

**The Portrayal of Women in Islam in *The Taqwacores* (2010): A Critical  
Discourse Analysis**

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining  
the Bachelor Degree in English Department



By

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## MOTTO

**“Find ecstasy in life; the mere sense of living is joy enough.”**

(Emily Dickinson)

**“But life is long. Moreover, the long run balances the short flare of interest  
and passion.”**

(Sylvia Plath)

**“I would rather be hated for who I am, than loved for who I am not.”**

(Kurt Cobain)



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this graduation thesis to the only extraordinary woman in my life, my mother. Thank you for believing in me and always supporting me.





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## FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researchers' opinions or findings included in this research are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munawaroh untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

MOTTO .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
VALIDATION .....	iv
FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT .....	v
NOTA DINAS .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
ABSTRACT .....	xii
CHAPTER I .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of Study .....	1
1.2 Research Question .....	4
1.3 Objective of Study .....	5
1.4 Significance of Study .....	5
1.5 Literature Review .....	5
1.6 Theoretical Framework .....	8
1.6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) .....	8
1.6.2 Feminism Theory .....	9
1.7 Research Method .....	11
1.7.1 Types of Research .....	11
1.7.2 Data Sources .....	12
1.7.3 Data Collection Technique .....	12
1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique .....	13
1.8 Paper Organization .....	13
CHAPTER II .....	15
INTRINSIC ELEMENTS .....	15
2.1 Summary .....	15
2.2 Theme .....	16

2.3 Plot .....	17
2.3.1 BEGINNING.....	18
2.3.2 MIDDLE.....	19
2.3.3 RISING CONFLICT.....	20
2.3.4 CONFLICT.....	20
2.3.5 CLIMAX.....	21
2.3.6 RESOLUTION.....	21
2.4 Character and Characterization .....	22
2.5 Setting .....	33
2.5.1 Setting of Time:.....	33
2.5.2 Setting of Place: .....	33
2.5.3 Setting of Social Condition:.....	34
CHAPTER III .....	36
ANALYSIS .....	36
3.1 Freedom of Expression Between Men and Women in Islam.....	36
3.2 Manifesting Gender Equality in Worship.....	42
3.3 Rebellious: Injustice in the household .....	48
3.4 Strong Principles and Obedience .....	54
CHAPTER IV .....	61
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION .....	61
4.1 Conclusion.....	61
4.2 Suggestion.....	62
REFERENCES: .....	63
CURRICULUM VITAE .....	68

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 The Chart of the Plot.....	22
Figure 2.2 First appearance of Yusef.....	22
Figure 2.3 First appearance of Umar.....	24
Figure 2.4 First appearance of Ayyub.....	26
Figure 2.5 First appearance of Rabeya.....	27
Figure 2.6 First appearance of Jehangir.....	28
Figure 2.7 First appearance of Fasiq.....	29
Figure 2.8 First appearance of Lynn.....	30
Figure 2.9 First appearance of Muzammil.....	32
Figure 2.10 Jehangir plays guitar at dawn.....	33
Figure 2.11 Prayer activities in a rented house.....	34
Figure 2.12 Yusef, Ayyub, and several characters at the skate park.....	34
Figure 2.13 Ayyub is being chased by bullies.....	35
Figure 4.1 The scene when Rabeya and Yusef are alone in the kitchen.....	40
Figure 4.2 The scene when Rabeya leads the Friday prayer sermon.....	45
Figure 4.3 The scene where Rabeya crosses out one of the Qur'anic verses.....	52
Figure 4.4 Rabeya is offended by Yusef's words about the burqa she is wearing..	56

