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AWRAH AND WOMEN'S CLOTHING: REINTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC TEXTS IN INDONESIAN CONTEXTS

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Abstract: *The concept of Awrah among Indonesian Muslims undergoes a process of contextualization and adaptation to local culture. This article focuses on the understanding of the ulemas about Awrah based on the interpretation of Al-Quran and Hadith texts which have implications for the practice of women's clothing. By using a qualitative approach, data obtained from online media and interviews. This article shows that the models, forms and trends of women's clothing influenced by multiple interpretations of Islamic texts, which are not only influenced by religious understanding, modernity, local traditions but also the context of the relationship between Islam and the state. There has been a shift in the reasons women cover their private parts from piety and obedience in religion; security, comfort and tranquility; then a lifestyle. External factors that influence women to cover their awrah are due to the family and friends, as well as maintaining local traditions. Interestingly, women who choose not to cover their awrah have the support of religious prominent, with argumentation personally and religiously. There are attempts to reinterpret the spirit of Awrah which does not only focus on women's clothing, but includes issues of ethics, morals, decency and protection of women.*

Keywords: *Awrah; Women's Clothing; Islamic Text; Indonesian Context; Women's Protection.*

INTRODUCTION

Awrah is a part of the body that must be guarded and covered and causes embarrassment if seen by other people. It is understood and practiced differently by the Indonesian Muslim community. The debate about the boundaries of private parts based on the text of the Quran and hadith influences the models and forms of clothing used by women in everyday life. Some ulemas are of the opinion that a woman's entire body is Awrah, so it must be covered from head to toe. However, some other ulemas argue that not all parts of a woman's body, including Awrah, must be covered with clothing. In the Indonesian context, there are various models of women's clothing such as the veil/niqab, hijab/hijab, veil, and open clothing that shows the head, some hands and feet. Muslim women's clothing is not only an identity and expression of religion, but also a life style (W. Akmaliah, 2023) that follows the development of clothing models that are influenced by modern values and local customs. The veil, which was influenced by transnational Islamic movements, which previously only had dark colors and was identified with conservative and radical Islamic movements, has developed into a variety of colors and shapes to suit women's choices and desires. The headscarf is a symbol of religiously devout students, but nowadays it is seen as un-Islamic along with the popularity of the syar'i hijab. In this way, the process of contextualization of verses from the Quran and hadith takes place dynamically which influences the models and forms of Indonesian women's clothing.

The study of women's Awrah and clothing is divided into three categories. First, understanding the Awrah of women determines the boundaries of the Awrah and models of women's clothing. Second, the meaning and experience of women in covering their Awrah. Covering the Awrah is considered a symbol of women's piety and religious commitment in the public sphere. Veil or Niqab as a migration identity is a religious identity and symbol. Third, Awrah and clothing of women in the history cross of Muslim in Indonesia. The influence of the relationship between religion and the state also influences the development of covering the Awrah in Indonesia. The existence of regional government regulations regarding the implementation of the headscarf, as happened in Aceh, has raised resistance from women themselves (Ansor, 2014). The use of the veil/niqab, which was once banned in one of the Islamic universities and was influenced by transnational culture during the reformation era, was also associated with terrorism, fundamentalism and conservativeness. This study complements the study of the intimate parts and women's clothing that has been carried out above, critically and comprehensively and reveals the existence of efforts to reread the intimate text in accordance with the socio-cultural context of contemporary Indonesia.

This article focuses on Muslim interpretation of the Al-Quran and hadith texts regarding the private parts and their implications for the form of women's clothing in the socio-cultural context of Indonesian Muslim society. To discuss this issue, three questions are asked: a) How do Muslims understand the Awrah based on Islamic texts? b) How is the practice of women's clothing in the Indonesian context? c) How is the

rereading of Awrah texts in the context of contemporary Indonesia? These questions became the guideline in writing this article.

