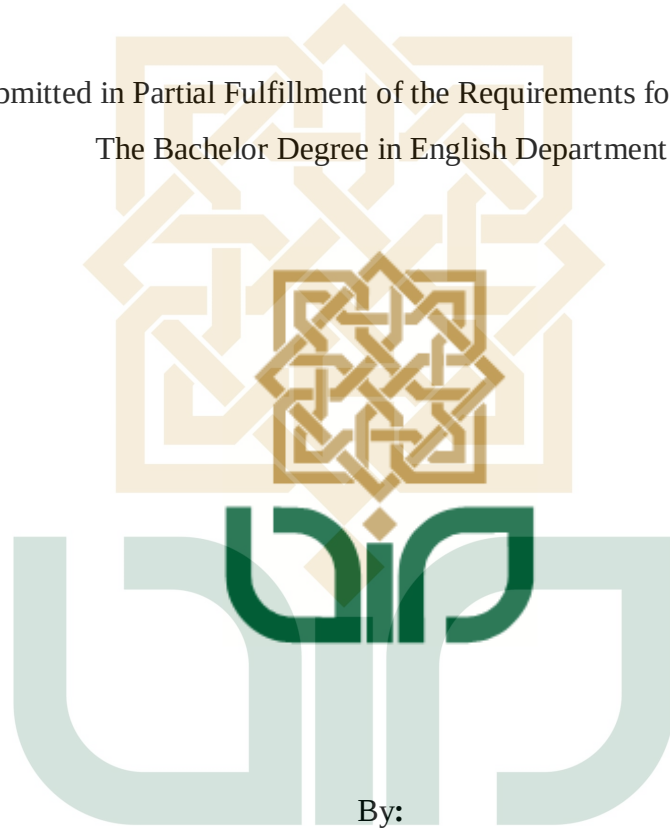


**WOMEN'S VOICES UNVEILED: FEMALE CHARACTERS
CHALLENGING MISOGYNISTIC RELIGIOUS VIEWS IN *PEREMPUAN
BERKALUNG SORBAN* (2009) AND *THE TAQWACORES* (2010)**

A GRADUATING PAPER

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



By:

Safa Aulia
21101050039

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF ADAB AND CULTURAL SCIENCES

SUNAN KALIJAGA STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

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KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto, Yogyakarta, 55281, Telp./Fax. (0274) 513949
Laman: <http://adab.uin-suka.ac.id> Surel: adab@uin-suka.ac.id

=====

NOTA DINAS

Hal: Skripsi

a.n. Safa Aulia

Kepada

Yth. Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga

di Yogyakarta

Assalamu 'alaikum Warohmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Setelah memeriksa, meneliti, dan memberikan arahan untuk perbaikan atas skripsi Saudara/i:

Nama	:	Safa Aulia
NIM	:	21101050039
Program Studi	:	Sastra Inggris
Fakultas	:	Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Judul Skripsi	:	WOMEN'S VOICES UNVEILED: FEMALE CHARACTERS CHALLENGING MISOGYNISTIC RELIGIOUS VIEWS PEREMPUAN BERKALUNG SORBAN (2009) AND THE TAQWACORES (2010)

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Yogyakarta, 4 Juni 2025

Dosen Pembimbing,

Dr. Danial Hidayatullah, SS, M.Hum
NIP 19760405200901 1016



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN KALIJAGA
FAKULTAS ADAB DAN ILMU BUDAYA
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto Telp. (0274) 513949 Fax. (0274) 552883 Yogyakarta 55281

PENGESAHAN TUGAS AKHIR

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(2009) AND THE TAQWACORES (2010)

yang dipersiapkan dan disusun oleh:

Nama : SAFA AULIA
Nomor Induk Mahasiswa : 21101050039
Telah diujikan pada : Selasa, 03 Juni 2025
Nilai ujian Tugas Akhir : A-

dinyatakan telah diterima oleh Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta

