantamount to dehumanising them. In this light, it would be paradoxical for Muhammadiyah to prohibit LGBT people from expressing their subjectivity. While there may be strong justifications to avoid same-sex relationships and transgender expression from an Islamic point

of view, condemning and ostracising LGBT people for their sexual orientation or non-conforming gender expression does not seem to be in line with the humanist values of the Quran.

Thus, I contend that if Muhammadiyah is to produce a theological enlightenment that embodies the values of transcendence, liberation, emancipation, and humanisation (Nashir, 2016), it should accept the moral challenges that this entails. It includes creating opportunities for open and genuine dialogue about what it means to tolerate and protect minority groups. While it can be challenging to reconcile their own religious norms with the realities of the world, Muhammadiyah leaders can find solutions that align with their beliefs while still upholding the Quranic values. Rather than resorting to condemnation and ostracism, they can effectively follow Muhammadiyah's principles by engaging in sincere dialogue with the marginalised LGBT community, fostering an atmosphere of openness, equality, and mutual respect. In situations where specific religious norms may not be able to accommodate differences, Muhammadiyah leaders can rely on universal Islamic values centred on compassionate humanity. It does not mean that Muhammadiyah, as an organisation, must condone same-sex relationships and transgender expression. However, it certainly means that Muhammadiyah must accept the fact that LGBT people exist in Indonesia and that their existence must be respected and valued because they are human beings and Indonesian citizens, many of whom are also Muslims, and because a truly Islamic society should protect everyone.

Ultimately, my research has addressed only a few aspects of the vast untapped fields of non-normative gender and sexuality in Muhammadiyah studies. Future research could explore the following issues. First, previous scholars have identified three factors that correlate with homophobia: religiosity, traditional gender beliefs, and authoritarianism. This study has only addressed the first two factors. As Muhammadiyah shows a propensity towards religious authoritarianism through the centralisation of authority over Islamic legal matters and interpretation of canonical texts in the Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid, future research could thus investigate the third factor. Second, this study has only investigated the perspectives of Muhammadiyah

and Aisiyah. Therefore, future research should investigate other autonomous organisations, including Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Nasyiatul Aisiyah, and Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah, which are actually forums for young people within Muhammadiyah. Finally, further research on non-normative concepts of gender and sexuality in other religious communities in Indonesia is desirable for comparative purposes.

6.5. Epilogue: Reflection on my role as a researcher

I carried out the fieldwork as an insider of Muhammadiyah, and I made it clear to all the interview participants beforehand. I have been associated with Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah all my life. I was born into a Muhammadiyah family in a small village in Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta. My father was a teacher at a Muhammadiyah junior high school in the neighbouring village, and my mother was a teacher at an Aisiyah kindergarten in the village we lived in. While both worked at the educational institutions of Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah, my parents were also structurally active at the sub-district leadership boards of the respective organisations. As a child, I spent a year of preschool in the kindergarten where my mother worked as a teacher and a six-year primary school in a Muhammadiyah elementary school in our village. After my six-year primary education, I went to a public junior and senior high school for another six-year, and then I continued my studies for my bachelor's and master's degrees at the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta.

Until I was around eight years old, my mother used to take me along to her Aisiyah organisational meetings and *pengajian*. Even though I would spend most of the time playing with other kids, I remember vividly that sometimes I would sit next to my mother, trying to listen and comprehend what were the issues being discussed in those meetings and *pengajian*. Growing up in my teenage years, I would sometimes join my father in his Muhammadiyah organisational events and activities. Through those events, I was introduced to Muhammadiyah's and Aisiyah's history, works, and values. As both my parents were active on the sub-district level, my early experience with Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah was at the

grassroots level, meaning disseminating the organisational decisions and policies from central or regional leadership boards to the local communities and or translating the organisational programs into actions.