# **The Portrayal of Women in Islam in *The Taqwacores* (2010): A Critical Discourse Analysis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The American film *Taqwacores* (2010) addresses social and cultural issues, including the problem of patriarchy, particularly in Islamic culture. This research aims to find out how the Rabeya in *The Taqwacores* is portrayed as an Islamic woman who is oppressed by social culture and rules in Islam and the reasons behind it. Therefore, this research uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), proposed by Norman Fairclough, and feminist theory, proposed by Mary Wollstonecraft. The Type of this research is qualitative and applies a documentation technique. The data analysis is based on three levels of analysis (micro, mezzo, and macro) as proposed by Fairclough. This research finds how Rabeya is portrayed as an illustration of a strategy for distributing women's power in rebellion against Islamic rules. Furthermore, this research highlights the need to view women as autonomous beings with the same rights as men and women's freedom to choose life and religion. The portrayal of women in Islam in *The Taqwacores* film becomes a symbol of the resistance of Muslim women who feel burdened or oppressed by the rules in Islam that ensnare them.

**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, Feminist, Critical Discourse Analysis, Women.*

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# **The Portrayal of Women in Islam in *The Taqwacores* (2010): A Critical Discourse Analysis**

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## **ABSTRAK**

Film Amerika *Taqwacores* (2010) mengangkat isu-isu sosial dan budaya, termasuk masalah patriarki, khususnya dalam budaya Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana penggambaran Rabeya dalam *The Taqwacores* sebagai perempuan Islam yang tertindas oleh sosial budaya dan aturan dalam Islam serta alasan yang melatarbelakanginya. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA) yang dikemukakan oleh Norman Fairclough dan teori feminis yang dikemukakan oleh Mary Wollstonecraft. Jenis penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dan menggunakan teknik dokumentasi. Analisis data didasarkan pada tiga tingkat analisis (mikro, mezzo, dan makro) seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Fairclough. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa bagaimana Rabeya digambarkan sebagai ilustrasi strategi pendistribusian kekuatan perempuan dalam pemberontakan melawan aturan Islam. Demikian juga, penelitian ini menyoroti perlunya memandang perempuan sebagai makhluk otonom yang memiliki hak yang sama dengan laki-laki dan kebebasan perempuan dalam menentukan pilihan hidup dan beragama. Penggambaran perempuan Islam dalam film *The Taqwacores* menjadi simbol perlawanan perempuan muslim yang merasa terbebani atau tertindas dengan aturan-aturan dalam Islam yang menjeratnya.

**Kata Kunci:** *Patriarki, Feminis, Analisis Wacana Kritis, Perempuan.*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

The issue of patriarchy is currently still an ongoing problem, especially in Islamic culture. In the Islamic religion itself, there are still many cultures or rules that seem to position women as lower than men. Gender segregation between men and women has a negative impact on women and causes gender inequality. Thus, women are seen as inferior, and always oppressed by men because of patriarchal culture, so the issue of patriarchy is still a problem for women in social culture. There are several ways to convey and criticized patriarchal issues in social culture, one of which is through media such as film. Film is an audio-visual communication medium to convey a message to a group gathered in a particular place (Effendy, 1986: 134). A film's message in mass communication can take any form, depending on the film's mission. Generally, a film can include various messages, be they educational, entertainment, and informational messages.

One of the films that raises social issues and issues regarding patriarchy in Islam is *The Taqwacores* (2010). It is an American film that raises issues about social culture. This film focuses on depicting Islamic stereotypes that are inherent in American society. Portraits of Islamic stereotypes are shown and explained by each character in this film. However, the main point in this film is a representation of the Muslim punk living in America and how society sees them as trash by society as described in the film *The Taqwacores*. Furthermore, Islam has had a bad perception of America ever since the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Similar to how punks are viewed as trash by the general public, this movie provides us with a clear picture of Muslim punks in America. Since the tragic terrorist incident of 9/11, Islamic issues, especially Islamic works, have been prevalent in America. The film is mainly set in a residence or rented house inhabited by Muslim punks in Buffalo, New York.