TIM UJIAN TUGAS AKHIR



Ketua Sidang

Dr. Danial Hidayatullah, SS., M.Hum
SIGNED

Valid ID: 68511d076f61



Penguji I

Febriyanti Dwiratna Lestari, SS., MA
SIGNED

Valid ID: 6851138c61ff6



Penguji II

Dr. Ulyati Retno Sari, S.S. M.Hum.
SIGNED

Valid ID: 685116ca5d0c



Yogyakarta, 03 Juni 2025
UIN Sunan Kalijaga
Dekan Fakultas Adab dan Ilmu Budaya
Prof. Dr. Nurdin, S.Ag., S.S., M.A.
SIGNED

Valid ID: 68511e060a9f

A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduate paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other researcher's opinion or finding included in this research is quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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3FBFEAMX283942554
Sara Aulia
NIM: 21101050039

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SUNAN KALIJAGA
YOGYAKARTA

MOTTO

“A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us”

Franz Kafka



DEDICATION

With gratitude, I dedicate this work to my beloved parents, who always support me in all ways, and who will wait for me until I complete my thesis. Thank you for all your sacrifices, encouragement, and invaluable love.

For myself, who has persevered to fight through everything, who always believes in the success that is waiting at the end of the struggle, and who always believes in God's help, that I can get through this.

To all the lecturers of English Department at the Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, thank you for the knowledge, guidance, and patience you have given me during my studies.

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Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

Alhamdulillahirabbil 'alamin

First of all, I would like to thank Allah Ta'ala, who has given me the blessings of health, strength, patience, grace, and guidance, so that I can complete this graduating paper. By his will, I can complete this graduating paper entitled “Women’s Voices Unveiled: Female Characters Challenging Misogynistic Religious Views in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009) and *The Taqwacores* (2010)” to fulfill the requirements to obtain a Bachelor of English Department, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, Islamic State University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Secondly, I would like to say my deepest gratitude to the following parties who have supported me during my work on this graduating paper:

1. Prof. Dr. Nurdin, S.Ag., S.S., M.A, as the Dean of the Adab and Cultural Sciences Faculty.
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5. My parents always give full support, pray for me, and help me in all aspects.
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8. Rahman Dwi Saputra, S.I.Kom., Thanks for supporting me to finish my graduation paper.

The author realizes that this paper still has many deficiencies. For this reason, readers are always expected to be able to provide suggestions and corrections to perfect the study concerned.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.



**WOMEN'S VOICES UNVEILED: FEMALE CHARACTERS
CHALLENGING MISOGYNISTIC RELIGIOUS VIEWS IN *PEREMPUAN
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By: Safa Aulia

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study is to compare women's authority in reinterpreting the Qur'an and Hadith in the films *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009) and *The Taqwacores* which are influenced by differences in socio-cultural aspects of the two main female characters. The method used in this research is qualitative with liberal feminist theory by Rosemarie Tong which focuses on women's struggle to be able to access and get their rights in the public space. As a result, the struggles of Annisa and Rabeya show different forms of struggle that are influenced by their socio-culture. Annisa's character faces multiple resistances to family pressure, social norms and educational institutions in the conservative Islamic boarding school environment. In contrast, Rabeya, who is in a liberal environment, has a more open space to voice her views on religion and feminism. Despite these differences, both figures assert women's rights in reinterpreting misogynistic interpretations of the Quran and Hadith through the lens of gender justice and champion liberal feminist principles such as autonomy, equal access to public space and individual freedom. In addition, this study found that it is important to give women the authority to reinterpret Islamic texts to challenge patriarchal domination in religious discourse, provided that such interpretations are done carefully and responsibly so that they remain in line with Islamic values.

Keywords: *Liberal Feminist, Reinterpretation of Qur'an and Hadith, Women's Authority, Misogynistic Views.*