As a child and then teenager, I witnessed both of my parents dedicating themselves to work voluntarily for the development of the organisations. I saw, for example, how my mother organised fund-raising activities for her kindergarten or organised workshops and training on women's empowerment for the women in our sub-district. I also often went with my father, who was invited to speak at many of Muhammadiyah's *pengajian* events. During this time, I learned from my parents that grassroots initiatives are the backbone of the organisation. The grassroots movement provides social services, including kindergartens, schools, orphanages, and other charity activities, for those in need and empowers local communities in many of their social struggles.

It was during my bachelor's and master's degree studies at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta when I started to get to know Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah from the top-down perspectives, as many of my lecturers and professors were active in the organisations' regional and central leadership boards. Throughout this time, I learned not only how Muhammadiyah's social movement functioned but also about its political perspectives and activities. After completing my Master's degree, I started working as a lecturer at the university, a role I still have while writing this thesis. Though I have never officially joined the organisation in the sense of getting involved in structural positions on any level, I have been observing Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah from the inside and living according to the norms and values of the organisation.

Another situation -other than my deep association with Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah- which requires to be mentioned is that I write this thesis from within the perspective of 'the other group,' surrounded by friends and acquaintances who identify themselves as part of the LGBT community with whom I have come to learn and share the same concerns, worries, and fears. It is, therefore, not irrelevant to mention that the idea of this study came after a long process of self-reflection on

experiences and a series of events surrounding the topic. Though this thesis is intended and carried out as an academic work, I wish to acknowledge that this work also serves as a personal ‘battleground’ where the two identities are pitted against each other. This situation makes me feel that I belong and othered at the same time. Even though I draw on scholarship and conversations with people with different identities and life experiences from both groups, my understanding of this issue is inevitably influenced by my own experience. It is, therefore, important to emphasise that this research is marked by the dichotomy I have just outlined. I am not unemotional about the subject of this thesis, for it is not a mere abstraction for me.

Although this study relies on empirical data from the central leadership boards of both Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah and some of their respective regional leadership boards, my personal and professional experiences with both organisations cannot be separated from the approach and methods I employ. While most of these experiences may not explicitly be related to my study, my personal and professional association with both organisations has most certainly brought tremendous advantages for me as a researcher. Not only did this association give me adequate understanding and insight into Muhammadiyah’s organisational settings, but it also helped my relative ease in making contacts with my respondents and moving in between leadership boards of national and regional levels within the organisations. My professional connections have benefitted me significantly in winning participants for the interviews, particularly from the central leadership of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, some of whom were my teachers during my bachelor’s and master’s studies.

My personal and professional association with Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah, however, also brought me some difficulties. From these associations, I have developed certain images of the two organisations, which give me partiality in assessing them. It has proven to me that, every so often, it is challenging to examine the two organisations beyond those established images, particularly on problems that contradict them. Furthermore, being part of the organisation and personally knowing some of my respondents brought me certain pressures. Several times

during the interviews, I came into situations where I was apprehensive about going deeper into the issue. I experienced upcoming emotionality and the wish to respond to the respondents' opinions. However, the openness in discussion and the willingness of my respondents to engage with the topic supported me in keeping a professional distance and staying critical.

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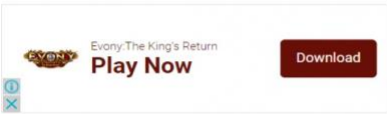
Appendices

Appendix I – Muhammadiyah’s media statement on LGBT

Photo: captured from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/03/11/national-scene-muhammadiyah-takes-soft-approach-lgbt.html>

NEWS • NATIONAL

National scene: Muhammadiyah takes soft approach on LGBT



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Jakarta • Fri, March 11, 2016

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The country’s second-largest Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, said on Thursday it would not issue any edict condemning members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community as was done earlier by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the country’s largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

Muhammadiyah’s secretary-general, Abdul Mukti, said Muhammadiyah considered LGBT expression immoral, but that publicly condemning people affiliated with those identities and orientations would not help them return to normalcy.