The researcher uses *The Taqwacores* as a research object because issues about Islam in America are presented in this film, such as portraits of Islamic women living in America. One of the issues raised in the film *The Taqwacores* is patriarchy in Islamic culture, which some women feel to be oppressive. This film raises the problems and anxieties experienced by Islamic women about their position in social life as wives who are required to obey their husbands. Furthermore, women's freedom of religion is still oppressed by stereotypes attached to Islam as a religion that contains elements of terrorism, for example, regarding the identity of Muslim women living in America who are labeled as terrorists just because they wear a *burqa*, which causes feelings of insecurity to this day.

Islamic women are portrayed in the film *The Taqwacores* as resisting patriarchal culture and stereotypes that bind them, giving them the ability and power to express their femininity in Islam. Thus, the issue of patriarchy and how women struggle to face the stereotypes embedded in Islam in social and cultural life is an interesting topic to study in more depth. In order to critically and thoroughly analyze the discourse that is intended to be conveyed regarding issues of patriarchy and the portrayal of Islamic women in America, research



using CDA is crucial. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) not only discusses language in a text, but also connects it to context. Context here means the language used in accordance with certain situations and conditions so that the desired goals are achieved. Critical discourse analysis, as proposed by Norman Fairclough, views discourse as a social practice. Social practices and the discourse formation process are linked as a result of this. In order to understand how texts are produced and consumed as well as the sociocultural factors that affect how discourse is formed, research into these topics is necessary.

The researcher presumes that the film *The Taqwacores* contains issues of patriarchy in Islam. The conception of patriarchal perceptions is principally based on a paternalist view, which assumes that in a social system, the existence of a father or a man becomes a phenomenon that determines the realization of a functional structure in the family or society. The paternalist concept is a symbol of significance that men are symbols of a leadership system based on the relationship between mother and children in forming a dynamic social life intact (Goode, 2007: 18). Patriarchy itself is also inseparable from the issue of feminism inherent in women. Feminism can be the foundation for women to cross the patriarchal boundaries they experience in society. The researcher presumes that the depiction of feminism and patriarchy in the film *The Taqwacores* can be seen in a character named Rabeya, who is a female character in the film who opposes patriarchal culture in Islam as shown in the film.

In the film *The Taqwacores*, Rabeya's character represents women's concerns about patriarchy and the oppression of women in Islam, which,

according to Rabeya, is not by the provisions and views on gender equality in Islam. In the film *The Taqwacores*, it is shown that in Islam, men always benefit and are given freedom regarding their rights as men, which makes women only become supporters and companions for men. A scene in the film *The Taqwacores* shows Rabeya crossing out a verse in the Quran because, according to Rabeya, this verse is too demeaning to women.

However, in *The Taqwacores*, Rabeya's character is also depicted as a devout Muslim woman in worship, and Rabeya's religious attitude contrasts sharply with her ideology of patriarchy in Islam. In this case, the researcher is interested in the discourse shown by Rabeya regarding the portrait and depiction of Islamic women in the film *The Taqwacores*. Thus, this research uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Norman Fairclough to reveal the reasons behind Rabeya's expressions and behavior related to sociocultural issues in Islam, especially Muslim women in America. However, the urgency for researcher using CDA is to analyze the meaning of a discourse and object in more depth so that it is not just a superficial depiction. Likewise, the researcher uses Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist theory, which believed that society was wasting its assets because it kept women in the role of 'convenient domestic slaves.'

## 1.2 Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, this thesis will answer the following questions: How is Rabeya in *The Taqwacores* portrayed as an Islamic woman who is oppressed by social culture and rules in Islam?

### 1.3 Objective of Study

This research aims to find out how the portrayal of Rabeya in *The Taqwacores* as an Islamic woman who is oppressed by social culture and rules in Islam and the reasons behind it.

### 1.4 Significance of Study

There are several significances of this study. Theoretically, this research uses CDA to explore and dissect the meaning contained in Rabeya's character, and feminist literary criticism is used to understand the female characters in *The Taqwacores*, such as the behavior and speech of Rabeya's character, which opposes Islamic standards regarding patriarchy. This thesis also provides information about the depiction of Islamic women depicted in *The Taqwacores*.