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Oleh: Safa Aulia

ABSTRAK

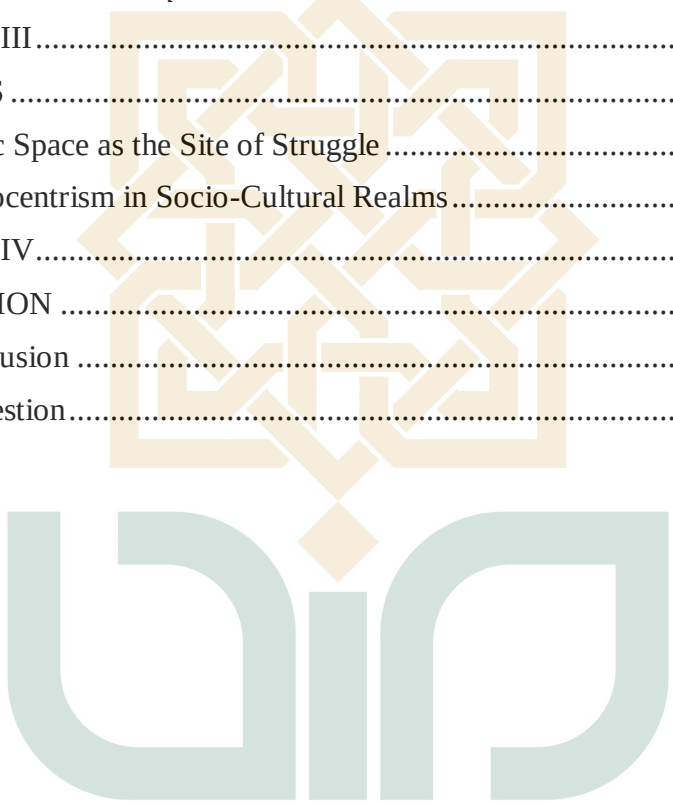
Tujuan dalam penelitian ini adalah untuk membanding otoritas perempuan dalam penafsiran kembali Al-Qur'an dan Hadis dalam film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009) dan *The Taqwacores* (2010) yang dipengaruhi oleh perbedaan aspek socio-cultural dari kedua tokoh utama perempuan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan teori feminist liberal by Rosemarie Tong yang berfokus kepada perjuangan perempuan untuk biasmendapatkan haknya di ruang publik. Hasilnya, perjuangan tokoh Annisa dan Rabeya menunjukkan bentuk perjuangan yang berbeda yang dipengaruhi oleh sosial-budaya mereka. Karakter Annisa menghadapi perlawanan berlapis terhadap tekanan keluarga, norma sosial serta institusi pendidikan di lingkungan pesantren yang konservatif. Sebaliknya, Rabeya yang berada di lingkungan liberal mendapatkan ruang yang lebih terbuka dalam menyuarakan pandangannya terhadap agama dan feminisme. Terlepas dari perbedaan tersebut, kedua tokoh menegaskan hak perempuan dalam menafsirkan ulang tafsir misoginis atas Alquran dan Hadis melalui lensa keadilan gender dan memperjuangkan prinsip feminis liberal seperti otonomi, kesetaran akses terhadap ruang publik dan kebebasan individu. Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa penting untuk memberikan otoritas pada perempuan untuk menafsirkan fulang teks-teks keislaman untuk menantang dominasi patriarki dalam wacana keagamaan dengan catatanpenerjemahan tersebut dilakukan dengan hati-hati dan bertanggung jawab agar tetap selaras dengan nilai-nilai akidah Islam.

Kata Kunci: Feminis Liberal, Penafsiran Al-Qur'an dan Hadis, Otoritas Perempuan, Pandangan Misoginis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Religious discourse in Islam has long been dominated by patriarchal interpretations, with women's experiences and voices often ignored and limited. This has led to authority structures that cause gender inequality. Seeing this, doubts and questions arise about the space for women to reinterpret religious teachings that are harm women, especially in the context of their struggle for rights, freedom and equality. Film as a medium that reflects culture, offers a critical reflection of these issues. Two different films, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Bramantyo, 2009), a conservative Indonesian film, and *The Taqwacores* (Zahra, 2010), as liberal American film, illustrate these dynamics in contrasting socio-cultural contexts through the struggle of female characters to gain their rights to autonomy, equal access to public space and individual freedom.