‘ Muhammadiyah only recognizes relationships between men and women united in marriage who are not related by blood,’ Mukti told *The Jakarta Post*.

He said approaches using edicts or verbal theological condemnation in public would not be effective in dealing with the LGBT issue.

‘ That’s why we think dialogue is an alternative solution ’ to avoid unproductive arguments in public,’ Mukti said, adding that Muhammadiyah would provide counseling for LGBT people who wanted to seek ‘ help’ .


He said people who had chosen LGBT as their sexual lifestyle tended to use the examples of people in their neighborhood such a close friends or public figures and idols to justify their decisions.

In addition to the MUI and NU campaigns, a joint interfaith forum comprising NGOs representing Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism and Confucianism also stepped up campaign in late February to condemn LGBT people and any campaigns related to them.

Both MUI and NU have demanded the prosecution of LGBT people and campaigners, but the interfaith forum claimed that that proposal was unnecessary because LGBT people should be embraced with affection to enable guiding them back to normalcy

Appendix II – Aisyiyah’s press release on LGBT

Photo: private collection


PIMPINAN PUSAT 'AISYIYAH

**PERNYATAAN SIKAP PIMPINAN PUSAT 'AISYIYAH
TENTANG
LGBT (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEKSUAL, TRANSGENDER)**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Perkembangan dan isu tentang LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, dan Transgender) telah menimbulkan kontroversi di masyarakat, lebih-lebih di kalangan umat Islam dan golongan umat beragama di Indonesia. Beragam pandangan antara yang pro dan kontra mengemuka di ruang publik, yang menggambarkan kemajemukan pemikiran dalam menghadapi LGBT. Mayoritas kalangan umat beragama menunjukkan sikap penolakan dengan berbagai argumentasi. 'Aisyiyah sebagai organisasi Islam berkewajiban untuk merespon masalah tersebut dengan bijaksana sehingga membawa kemaslahatan bagi semua kelompok masyarakat.

Berdasarkan pada berbagai kajian teoritis dan empiris memang terdapat pandangan bahwa manusia adalah makhluk yang sangat kompleks baik dilihat dari potensi maupun kerentanan, termasuk dalam pemenuhan kebutuhan relasi sosial dan seksualitasnya. Manusia mempunyai potensi untuk kesenangan dunia (Id), karena itu perlu ada petunjuk dan aturan (Super Ego), sehingga akan terbentuk manusia yang bertata aturan baik dalam relasi dengan manusia lainnya maupun dalam ekspresi kehidupannya. Selain itu, sesungguhnya pada diri manusia memang mempunyai fitrah untuk mengikuti perintah-perintah Tuhan dan beragama. Karenanya manusia tidak dapat dilepaskan dari pentingnya bimbingan hidup keagamaan agar tetap di jalan fitrah yang lurus.

Terkait dengan konsep keluarga di Indonesia, berdasarkan UU Perkawinan No. 1 tahun 1974, perkawinan adalah perkawinan heteroseksual. Ada banyak teks dalam Al Qur'an maupun Hadist yang menyatakan bahwa terjadi ketidaknyamanan dan menimbulkan masalah di dunia ini disebabkan karena perilaku seksual yang tidak sesuai dengan tuntunan agama antara lain dalam Q.S. al-Ankabut [29] : 31-35. Namun demikian juga banyak teks yang menyampaikan bahwa Islam adalah agama yang rahmat (Q.S. al-Anbiya' [21] : 107), serta menjadi petunjuk, pembeda, dan bimbingan bagi umat manusia (QS al-Baqarah [2]: 183).