Practically, this research is significant as a guide to understanding the feminist perspective in films and to seeing depictions of Islamic women who live in an extreme environment. Researcher hope that this research can attract readers to learn about popular culture literature such as films, books, media, and others.

### 1.5 Literature Review

Researcher found some researches that used the same object entitled *The Taqwacores*. The first research was Ridwan Putra Mahardika's graduation paper in 2020 entitled "Violations in Women Language Feature in *The Taqwacores Movie*." This graduation paper describes violations of women's language uttered or committed by Rabeya. This research is descriptive qualitative because it will describe Robin Lakoff's violations of women's language characteristics. This

research shows that the violated characteristics of women's language include empty adjectives or particles, rising intonation, tag questions, lexical hedges, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite form, emphatic stress, and avoiding swearing solid words.

The second is a graduation paper issued in 2022 by Anggia Bagas Setyoko from the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta entitled "Flouting Conversational Maxims Performed by The Characters in The Taqwacores Movie." This paper aims to analyze and find out the violations of conversational maxims committed by the characters in the film entitled The Taqwacores. This research uses the theory of cooperative principles and conversational implicatures initiated by Grice. The method used in this research is qualitative. The characters in The Taqwacores use several strategies in their violations. The violation of the maxim of quantity is providing too much information and too little information. In committing quality violations, the characters use several strategies, namely hyperbole, metaphor, irony, patent lies, and rhetorical questions.

The researcher also found several papers that used the same theory using Norman Fairclough's CDA. The first is a graduation paper issued in 2021 by Tutik Hidayati from the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta entitled "The Portrayal of Sunnis as Seen in *Green Zone* (2010): A Critical Discourse Analysis". This research raises a problem regarding the depiction of Sunni people in the Green Zone, which leads to a negative image. This research uses Critical Discourse Analysis, proposed by Norman Fairclough, and film

theory, proposed by Ed Sikov. This type of research is qualitative, which applies a documentation technique.

The second research is a thesis from Reizha Ocnarulita Tobing in 2013 entitled "A Critical Discourse Analysis of *8 Mile* Movie". In this research, Tobing (2013) focuses on social issues regarding racial stereotypes of African Americans and white Americans depicted in the *8 Mile* film using critical discourse analysis. Tobing (2013) examines sociocultural stereotypes and power relations in American culture or, more precisely, between African Americans and white Americans portrayed in the film *8 Mile*. Where the film also represents the hip-hop subculture that occurs in America. The film *8 Mile* tells the story of a white American who wants to become a rapper, but he is intimidated by the Afro-Americans in the hip-hop subculture in the film.

In contrast to Tobing's (2013) thesis, which used a socio-cultural approach, the researcher modifies and builds on previous research using a different approach. In this study, the researcher is more focused on the feminist approach because the issue being discussed is patriarchy in Islamic culture.

From the explanation above, two studies use the same theory: Fairclough's CDA. The researcher used two previous studies as references that helped the researcher to conduct research and analyze data. However, this research is different from the previous studies above. Here, the researcher uses Norman Fairclough's CDA, which has not been used in two studies with the same object as *The Taqwacores*. It could be said that the results of this research are different

from previous studies because this research focuses on The Portrayal of Women in Islam in *The Taqwacores*.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

Based on the problems in *The Taqwacores*, the researcher decided to choose an appropriate theory that could be used to discover, research, explain, and find out the problems in the film. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the main theory used. Likewise, the researcher uses a feminist approach, namely Mary Wollstonecraft's theory, to deepen and study the characteristics and background of the subjects. These theory and approach help the researcher solve this research's problems. In this way, the results of critical discourse analysis in this research can be relevant and answer the research question above.