This study is based on three arguments. First, the understanding of the texts of the Quran and hadith about Awrah is very diverse. In addition to the methods used, both textual and contextual, the socio-cultural context in which Muslims are located also influences different interpretations of Awrah. Second, this understanding influences the practice of Muslim dress, even though personally it has various and dynamic meanings. There has been a shift in the meaning of Awrah for women from a symbol of religious conservatism to a symbol of fashion style. Third, some scholars carry out rereading and reinterpretation of Awrah texts which do not only discuss clothing as physical protection for the body but rather the substance related to ethics and morality of decency and the spirit of protecting women from various discrimination and injustice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is based on qualitative research. Data sourced from documentation in the form of Islamic books, online media and reinforced by interviews. Online media has become a reference for the views of contemporary Indonesian scholars regarding Awrah and the practice of women's dressing. The informants consisted of fourteen women who wore veils/niqabs, headscarves, headscarves and did not cover their heads, who were purposively selected with a focus on the reasons for covering their Awrah. The data from informants were analyzed by using content analysis. Online data and interviews were selected, sorted, classified and mapped systematically and analyzed through three stages, including data restatement, description, and interpretation. Data restatement is done by showing data patterns and trends related to the views of the scholars. Data from informants are described to show the meaning and practice of women's clothing. While the process of interpretation of online data is carried out to show rereading of the text of the Quran and hadith to get the spirit of Islam in the context of contemporary Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that there are differences of opinion among ulemas regarding the boundaries of Awrah which affect the models and forms of women's clothing. In the following discussion, we will discuss the interpretation of Awrah according to ulemas, followed by the practice of Awrah in Indonesian Muslim society and reveal the reasons why women use Awrah. Finally, it explains the reinterpretation of intimate verses and hadiths related to morality and the protection of women.

Definition of Terms

'Awrah (the private body/the part of the body which must be covered by clothing) comes from the Arabic word 'awrah, which means the part of the body that must be covered because it can make women uncomfortable, embarrassed and a disgrace if seen by other people. 'Aurah in Indonesian is known as aurat, in English veil refers to the

covering of a woman's head and body parts in general. In Islam, there are differences in the boundaries of men's and women's private parts. The boundaries of men's private parts are between the navel and knees, while the boundaries of women's private parts are subject to differences of opinion among the ulemas. There are those who believe that women's private parts are the entire body, except the face and palms of the hands. Debate also occurs as to whether all women's private parts must be covered or not, especially those related to the head, neck, some hands and some feet. Interpretation of the concept of Awrah/aurat and its boundaries determines the models and forms of clothing used by men and women.

In the Indonesian context, clothing covering women's Awrah can be categorized into four forms as shown in the following figures:

 <p>(MUI, 2020)</p>	 <p>(cnnindonesia.com, 2022)</p>	 <p>(tempo.co, 2023)</p>	 <p>(instagram@najwashiha b)</p>
<p>Image 1: cadar/niqab</p>	<p>Image 2: Jilbab/hijab</p>	<p>Image 3: Kerudung</p>	<p>Image 4: Aurat terbuka</p>

The first image is a veil or also known as a niqab, which covers the entire body of a woman except for the eyes that are visible. The veil is also interpreted as a cloth covering the head or face for women. Usually, the veil is dark color, but in its development, the veil is also colorful, following the development of clothing fashions. The second picture is a headscarf or hijab which is a head covering except for only showing the face and hands. The headscarf has a variety of shapes and colors, and is used with clothing in the form of robe, skirt or trousers. Currently, the hijab or syar'i hijab is developing, which has a long and wide shape so that it covers all members of the female body. The majority of Indonesian women wear the headscarf compared to the veil or headscarf.

The third picture is the veil, which covers the head and face with the neck visible. The veil is a private covering worn by women since before independence. In 1928, the headscarf was worn by Muslim women activists at the Women's Congress. During the new order era, the headscarf was a symbol of *santri* (students of Islamic boarding schools), but currently it is only used by certain people and is usually used by Muslim women who do not cover their Awrah (not veiled) at celebrations of religious events. The fourth picture is open Awrah, that is, it does not cover the Awrah or shows part of the body in the form of head, hair, face, ears, neck, half of the hands and feet. In everyday language, open Awrah are also known as not covering the Awrah or not wearing the hijab. Clothing with open Awrah was a model of women's clothing that was commonly used before the reformation era in 1998. Thus, clothes covering Indonesian

women's Awrah experienced developments in accordance with the socio-political conditions and lifestyle of Indonesian women.

Ulama Interpretation of Women's Awrah and Clothing

This section explains the Muslim interpretation of female Awrah based on the text of the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet. The Quran explains the obligation to cover the Awrah for women, while the hadith stipulates the limits of Awrah based on the Prophet's narration and the practice of women's clothing at that time. The Muslim interpretation of a woman's Awrah is based on the verses of the Quran which explain the command to guard the eyes, to maintain self-respect, and not to show jewelry and cover the cloth to the chest, as explained below:

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands’ fathers, or their sons or their husbands’ sons, or their brothers or their brothers’ sons or sisters’ sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women’s nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, O believers, in order that you may succeed” (an-Nur/24: 31)

The ulemas debate occurred on the interpretation of "and let them cover their breasts with a cloth". The command to cover the chest means that the chest is part of the private parts that must be covered by women. However, there are differences of opinion among ulemas regarding the limits of women's private parts. The ulemas determine the limits of the Awrah not only by determining which parts of the body must be covered or open, but also interpret whether all parts of a woman's body which are included in the Awrah must be covered or not. These body parts are the head, hair, face, neck, shoulders, nape, shoulders, palms, half the arms, half the calves (tafsirweb, n.d.)