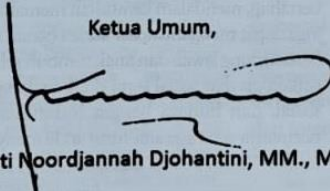

Berdasarkan Kajian Teologis, Teoritis dan Empiris tersebut di atas maka Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah menyatakan bahwa :

1. Terkait dengan legalisasi hukum negara atas perkawinan sejenis, maka 'Aisyiyah menolak atau tidak menyetujui pernikahan sesama jenis. Prinsip relasi sosial dan perilaku seksual berdasarkan benar, baik, dan sehat secara agama, spiritual, sosial, hukum, fisik, dan psikis. Hal itu hanya dapat dilakukan dalam ikatan perkawinan yang sah sesuai dengan UU Perkawinan No. 1 tahun 1974.
2. Perilaku seksual yang benar, baik, dan sehat secara agama sesuai dengan paham yang diyakini 'Aisyiyah yaitu perilaku seksual seperti yang dituntunkan dalam Al-Qur'an dan Hadis. Keluarga sebagai basis pengenalan pendidikan seksualitas yang sehat, halal dan aman serta fungsi biologis dan reproduksi melalui keluarga sakinah.
3. Tidak menyetujui segala bentuk gerakan yang mempromosikan LGBT yang akan berpengaruh pada perusakan moral generasi muda.
4. Tidak menyetujui kekerasan dan diskriminasi kepada setiap warga Negara apapun bentuk preferensi seksualitasnya, dengan tanggungjawab bagi organisasi keagamaan untuk membimbing dan melakukan dakwah yang humanistik.


Demikian pernyataan sikap ini disampaikan sebagai salah satu bentuk kepedulian 'Aisyiyah dalam menyikapi kontroversi LGBT dan digunakan sebagai panduan bagi warga 'Aisyiyah. Semoga Allah senantiasa memberikan petunjuk-Nya bagi kita. Aamiin.

Pimpinan Pusat 'Aisyiyah

Ketua Umum, Sekretaris Umum,

Dra. Siti Noordjannah Djohantini, MM., M.Si. Siti Nuraini, M.PI.



16 SUARA 'AISYIYAH | APRIL 2016

AISYIYAH CENTRAL LEADERSHIP
STATEMENT OF THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP OF AISYIYAH
ABOUT
LGBT (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER)

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

The development and issue of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) has caused controversy in society, especially among Muslims and religious groups in Indonesia. Different views between pros and cons have emerged in the public sphere, illustrating the plurality of thought in dealing with LGBT. The majority of religious communities express their opposition with various arguments. Aisyiyah, as an Islamic organisation, is obliged to respond wisely to the issue and bring benefits to all groups of society.

Based on various theoretical and empirical studies, there is a view that human beings are complex creatures in terms of their potential and vulnerabilities, including in their quest for fulfilment in social relationships and sexuality. Human beings have the potential for worldly pleasure (*id*), so there is a need for guidance and rules (*super-ego*) to form a human being who is governed both in his relationships with other human beings and in the expression of his life. In addition, human beings have inherent nature (*fitrah*) to follow God's commandments and to practice religion. Therefore, man cannot be separated from the importance of religious guidance to remain on the straight path of *fitrah*.

Regarding the concept of family in Indonesia, which is based on the Marriage Law Nr. 1 of 1974, marriage is heterosexual marriage. There are many texts in the Quran and hadith that state that there are discomforts and problems in this world due to sexual behaviour that is not in accordance with religious guidance, including in Q.S. al-Ankabut (29): 31-35. However, there are also many texts that convey that Islam is a religion of mercy (Q.S. al-Anbiya (21): 107), as well as a guide, differentiator, and guide for humanity (Q.S. al Baqarah (2): 183).

Based on the theological, theoretical, and empirical studies mentioned above, the Central Leadership of Aisyiyah declares that:


1. Regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage, Aisyiyah disapproves of same-sex marriage. It is because principles of social relations and sexual behaviour are based on the conception of religiously, spiritually, socially, legally, physically, and psychologically correct, ethical, and healthy. Therefore, sexual relations can only be done within a legal marriage following Marriage Law 1/1974.
2. Aisyiyah believes that religiously correct, good, and healthy sexual behaviour should follow the guidance prescribed by the Quran and hadith. Therefore, sex education to introduce biological and reproduction functions that follow the conception of healthy, halal, and safe should start from the family through *keluarga sakinah*.
3. Aisyiyah disapproves of all forms of movements that promote LGBT, which will damage the morality of younger generations.
4. Aisyiyah disapproves of violence and discrimination against any citizen regardless of their sexual preference. Furthermore, Aisyiyah wishes religious organisations to take responsibility for guiding Muslim communities through humanist da'wah.