The film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* 'Woman with a Turban' (2009), tells the story of a female major character named Annisa, the daughter of the owner of an Islamic boarding school called Al-Huda. Annisa grows up in this Islamic boarding school and becomes a girl who is always curious about the outside world. However, various restrictions and patriarchal rules occurred in the Islamic boarding school limit her from being able to see the outside world just because she is a woman. This film discusses various patriarchal issues in Islam, which are

reflected in multiple events experienced by Annisa. The character's struggle against the issue of patriarchal authority in her life makes her considered different because it is against the rules in her Islamic boarding school, so she receives various criticisms and obstacles in the process of her struggle.

In contrast to Annisa's experience within a traditional Islamic setting in Indonesia, *The Taqwacore* (2010), a film adaptation of a novel by Michael Muhammad Knight, directed by Eyad Zahra, explores the life of a Muslims minority community in the United States that merge with punk subculture, known as the Taqwacores. The film centers on a female character named Rabeya, a burqa-wearing Muslim woman who actively challenges religious authority and gender norms. Rabeya shows more radical resistance in fighting for rights and liberal feminist ideals in her community.

Despite their differing cultural contexts, both characters experience various obstacles in the diverse rules that exist in the male interpretation of Qur'an and Hadith are the main reasons for limiting the characters in fighting for their rights as seen in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *The taqwacores*. In the former, Annisa experiences inequality in the Islamic boarding school. One of the examples is when she wins the class president election but is replaced by her rival, Farid, as her teacher argues that in Islam, women cannot be leaders. The Islamic boarding school refers to the socio-cultural combination of Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia, with a learning system based on the Islamic model. This place provides education to both male and female students to create new

intellectuals who understand Islam through understanding Islamic sources(Doornharder, 2007, p. 2).

Although some Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia allow women to participate in learning on an equal opportunity with men, others still follow Islamic rules that restrict women and create inequality and injustice, such as the traditional Islamic boarding school Al-Huda in the film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Traditional Islamic boarding schools refer to classical Islamic books as their medium of learning. In addition, traditional Islamic boarding schools still hold tightly to Islamic rules and traditions (Makmun, 2016, p. 222,224). Seeing this, Annisa tries to fight the issues of male authority that restrict women's freedom in her Islamic boarding school. Male authority is an understanding that refers to the power of men or fathers over everything. In addition, it refers to fatherhood and its descendants (Hearn, 1992, p. 48).

In *The Taqwacores*, Rabeya also fights against patriarchal culture. In one scene, during a congregational Friday prayer held by the Taqwacores punk community attended by both men and women, Rabeya leads the *khutbah* and the Friday prayer. Rabeya's actions in leading the *khutbah* and Friday prayers represent her struggle to gain her rights as a woman. Punk is a subculture community formed from various circles of society. We can recognize this community through their music, ideology, actions, and their unique and eccentric style of dress. In addition, it is known for its sharp criticism of contemporary society. This group often intersects with conflict, violence, and political

movements, which are often racist and also have libertarian tendencies (Grossman, 2016, p. 24).

Like many Americans, *the Taqwacores* embrace a liberal ideology synonymous with the principle of freedom, including freedom of religion and belief. However, it is this freedom that makes the practice of Islam in America be complex. As Grossman explains, Muslims in America continuously struggle to define their identity in the American context. This occurs because American Muslims come from different countries, cultures, and races (Smith, 2013, p. 83). The liberal Islam practiced by the Taqwacore community represents one of the many sects found in America. Broadly speaking, this community rejects traditionalist interpretations of Islam and lives their own values without being restricted by the rules of the state, the environment, or even religion. Liberal Islam emerges as a form of religious liberation that transcends private boundaries. A fundamental element of liberal Islam is its critique of traditional, indigenous, and revitalise Islam, which they refer to as “backwardness” (Rachman, 2011, pp. 9, 26).

The restriction that prevents both characters from becoming leaders stems from Bukhari's Hadith number 4425, which is then interpreted by male interpreters as prohibiting leadership by women. This interpretation narrows the space for women in the public space. Anisa and Rabeya realize that the restrictions placed on women come from an inaccurate interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith by male-dominated interpreters. Seeing this, they attempt to fight against the inequality they experienced. However, their struggle, despite

their socio-cultural backgrounds, cause them to be viewed as religious rule-breakers and against the rules that had been set before. The “liberation of women” is often seen as a negative term, associated with the moral decline of women as individuals and societies (Geel, 2016, p. 372). The actions of Annisa and Rabeya are considered unlawful because their process of fighting for their rights as women is an act of Western liberal feminism. Some argue that Western feminism is incompatible with Islam (Wadud, 2008, p. 2).