Some ulemas are of the opinion that body parts that must be covered are not only the chest, but also the entire female body from head to toe because it is believed to be a source of beauty and slander, based on the hadith of the Prophet: From Ibn Mas'ud RA, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: " Women are Awrah, if they leave the house they will be greeted by Satan." (HR. At-Turmudzi). Meanwhile, the obligation to cover the head is based on the hadith of the Prophet: "Allah does not accept women's prayers unless they wear a head covering" (HR. Abu Daud). Another hadith mentions about the Prophet's wife wearing a veil: "It was narrated from Abdullah bin Umar RA that he said, "When the Prophet Muhammad SAW married Shafiyah, he saw Aisyah wearing a niqab (veil) in the midst of a crowd of friends and the Prophet recognized her." (Ibn Sa'ad). However, there is a prohibition on wearing the veil during ihram (HR. al-Bukhari). This means that wearing the veil was a habit of Arab women at the time of the Prophet which was excluded during ihram. However, the ulemas the Maliki school of thought believes that wearing the veil is an excessive act in religion. In the view of the Indonesian Ulemas Council, the problem of the veil is basically a matter of khilafiyah (differences of opinion)

which is indeed permissible (Nashrullah, 2020). Meanwhile, the permissibility of uncovering the face and two palms is based on the hadith of the Prophet: "That Asma 'bint Abi Bakr met Rasulullah SAW wearing a thin shirt, then Rasulullah SAW turned away from her and said: "O Asma' indeed, when a woman has reached her menstrual period, no part of her body is allowed to be seen except this and this, and he pointed to her face and both palms of hands" (HR. Abu Dawud).

Apart from the discussion about the physical boundaries of the intimate parts above, the ulemas also discussed the diversity of the social context of the private parts. The use of intimate coverings differs between at home and outside the home, between in public and in front of one's own family, between in front of men who are still sexually active and those who are no longer active or impotent, as well as between young and old women. Thus, the context of the intimate parts becomes dynamic and diverse, which is not only influenced by religious texts but also the socio-cultural context (swararahima, 2018b). Based on these customs, some ulemas use habits as a benchmark for determining Awrah. Qasim Amin and Mahmud Syahrur stated that the hijab is not a religious obligation but a form of clothing that is required by social life and the environment and can change with changes in society. Therefore, Quraish Shihab, Indonesian ulemas, believes that women's clothing must be in accordance with Islamic teachings, namely covering the private parts, not being see-through, not being tight, and showing the curves of the body, not wearing clothes like men (Muhammadiyah, 2003) but still paying attention to beauty and era development (Lubis, n.d.) Thus, social culture also influences the views of every ulemas in interpreting religious texts, including the Awrah.

The method of understanding and interpreting the verses of the Quran and hadith determines the understanding of the Awrah which influences women's clothing practices. Different interpretation methods will produce different understandings of the intimate parts which have an impact not only on women's clothing models, but also women's activities in public spaces. For example, the interpretation of the hadith about women is Awrah. For conservative Muslims, this hadith is understood textually to domesticate women. Because women are intimate, their movement is limited and they are prohibited from leaving the house. However, this view is denied by progressive Muslims. Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Indonesian feminist ulemas, stated that women and men have an equal mandate from Allah to carry out His commands and avoid His prohibitions. By using contextual understanding, Kodir refers to the socio-historical context of women during the time of the Prophet where women could leave the house for various purposes and carry out social activities such as working, studying with the Prophet, migrating from Mecca to Medina and so on. This means that women actually carry out various activities outside the home in the same way as men.

Contextualization of Awrah in Indonesian Socio-Cultural and Political Dynamics

In the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society, the way women dress which is inspired by understanding the text of the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet is experiencing very dynamic development and is influenced by the social, cultural and political context in Indonesia. Historically, the hijab became popular in the 1970s which

was influenced by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. At that time, the hijab became a form of resistance to Western political, cultural and economic domination of Islam. The image of being part of a world Muslim community that has the same religion and values then became the basis for the 'hijabization' movement in Indonesia.