Thus, this statement is presented as a form of Aisyiyah's concern in dealing with the LGBT controversy and as a guide for Aisyiyah citizens. May Allah always give us His guidance. Aameen.

Aisyiyah Central Leadership

Appendix III – NU’s official statement on LGBT

Photo: <https://www.nu.or.id/>



PENGURUS BESAR NAHDLATUL ULAMA
Jl. Kramat Raya No. 164 Jakarta 10430 Telp. (021) 31923033, 3908424 Fax (021) 3908425
E-mail : setjen@nu.or.id - website : <http://www.nu.or.id>

**SIKAP DAN TAUSHIYAH PBNU
TENTANG PERILAKU SEKSUAL MENYIMPANG DAN PENANGANANNYA**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Islam adalah agama yang selaras dengan dengan fitrah kemanusiaan dan menempatkan perlindungan terhadap keturunan (*hifzhun nasl*) sebagai bagian yang sangat penting. Pranata untuk menjamin hifzhun nasl adalah melalui lembaga pernikahan antara laki-laki dan perempuan dengan syarat dan rukunnya. Aktifitas seksual di luar pernikahan adalah terlarang, dan digolongkan sebagai kejahatan (Jarimah). Kecenderungan Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual dan Transgender (LGBT) adalah bentuk penyimpangan dan praktek LGBT adalah penodaan terhadap kehormatan kemanusiaan. Belakangan, ada kampanye sistematis terhadap aktifitas LGBT dari pelaku LGBT dan kelompok pendukungnya, termasuk dukungan dana dan sumber daya. Untuk itu, PBNU menyampaikan sikap sebagai berikut:

1. PBNU menolak dengan tegas paham dan gerakan yang membolehkan atau mengakui eksistensi LGBT. LGBT mengingkari fitrah manusia. PBNU menegaskan bahwa perilaku LGBT adalah perilaku yang tidak sesuai dengan fitrah manusia. Dengan demikian kecenderungan untuk menjadi LGBT adalah menyimpang, sehingga orang yang mengidapnya harus direhab. Pola rehabilitasi dilakukan sesuai dengan faktor yang menyebabkannya.
2. Perlu ada penerahan sumber daya untuk rehabilitasi terhadap setiap orang yang punya kecenderungan LGBT:
 - a. PBNU meminta Pemerintah serius memberikan rehabilitasi dan mewajibkannya.
 - b. PBNU menghimbau kepada seluruh da'i dan warga NU khususnya, serta masyarakat Indonesia umumnya untuk bahu membahu menyediakan layanan rehabilitasi bagi mereka, dan mendampingi untuk pemulihannya.
 - c. Melakukan berbagai usaha guna pencegahan dan pemulihan yang bertujuan untuk membantu sesama manusia agar kembali pada fitrahnya sebagai manusia yang bermartabat.
 - d. Memperkuat ketahanan keluarga, salah satunya dengan pendidikan pra-nikah serta konsultasi-konsultasi keagamaan untuk melanggengkan pernikahan.
 - e. Meminta kepada semua pihak untuk memberikan bantuan kepada orang-orang yang memiliki kecenderungan LGBT untuk dapat hidup lurus sesuai dengan norma-norma agama, sosial dan budaya. Salah satu hak mereka adalah untuk memperoleh rehabilitasi dan edukasi secara baik. Perlu ada langkah dakwah dengan hikmah, menggunakan cara yang baik, lemah lembut, peduli, penuh kasih sayang, jelas dan tegas dalam menangannya.
3. PBNU menilai, kampanye terhadap aktifitas LGBT adalah tindakan melanggar hukum yang perlu diberikan sanksi. Untuk itu PBNU meminta:



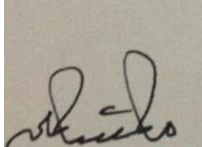
PENGURUS BESAR NAHDLATUL ULAMA

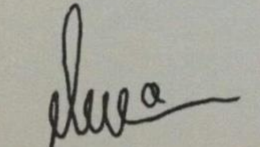
Jl. Kramat Raya No. 164 Jakarta 10430 Telp. (021) 31923033, 3908424 Fax (021) 390
E-mail : setjen@nu.or.id - website : http://www.nu.or.id

- a. Pemerintah mengambil langkah-langkah segera untuk menghentikan segala propaganda terhadap normalisasi LGBT dan aktifitas menyimpang serta melarang pihak-pihak yang mengampanyekan LGBT.
- b. Meminta masyarakat, LSM, dan pegiat LGBT yang selama ini melakukan propaganda normalitas LGBT, membiarkan, menolak rehabilitasi dan mengampanyekannya untuk menghentikan kegiatannya.
- c. Meminta Pemerintah mengawasi melarang bantuan dana dan intervensi asing yang menyokong aktifitas LGBT.
- d. Meminta DPR, khususnya yang berasal dari warga NU untuk memperjuangkan penyusunan UU yang intinya:
 - 1) Menegaskan larangan LGBT dan perilakunya sebagai kejahatan;
 - 2) Memberikan rehabilitasi kepada setiap orang yang memiliki kecenderungan LGBT untuk bisa normal kembali;
 - 3) Memberikan hukuman bagi setiap orang yang terus mempropagandakan dan mengampanyekan normalisasi LGBT, serta melarang aktifitasnya.


والله الموفق إلى أقوم الطريق

Jakarta, 22 Februari 2015


DR. KH. Ma'ruf Amin
Rais Aam


KH. Mujib Qulyubi, M.Hum.
Katib


Prof. Dr. KH. Said Aqil Siroj, MA
Ketua Umum


Ir. H. A. Helmy Faishal Z
Sekretaris Jenderal

BOARD OF NAHDLATUL ULAMA
(Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama – PBNU)
Jalan Kramat Raya No. 164 Jakarta 10430 Telp. xxxxxxxxxxxx
Fax xxxxxxxxxxxx E-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxx website: <http://www.nu.or.id>

PBNU’S ATTITUDE AND TAUSHIYAH REGARDING STRAYING SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS AND TREATMENT

Islam is a religion that is harmonious with the nature of humanity and places the protection of offspring (*hifzhun nasl*) as a very important part. Institutions for *hifzhun nasl* ensure that it is through the institution of marriage between men and women with the conditions and pillars of marriage. Sexual activity outside of marriage is forbidden, and is considered a crime (*jarimah*). The tendencies of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) are a form of perversion and the practice of LGBT is a desecration of human dignity. Lately, there has been a systematic campaign against the activities of the LGBT perpetrators and LGBT support groups, including financial support and resources. Therefore, PBNU conveys the following attitudes:

1. PBNU refuse to recognise movements that allow or acknowledge the existence of LGBT. LGBT denies human nature. PBNU confirms their belief that LGBT behaviour is incompatible with human nature. Thus, LGBT tendencies are distorted, and the people who have it should be rehabilitated. The process of rehabilitation to be carried out will be in accordance with the factors that cause LGBT.
2. There should be a mobilization of resources for the rehabilitation of every person who has LGBT tendencies:
 - a. PBNU requests serious government action to provide rehabilitation and make it a requirement.