### **1.6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The researcher uses Norman Fairclough's method for critical discourse analysis in the film. Fairclough and Wodak (1997:1-37) emphasize that critical discourse analysis sees discourse (the use of language in speech and writing) as a form of social practice so that it may display the effects of ideology, producing and reproducing unequal power relations between social classes, men, women, majority and minority groups. Fairclough (1989:110-164; 1995:98) divides discourse analysis into three dimensions: text (micro), discourse practice (mezzo), and sociocultural practice (macro). The analytical framework developed by Fairclough consists of a text analysis stage (micro), which is described;



micro analyses are carried out to examine the text's formal and language represented in the discourse. At the interpretation stage (*mezzo*), the same questions and clues regarding intertextual relationships and situational contextualization can be used to obtain explicit and implicit references in the discourse to that context. The final stage, called explanation (*macro*), reveals what the discourse has to do with the social context and what it has to do with language.

In his book *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, Norman Fairclough explains that an analysis of CDA counts for three characteristics. Firstly, it is not just an analysis of discourse (or, more concretely, texts); it is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. Secondly, it is not just a general commentary on discourse; it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts. Thirdly, it is not just descriptive; it is also normative. It addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them.

### **1.6.2 Feminism Theory**

The researcher uses Mary Wollstonecraft's theory, which represents the beginning of the liberal feminist movement, as an approach. According to the lexical meaning, feminism is a women's movement that demands full equality of rights between men and women. Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist theory focuses on the importance of awareness of equal rights between women and men. The first wave of feminism is considered to have started



with Mary Wollstonecraft's writing *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which called for the development of the rational side in women and demanded that girls be able to study in government schools to be equal to boys to become independent, especially financially.

Liberal feminism, according to Rosemarie Tong, "is equality of opportunity," citing Susan Wendell in her book *Feminist Thought* (2009:13). Liberal politics served as the theoretical foundation for liberal feminism, which demanded equality for women's rights to vote to divorce, and to own property. It also opposed discrimination against women in public legislation campaigns. Furthermore, in building their fundamental premise on equality and freedom for both sexes, liberal feminists highlighted the similarities in identities between men and women.

Quoting Tong, "...the vote gives people the power not only to express their political views but also to change those systems, structures, and attitudes that contribute to their own and/or others' oppression" (Tong, 2009: 21).

The female characters in *The Taqwacores* can be examined using Tong's definition of liberal feminism. In the film, Rabeya's character is very prominent and very closely linked to feminism itself. Mary Wollstonecraft's theory, which is derived from Tong's book, the first-wave feminist, also offers a distinct viewpoint on how women are portrayed in plays and other media, including film. According to Wollstonecraft's reading of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, women were not free to choose for themselves and were, therefore, deemed to be without liberty. The confines

of their spouses, homes, and kids bound them (1996:173). Wollstonecraft depicts a picture of a woman who is free from captivity in the home and is strong both physically and intellectually. Tong also makes clear that the goal of liberal feminism is to give women the same rights as men. She states that "a just and compassionate society in which freedom flourishes" is the overarching goal of liberal feminism (2009:13).

## **1.7 Research Method**

According to Sugiyono (2013:2), the research method is a scientific way to obtain data with specific purposes and uses. This section discusses this research method, which contains several methods consisting of research types, data sources, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques.

### **1.7.1 Types of Research**

This study uses a qualitative research method. Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 5) define qualitative methods as research procedures that produce descriptive data from people and observable behavior in written or spoken words. Therefore, rather than being presented as a form of numbers, the data is collected and presented as words. The aim is to provide a detailed explanation of the research. Furthermore, this study aims to provide a clear, data-supported explanation of how Rabeya in *The Taqwacores* is portrayed as an Islamic woman oppressed by social culture and rules in Islam.