In the 1980s, the hijab was a form of resistance to the authoritarianism of the New Order which was considered anti-Islam (Ramdhan & Dja'far, 2019) because the government prohibited the use of the hijab in state schools. The headscarf, which was previously a symbol of religious awareness, became a symbol of resistance by Islamic groups against the government at that time. Therefore, Indonesian ulemas such as KH Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) stated that the use of the headscarf should not be regulated by the government, but should be returned to the principle of individual freedom to determine their own choices in clothing (Adistia, 2020). Before the introduction of the hijab, the headscarf became the identity of santri (Islamic boarding school students) and a symbol of obedience and freedom of expression in religion (Wahid, 1983). The use of the headscarf cannot be separated from the historical context of the struggle of Indonesian Muslim women, which was worn by female Muslim fighters at the women's congress in 1928.

However, the use of the hijab in the 1990s became increasingly common in schools along with the growing development of the Islamic spiritual movement (Rohis) in schools. The use of the hijab in this era was a symbol of transformation of piety, hijrah, and Muslim identity. Currently, there are many national and regional regulations that regulate Islamic dress standards for women in educational institutions and public spaces. This clothing regulation is a form of control over women's bodies as an implementation of government control politics (Ramírez, 2015). This regulation actually creates resistance among women, both openly and covertly, against the rules on the use of standards for women's clothing as an interpretation of religious teachings by religious elites in interpreting Islam (Ansori, 2014). In a feminist context, women are the ones who are easiest to regulate to fulfill the ambitions of those in power who are in fact men. In the early 2000s, the use of the hijab was associated with the process of Islamization and the opportunities for autonomy and choice offered by universities regarding Islamic commitment (Smith-Hefner, 2007a).

The use of the cadar in Indonesia began to be known in 1998 and experienced its peak in 2015, along with the influence of transnational Islamic movements such as ISIS which required women to wear the cadar. Apart from that, openness of information makes Indonesian people accept things that were previously considered taboo and allows people to have freedom of expression in various aspects of life, especially in religious matters. The cadar in Indonesia is generally used by Salafi and Wahhabi groups and is associated with the concept of hijrah to internalize Islamic values in everyday life (Hasse Jubba et al., 2021). However, the use of the cadar raises pros and cons among Indonesian Muslims. For those who refuse, the cadar is considered a Middle Eastern women's clothing tradition and is not suitable for the Indonesian climate (Nashrullah, 2020). Some people even believe that the cadar is a symbol of radicalism, conservatism and patriarchy

(Fadillah, n.d.). This belief became the basis for the implementation of a fairly controversial ban on the cadar at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in 2018, which aimed to prevent radical Islam from entering campus. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the practice of covering the private parts in Indonesia experiences diverse and quite dynamic dynamics in the narrative of the intersection of religion, culture, social and politics. Modernity and the reform era in 1998 influenced the knowledge, meaning and practice of women's clothing along with openness of expression in public spaces.

Reasons Why Indonesian Women Cover Their Private Parts

Even though covering the private parts is a religious recommendation, women have knowledge, understanding, views and experiences which are the reasons why women use the veil, hijab, headscarf or not, for various reasons, both internal and external, as explained below:

1. Internal reasons

a. Demonstrate piety and religious observance

Both women who wear the veil and the hijab believe that the veil or hijab is to show piety and obedience in religion. The cadar is synonymous with the hijrah community whose aim is to become kaffah Muslims. One form of hijrah is changing clothes from non-veil to veil (Yurisa et al., 2020). Islam commands women to cover my private parts and I am very happy and willing to use it" (Kh, housewife, 35 years)

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Religion is one of the reasons for wearing the hijab as expressed by the following sources:

"I wear the hijab because it is God's command and I will try my best to carry it out" (RK, student, 20 years old)

b. For security, comfort, and tranquility

Veil/cadar for security, comfort, and tranquility. Women wear the veil to maintain safety and comfort, especially when praying. This was stated by one of the sources, "I received guidance during the umrah. Many people know me, so my worship is disturbed. For this reason, I decided to wear a veil" (UP, 40 years). Another informant revealed, 'I cover my private parts to protect myself from the gaze of men who are tempting or to commit crimes" (NS, academic, 30 years). "I wear a veil to protect myself from slander. During the iddah period, I decided to wear the niqab to avoid other people teasing me" (NS, housewife, 28 years)