- b. PNBU appeals to all preachers, PNBU members in particular, and the Indonesian people in general to work together to provide rehabilitation services for them and assist in their recovery.
 - c. Undertake various efforts for the prevention and recovery that aims to help fellow human beings, and in order to return human dignity to nature.
 - d. Strengthen the resilience of families with a pre-marriage education including consultations for the perpetuation of religious weddings.
 - e. Requests all parties to provide assistance to people who have LGBT tendencies in order for them to be able to live a straight life (righteous life) in accordance with religious, social and cultural norms. One of their rights is the right to obtain rehabilitation and education. There is a need for proselytizing measures using wisdom, goodness, gentleness, care, love, clearly and firmly handling it.
3. PBNU evaluation, the campaigns against LGBT activity are unlawful measures that need to be sanctioned. For that PBNU request:
- a. The Government takes immediate measures to stop all propaganda against LGBT normalisation and deviant activities; and ban parties campaigning for LGBT.
 - b. Ask the public, NGOs and LGBT activists who have been undertaking LGBT normality propaganda to allow rehabilitation and to campaign for the halt of activities.
 - c. Ask the Parliament, particularly from NU members, to fight for the drafting of laws that essentially:
 - 1) Confirm the ban on LGBT and these behaviours as a crime;
 - 2) Provide rehabilitation for every person with LGBT tendencies to return to normal;
 - 3) Impose penalties for individuals who continue to propagate and campaign for LGBT normalisation and ban their activities.

Jakarta, 22 February 2015

Appendix IV – Abstract / Zusammenfassung

In 2016, Indonesia witnessed an unprecedented spike in anti-LGBT discourse. It resulted in the LGBT community becoming the most hated group in the country. As a Muslim-majority country, the link between the anti-LGBT sentiment and Islam is undeniable. The anti-LGBT discourse, which challenges Indonesia's constitutionally enshrined and socially valued diversity, is shaped by the interplay of Islam with politics and culture and arises as a part of and in response to the larger global discourse. For its understanding, it is essential to investigate the LGBT discourse of influential Muslim organisations as representatives of Islam in Indonesia. Therefore, this dissertation analyses the position of Muhammadiyah and its autonomous women's organisation, Aisyiyah, towards LGBT in the aftermath of the 2016 controversy.

Using qualitative methodology, four objectives are examined: Muhammadiyah's gender norms, Muhammadiyah's public narrative on LGBT, Muhammadiyah's internal discourse on LGBT, and the LGBT community's response to Muhammadiyah's discourse. Empirical data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews with opinion makers in Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah at the national and regional levels, as well as activists, scholars, and/or individuals concerned with the topic at hand. Furthermore, online text and video sources were analysed to examine Muhammadiyah's LGBT discourse on the Internet.

While Muhammadiyah holds the view that the expression of homosexuality and transgender identities are incompatible with Islamic values and its heteronormative gender principles, the data analysis reveals that its position on LGBT is multifaceted. Unlike other Islamic organisations, Muhammadiyah has refrained from issuing official statements on LGBT. However, several of its key leaders have made personal statements that are diverse and multi-layered. In this context, Muhammadiyah's media outlets have provided them with a broad platform. The complexity of this contradiction increases when Aisyiyah's position is considered. In its official statement, Aisyiyah rejects same-sex sexual relations and same-sex marriage while urging society to refrain from violence and discrimination against LGBT people. In this light, Aisyiyah's statement creates organisational ambiguity.

Human rights activists and members of the LGBT community responded critically to Muhammadiyah's LGBT discourse. They viewed that the narratives promoted by Muhammadiyah's leaders reflect a growing religious conservatism that oppose the development of liberal human rights discourse in Indonesia. Nevertheless, they acknowledged the existence of a more progressive perspective among members of Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah towards LGBT people, particularly at the grassroots level.

The dissertation concludes that Muhammadiyah pursues a pragmatic strategy regarding the LGBT issue. It allows both tolerant and intolerant positions, thereby demonstrating ambivalence on the issue at hand – and perhaps also illustrating the existing ambivalence within Indonesian society in general.