This perception is particularly evident in Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country that predominantly adheres to conservative Islam, which upholds traditional Islamic teachings. Martin van Bruinessen defines conservative Islam as a school of thought that tends to maintain the pre-existing traditional system and rejects liberal Islamic teachings. Furthermore, this school of Islam often equates the term liberal with irreligiosity (Van Bruinessen, 2013, p. 16). This conditions gives the country a high potential to embrace interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith that lean towards male authority to the detriment of women. This dynamic is clearly reflected in *Perempuan Berkabung Sorban*, where Annisa cannot become a leader of the Islamic boarding school solely because she is a woman. This illustrating how religious and cultural norms are used to justify gender based oppression.

Similarly, in *The Taqwacores*, Rabeya faces marginalization in her own community. Despite living in a Muslim punk home that is considered progressive, she remains constrained by traditional gender norms. She is excluded from shared spaces that should be accessible to everyone regardless of their gender identity,

such as the living room, and she is forced to hide herself out of fear of violating Islamic rules that prohibit non-*mahram* interaction. This illustrates that patriarchal interpretations of Islam represent a global issue that transcends culture and geography, limiting women's presence and participation in private and public life.

The experiences of both characters show how patriarchal religious interpretations directly impact on women's social lives, especially when they try to challenge and reinterpret those norms. Although Islam is a religion that upholds equality and justice for all humanity because Islam is *rahmatan lil'alamin* (providing grace to all humanity and the environment), its teachings are often distorted by androcentric interpretations that harm women. Various rules in Islam are initially created for the good of women, but at a later time, these rules are transformed into rules that positioned women in a subordinate position. Restrictions on women's mobility in terms of space and identity have a crucial meaning of subordination (Massey, 1994, p. 179). If left unchecked, such misogynistic interpretations risk distancing Islam from its ethical promises as a religion of compassion, equality and justice.

This research shows that in both films, *The Taqwacore* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, the female characters try to fight for their views on women's rights in interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith. Annisa in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* struggles to become the class president. Meanwhile, in *The Taqwacores*, Rabeya fights for women's rights in Islam by preaching and leading Friday prayers. The purpose of selecting these two films is to see the struggle of two Muslim women figures with the same religious ethos in interpreting the Qur'an

and Hadith from the perspective of women with different socio-cultural backgrounds and how that background affects their interpretation.

1.2. Research Question

How are the struggles of two Muslim women figures in reinterpreting the Qur'an and Hadith against misogynistic views in different socio-cultural backgrounds are portrayed in *The Taqwacores* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*?

1.3. Objective of Study

The purpose of selecting films of *The Taqwacores* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* is to see the struggle of two Muslim women figures with the same religious ethos in interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith from the perspective of women with different socio-cultural backgrounds, and how the sociocultural background affects their interpretation.

1.4. Significance of Study

There are at least three reasons that make this study important: 1. Women's experience carry its own uniqueness that can present a different perspective from the dominant masculine interpretation so it can enrich the hasanah of Qur'anic interpretation. 2. Interpretations that negate female inclusion result in gender-biased interpretation of women so that the neglect of alternative literature such as feminist interpretations means negating the function of the Qur'an and hadith itself as guidance to achieve a just society. 3. Islam is a dynamic and flexible religion that follows across time and place. This makes interpretations involving women's perspectives methodologically valid and makes Islam an authentic and inclusive

religion. For these three reasons, this comparative study is very necessary so that the universality and adaptability of Islam anywhere and anytime can be seen because the main goal of the Qur'an is the achievement of "A viable social order on earth that will be just and ethically based" (F. Rahman, 2009, p.25).