Comfort is also felt by women who wear the hijab, as expressed by a resource person who works as a researcher, "Apart from being part of my identity as a Muslim, the hijab is a marker of my comfort, both as an Indonesian female figure

and as a professional as a researcher" (S. M. N. dan W. Akmaliah, 2021). Even though some feel uncomfortable because they receive harassment from the opposite sex, "I feel comfortable wearing the hijab... But, in my opinion, wearing the hijab doesn't help you stop 'catcalling' and women abusing. To be honest, I still often experience catcalling, and it's very uncomfortable" (CD, female student, 19 years old). This is confirmed by Wagner that in Muslim majority countries, women talk about comfort, fashion, and modesty with little reference to religion as their reasons for wearing the hijab.

c. Increase self-confidence, practicality and lifestyle

Wearing a veil or hijab makes women more confident, live more practically and fulfill lifestyle needs, as stated by the following source: "I graduated from an Islamic boarding school; I have been required to wear the hijab since school. So it feels like something is missing if you don't wear it, so you don't feel confident in yourself" (SL, female student, 24 years old). Practicality is also a choice for women who wear the hijab, "because my hair is curly, the only solution to my problem is to wear the hijab when outside the house. I save more time because I don't have to worry about how neat my hair is. The hijab also helps me to be exposed to sunlight outside for longer. I quickly get dizzy and dizzy when exposed to direct sunlight for too long" (NG, female student, 21 years old). Currently, there is a trend for long and wide hijab models known as the *syar'i* hijab. The reasons why women wear them include simple, not complicated, comfortable, can be used on various occasions, makes it easier to worship because they don't need to wear a *mukena* (Hijup, 2015) helps the opposite sex to lower their gaze, and gain Allah's approval (Zulfiana, 2022). *Shar'i* hijabs are popular with recitation mothers. For young women, this hijab is chosen because of its attractive color and model (Affan, 2015).

Religious anthropology researcher, Nancy Smith-Hefner, stated that the hijab is not only a symbol of an individual's interpretation of Islam, but also a lifestyle, trend, and control in interacting with the opposite sex (Smith-Hefner, 2007b) which has developed into a fashion style. To avoid the stigma of being exclusive and "not trendy" and looking fashionable, the choice of Muslim clothing has become diverse in terms of colors, models and shapes which are promoted via social media so that users still look beautiful and attractive. This is a reason for women to wear the hijab, "I wear the hijab because the hijab models are increasingly stylish and comfortable to wear" (BS, employee, 36 years).

2. External reasons

a. Because of the environment

The reasons of women wear the hijab is because of the environment that supports them, such as family, friends (Yurisa et al., 2020), school and living environment, as expressed by the women below:

"I wear the hijab because my father told me to" (FH, female student, 20 years old)

"My husband has been asking me to wear the hijab for a long time, now I'm finally settled on wearing the hijab. Moreover, the hijab is now more comfortable and there are lots of choices" (DS, employee, 37 years).

"Most of my environment defines the hijab as modesty and appropriate clothing. "It doesn't mean that not wearing the hijab is impolite and inappropriate, but the hijab places the wearer at a different level of politeness and appropriateness, therefore the hijab in my environment is used at certain events or those involving many people" (HR, employee, 42 years)

"At first I wore the hijab because of the environment, most women here wear it. I wore it because I felt uncomfortable and exposed, different from the others. "Until now it has become a habit, I feel strange and embarrassed if I don't wear the hijab" (DW, civil servant, 32 years)

Even though women who wear the hijab are influenced by the environment, they still have the ability to negotiate between themselves and their environment. Apart from following the "group" rules, they still pursue hobbies, for example by watching films, traveling, hiking, and swimming and so on (Sunesti, 2020).

b. Respect on traditions

Along with the popularity of the cadar, headscarf or shar'i hijab, the veil is actually considered less Islamic nowadays. Wearing the headscarf is also limited to certain people, such as the wife and daughter of KH Abdurrahman Wahid. They stated that the reason they kept the headscarf (not switching to the hijab) was because they respected Indonesian traditions and culture (Fauzi, 2021). They also reject the belief that the veil is a sin because it does not cover the head tightly. This is confirmed by Muhammadiyah's view that whether Islamic clothing or not is a relative matter. In the context of Javanese culture, kebaya and headscarves are very Islamic (Mu'arif, 2018).