Indonesien erlebte im Jahr 2016 eine beispiellose, gegen LGBT gerichtete öffentliche Diskussion. Diese wurden infolge der Debatte zur meistgehassten Gruppe des Landes. In dem mehrheitlich religiös und muslimisch geprägten Indonesien spielt die Haltung des Islam im Anti-LGBT-Diskurs eine zentrale Rolle. Über das Thema LGBT hinaus wird die verfassungsmäßig verankerte Vielfalt Indonesiens grundsätzlich in Frage gestellt. Zum Verständnis bedarf es einer detaillierten Analyse des LGBT-Diskurses in den einflussreichen nationalen muslimischen Organisationen. In dieser Dissertation wird die Position von Muhammadiyah und ihrer autonomen Frauenorganisation Aisyiyah analysiert.

In einem qualitativen Ansatz werden vier Aspekte untersucht: Muhammadiyahs Geschlechterideologie; öffentliche Äußerungen von Muhammadiyah zum LGBT-Diskurs; Muhammadiyahs interne Debatte zu LGBT; und die Reaktion der LGBT-Gemeinschaft auf Muhammadiyahs Diskurs. Empirische Daten stammen aus direkter Beobachtung und halbstrukturierten Interviews mit Meinungsmachern in Muhammadiyah und Aisyiyah auf nationaler und regionaler Ebene, sowie Aktivisten, Wissenschaftlern und Einzelpersonen, die sich mit Menschenrechten und LGBT-Themen in Indonesien beschäftigen. Weiterhin wurden Online-Text- und Videoquellen von Muhammadiyah zum LGBT-Diskurs untersucht.

Als Organisation sieht Muhammadiyah gleichgeschlechtliche Beziehungen und Transgender-Identitäten im Widerspruch zu islamischen Werten und heteronormativen Geschlechterprinzipien. Im Gegensatz zu anderen islamischen Organisationen hat Muhammadiyah davon abgesehen, offizielle Erklärungen zur Verurteilung von LGBT herauszugeben. Führungspersönlichkeiten veröffentlichten allerdings persönliche Erklärungen und Muhammadiyah-Medien haben diesen eine breite Bühne zur Verfügung gestellt. Individuelle Meinungen zum Thema sind in der Organisation dagegen divers und vielschichtig. In einer öffentlichen Erklärung lehnt Aisyiyah gleichgeschlechtliche sexuelle Beziehungen und die gleichgeschlechtliche Ehe ab, fordert aber zugleich von Gewalt und Diskriminierung gegen LGBT-Personen abzusehen.

Menschenrechtsaktivisten und Mitglieder der LGBT-Gemeinschaft haben kritisch auf den Diskurs zu LGBT-Themen in der Muhammadiyah reagiert. Sie sehen in den negativen Äußerungen von Muhammadiyah-Führern einen zunehmenden religiösen Konservatismus, der sich gegen die Entwicklung eines liberaleren Menschenrechtsdiskurses in Indonesien wendet, erkennen aber auch progressivere Positionen gegenüber LGBT-Menschen an der Basis.

Die Dissertation kommt zu dem Schluss, dass Muhammadiyah in Bezug auf das Thema LGBT eine pragmatische Strategie verfolgt. Sie lässt sowohl tolerante als auch intolerante Positionen zu und nimmt damit eine ambivalente Haltung hin, mit der sie vielleicht auch die bestehende Ambivalenz in der indonesischen Gesellschaft insgesamt widerspiegelt.

Appendix V – Statement of originality

Declaration of originality

I declare in lieu of oath by my own signature that I have prepared this doctoral thesis independently and without outside help and that all passages taken verbatim or approximately verbatim from publications have been marked as such. This assurance also applies to photographs, maps, pictorial representations, and the like provided in the thesis. The work has not yet been submitted in the same or similar form or in excerpts within the scope of another examination.

06.09.2023

Date



Anwar Kholid

Eidesstattliche Erklärung

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Appendix VI – Biography

Omitted for data protection reason.