1.5. Literature Review

Several researchers have also conducted research in line with this study. First, research was conducted by Moh. Muzakka and Suyanto entitled *The Gender Equality Struggles in Perempuan Berkalung Sorban and Gadis Pantai* aims to analyze the struggle for gender equality in the two novels. From this research, Muzakka concludes that there are several results from the comparison of the two novels on the causes of gender equality struggles. In *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, it is found that the struggle for gender equality is caused by the repressive actions of men against women based on patriarchal explanations and interpretations of Qur'anic verses. Meanwhile, in *Gadis Pantai*, the struggle for gender equality is caused by the repressive actions of men against women due to the feudal tradition that women are a private right for men (Muzakka & Suyanto, 2020).

Then the research was conducted by Amy McDowell which is entitled *Warriors and Terrorist: Antagonism as Strategy in Christian Hardcore and Muslim "Taqwacore" Punk Rock*. This research aims to analyze how to define and communicate religion in a secular environment. In this study, it's found that this subculture affirms and expresses a religious punk identity in a subculture that is known to exclude religion, Taqwacores not bridging religion and punk so that

they can give space to Islamic values and beliefs in their group. In addition, it's also finds that Taqwacores opposed the understanding of Islam as a terrorist by satirizing the depiction of terrorism and blending all groups of society and different racial groups in their community (McDowell, 2014).

Several studies have been conducted on the film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *The Taqwacores*. The difference between the previous research and the current research lies in the focus of the research, which is to see how the struggle of female figures with different socio-cultural backgrounds in fighting for interpretation space against misogynistic interpretations in the Qur'an and Hadith that harm women. This research aims to reveal the role of cultural context in shaping understanding and resistance to the dominance of patriarchal interpretations so as to open up the possibility of a more just and gender-equal interpretation of Islam.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Feminist theory

Since this research discusses two female characters struggling against the male interpretation that limits them from being able to access public spaces, the researcher decided to use the liberal feminist theory by Rosemarie Tong as the main theory in this research. Liberal feminists fight for women's freedom where men and women are equal and need to be given equal opportunities including the opportunity to have political, economic, and educational rights just like men (Tong, 2009, p. 16).

Liberal feminists focus their theory on the struggle of women to be able to get their rights in the public space. Public spaces include various places used for social interaction, such as buildings, roads, and open spaces (Chitrakar, 2016, p. 216). This theory emerged as a response to the assumption that women are considered weak and unable to compete with men in the public space. This assumption then results in various restrictions on women both in the social, economic, political and educational fields which are actually unfounded so as to create structural injustice. Liberal feminists arise from the assumption that gender inequality is not only the result of the patriarchal system that appears in the social structure alone, but also due to the actions of women who have historically been excluded from public spaces that provide access to power and influence.

Various acts of discrimination against women continue to occur and have even become deeply rooted in a culture that needs to be eliminated. Liberal feminism is present as a struggle for social reform through politics, economics, and education that ensures the realization of equal opportunities for women. Liberal feminists are not present to reject the existing institutional order, but instead encourage institutions to be more inclusive of women. This reform is expected to open up equal opportunities for women in accessing education, employment, political involvement and playing an active role in society.

According to liberal feminists, gender justice can be achieved if the existing system is able to provide equal space and opportunities to every individual regardless of their gender. Therefore, liberal feminists emphasize the removal of structural and cultural barriers that limit women in public life. This shows that liberal feminism is not only a theory of women's liberation, but also a driver for the formation of a more just and egalitarian society.

1.6.2 Film theory

Film theory is a reflection on the function of cinema as well as its essence. In addition, film theory is also understood by understanding and formulating basic questions related to how films work to reach the audience in watching, reading, and exploring film epistemology (Sripathy, 2023, pp. 109–110).