### 1.7.2 Data Sources

According to Lofland and Lofland (1984:47), the primary data sources in qualitative research are words and actions; the rest is additional data, such as documents. The data and research sources can come from cut scenes, monologues, dialogues, utterances, and interactions between characters in the film *The Taqwacores*, which will be the primary material for analysis. Additionally, supporting tools for analysis are gleaned from other sources, including details and concepts connected to the issue of gender, feminism, and patriarchy in Islam. It originates from the *Quran*, *hadiths*, relevant books, academic works, journals, articles, and other documents as a research tool.

### 1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

According to Moleong (2005:58), data collection techniques are a way or strategy to obtain the data needed to answer questions. Data collection techniques aim to obtain data in a way that is appropriate to the research so that the researcher will obtain complete data both in oral and written form. In this research, to obtain complete data, the researcher used documentation techniques to collect data. Moleong (2001: 161) documentation is written material or other films from recordings that are prepared at the request of an investigator. Documentation is a data collection technique related to published and unpublished documents. The researcher divided collecting data into three steps. First, the researcher watched *The Taqwacores* in-depth and then took the primary data from screenshots of

each required scene. Second, the researcher sees and takes monologues or dialogue from scenes with issues to be researched and analyzed. Third, the researcher classifies and organizes all data to facilitate the analysis process.

#### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:79), data analysis is a process that details formal efforts to determine themes and formulate working hypotheses (ideas) as suggested by the data and as an effort to provide support for those themes and hypotheses. From the explanation about Fairclough's CDA analysis above, for the procedure to conduct the study, the researcher did the text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation). These three analytical processes can lead the researcher to find utterances that contain issues of patriarchy in Islam and feminism in the female characters in the film, arrange them in a list, interpret the list of dialogues, and explain the patriarchy in Islam that is behind these utterances. In applying CDA, the researcher explains the data based on concepts from Norman Fairclough's CDA, such as micro, mezzo, and macro. The researcher also describes the portraits of Islamic women such as Rabeya in *The Taqwacores* using Mary Wollstonecraft's theory about liberal feminism, which is about women's equality in every facet of life.

#### **1.8 Paper Organization**

This research consists of four chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to this research, which contains the background of the study,

research question, objective of the study, significance of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, research method, and paper organization. Chapter two contains the intrinsic elements of *The Taqwacores*. Chapter three is a discussion of the problems in this research. Last, chapter four is the conclusion of the analysis and suggestion.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, the conclusion from this research is that the portrayal of Islamic women in *The Taqwacores* (2010) can be read as a transcript of patriarchal issues in Islam. This film shows how Rabeya is described and portrayed as an illustration of a strategy for distributing women's power in rebellion against Islamic rules that curb issues of patriarchy in religion. Patriarchy in Islam have influenced Rabeya which makes her feels that women in Islam experience injustice. The researcher concluded that Rabeya faced her problem of oppression in a frontal and controversial way so that she could get the audience's attention to the issue she wanted to convey. However, on the other hand, Rabeya still has a strong faith in religion and obedience to her God. In short, rebel-themed films such as *The Taqwacores* often trigger various forms of resistance to fight for the rights contained therein. This research emphasizes that women must be recognized as independent individuals with the same rights as men, not as an object that is only used as tools by men. The portrayal of women in Islam in *The Taqwacores* (2010) becomes a symbol of the resistance of Muslim women who feel burdened or oppressed by the rules in Islam that ensnare them. Thus, we can learn from this research to respect everyone's religious views, opinions, obedience, beliefs, and values of gender equality.

#### 4.2 Suggestion

The researcher acknowledges that this research is still far from perfect. Limited knowledge, data sources, and other factors cause this. However, the researcher hopes that the next researchers interested in analyzing *The Taqwacores* (2010) can do better. The researcher suggests that deconstruction theory be used in the next research. The advantage of deconstruction theory is its capacity to create the most expansive creative space for meaning and interpretation, allowing anyone to freely assign meaning and interpret an object in any way they see fit. Given the broad latitude for interpretation, it is hoped that the next researchers will be able to examine the benefits and drawbacks of Fairclough's CDA theory, which was employed in this study, more thoroughly and without restriction.





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