In order for the message in the film to be conveyed well to the audience, *mise-en-scène* plays an important role. *Mise-en-scène* is every element that enters the camera shot, which involves the use of setting, lighting, costume, make-up, hair, and figure behavior (Villarejo, 2013, pp. 29, 36). There are other important elements that also need to be considered in cinematography, namely camera techniques. Amy Villajero (Villarejo, 2013, p. 38) explained that one of the camera techniques that need to be considered is the use of framing in camera shots by analyzing the distance between the camera and the object. Here are the types of camera shots in film making:

- a. Extreme-Close-Up (ECU), this technique focuses on details on the face where we only see parts of the face such as the eyes, the lips.
- b. Close-Up (CU), here the camera focuses on the entire face or most prominently.
- c. Medium Close-Up (MCU), this technique focuses the camera on the chest up part of a human being.
- d. Medium Shot (MS), where we direct the camera lens to capture an image from the waist up.
- e. Medium Long Shot (MLS), or plan american, leads from the knees up section.
- f. Long Shot (LS), this technique shows a human from toe to head and here the human looks dwarfed by the background.
- g. Extreme Long Shot (ELS), in this technique, the camera shoots from a distance that barely distinguishes the human figure.

1.7. Method of Research

1.7.1. Type of research

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive studies are a comprehensive summarization, of certain events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals (Lambert, 2012, p. 255). It explains that descriptive qualitative is a type of research that provides a fundamental understanding of a phenomenon explained in everyday language. This type of research is used to present a direct, less

theoretical description of a phenomenon such as the experience and meaning of everyday life.

1.7.2. Data source

The primary data sources in this research are the *films Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *The Taqwacores*. Both films serve as the main object of study. Addition, the research is supported by secondary data such as scientific articles, book, and other academic sources relevant to the topic of liberal feminist and the interpretation of misogynistic elements in the Qur'an and Hadith. In this research, the form of liberal feminist struggle against the misogynistic interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith that appears in both films becomes the material object at the center of the research.

1.7.3. Data collection technique

The data collection for this study is done by observing dialog and events that occur in both films. The research identifies and collects elements such as discourse, myth, symbol, and practice that represent the character's efforts to gain equal access to public space in social, political, economic, and cultural domains in liberal feminist theory. This research also focuses on analyzing how the character's resistance challenges the space restrictions based on misogynist interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith against the right to access public space in both films.

1.7.4. Data analysis technique

This study compares two different films. Comparative literature is research on the relationship between two or more literary works, or is research on contextual texts and the origins of different cultures to find points of convergence and divergence (Meiliana, 2018, p. 62). In this study, the focus is directed at comparing the struggles of two female characters in the films *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *The Taqwacores* in opposing patriarchal religious discourse through a liberal feminist approach influenced by different socio-cultures.

1.8. Paper Organization/Presentation

There are four chapters that be discussed in this paper. The first is the introduction which consists of background of study, research question, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical framework, method of research, and paper organization/presentation. Then the second chapter contains an explanation of the intrinsic elements of *The Taqwacores* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* consisting of theme, plot, summary, character and characterization, and setting. The third chapter contain results and discussion about analyzing data collection. And the last one contains the conclusion of the research and offers suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1 Conclusion

Perempuan Berkalung Sorban and *The Taqwacores* are films that illustrate how female authorities with different socio-cultural backgrounds confront male interpretations that are detrimental to them as Muslim women. Research in both films on the female protagonists shows that their struggle to prove and reinterpret Qur'anic and Hadith interpretations that are detrimental to women is nothing more than the impact of an androcentric social culture. Moreover, regardless of socio-cultural influences, if women are not given the authority to reinterpret monolithic interpretations of the Qur'ān and Hadith, the problems of women in Islam will continue to occur everywhere. In addition, if this continues to happen, Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil alamin* will not be realized, and a just and ethical society is still far from expectations. From this research, it was found that Islam is not a religion that harms women. The disadvantages experienced by women in Islam are based on the inaccuracy of the textual interpretation and the patriarchal socio-culture that influences it

4.2 Suggestion

In addition to analysis of liberal feminism that occurs in both films, future research are advised to consider applying other theoretical frameworks to deepen the analysis of both films. One of them, by utilizing the Islamic Feminist theory to be able to dig deeper into the actions of the two characters who are very

contrasting in their struggles in the Islamic lens, in order to know the limits of interpreting the Qur'an and Hadith so as not to tarnish the true Islamic faith. Furthermore, the researcher realizes the limitations and the need for further deepening in this research. So the researcher needs to provide feedback to improve the quality of future research.



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