In line with the reasons for wearing headscarves, women who do not cover their intimate parts (do not wear a veil or hijab) also use traditional reasons to choose their clothing style. This choice is supported by ulemas such as Quraish Shihab based on three reasons. First, there are differences in the understanding of ulemas regarding the limits of women's private parts, thus giving legitimacy to women to wear models and forms of clothing that are in accordance with the views of the ulemas they follow. Second, there are differences in the views of Islamic ulemas regarding the hijab or head covering which has an impact on women's choice to wear the hijab or not. Shihab said that the hijab is a recommendation as stated in the QS. Al-Ahzab:59. In line with Shihab's views, Nurcholish Madjid, an Indonesian Islamic thinker, is of the view that the hijab is an Arab tradition that is not mandatory for Muslim women (Muallifah, 2022) but it contains the values of goodness, appropriateness and Islamic identity which functions as a protector for women from negative stigma. Third, the local Indonesian context determines women's laxity in clothing. Respectable clothing for

women is closely related to the customs and customs of a particular region and developed at a particular time. Wearing the hijab for women is a form of honor, protection and glorification of women, but not wearing the hijab is also a form of polite and respectable women's clothing.

Women who reveal their intimate parts for religious and personal reasons still maintain clothing styles that are appropriate to the Indonesian context. Najwa Shihab, the daughter of Indonesian ulema-Quraish Shihab, revealed the reason for not wearing the hijab because there are many ways to gain Allah's approval and reach heaven. This means that wearing the hijab is not the only way to enter heaven but can also be done with various other activities. Another reason why women do not wear the hijab is that they are not mentally ready, as expressed by the following informant: "I'll wear the hijab later; I want to hijab my heart first" (NC, employee, 26 years)

Based on the explanation above, covering the private parts in the form of women's clothing, whether in the form of a veil, headscarf, headscarf, or not covering the private parts, is a form of Muslim women's agency which is not only influenced by Islamic values and traditions, but also the values of modernity (Bilge, 2010). Women's Awrah show the identity of Muslim women and religious expression in public spaces (Badr, 2004). Women negotiate to reconstruct religious identity (Nisa, 2012) and contest Muslim identity (Dwyer, 1999). Among the hijra community, Tablighi Jama'ah and Salafi, the Niqab is a form of hijra identity and as a symbol of changes in conditions, behavior and clothing which is understood as the sunnah of the Prophet (Yurisa et al., 2020) a symbol of an Islamic lifestyle which is believed to be part of the glory of Islam as well as a form of obedience to Allah (W. Akmaliah, 2023) and religious (Brünig & Fleischmann, 2015). The hijab is a gender-based differentiation of religious identity (Zine, 2006) which is closely related to women's social and religious attitudes.

Reinterpretation of Awrah: Morals, Ethics, Decency and Women's Protection

In Islam, covering women's private parts/Awrah is not only related to physically protecting the body so that it is safe and comfortable, but is also related to morality, ethics, modesty and protection of women. The morality referred to in accordance with the Quran, Surah An-Nur, verses 30-31, is the command to restrain one's gaze, not to display jewelry and cover the veil over exposed parts of the body, and not to deliberately act to be seductive (*tabarruj*) (Kodir, 2000). The use of the hijab is a form of freedom and autonomy as well as honor and social ethics, and carrying out religious teachings (Kusciati, 2013). According to Smith-Hefner, the hijab is neither a traditionalist survival nor an antimodernist reaction, but rather an attempt to reconcile the opportunities for autonomy and choice offered by modern education with a high level of commitment to Islam (Smith-Hefner, 2007b) and the pursuit of self-improvement (Kusciati, 2013). Thus, the hijab functions to define Muslim identity, as a control over behavior, rejecting sexual objectification, providing more respect, maintaining intimate relationships, and giving freedom to women (Droogsma, 2007).

The command to cover the Awrah is a religious recommendation, but the limitations of the private parts are also determined by considering aspects of humanity that are accommodating and responsive to the values developing in society. In patriarchal and misogynistic cultural conditions, a woman's decision to wear a veil is a solution to overcome sexual harassment, both verbal and non-verbal (Rene, 2017). The veil is used to give women freedom from the gaze of men who judge, objectify and harass women (Izharuddin, 2019). Consideration of "khawf al-fitnah" so that women's bodies are not exploited, which has an impact on the emergence of slanderous turmoil that can damage the social order (Kodir, 2000). Slander can take the form of harassment experienced by women by men who like to tease and disturb women's comfort and security. This is confirmed by the source's confession as previously explained.

Abdurrahman Wahid, Indonesian ulema, revealed that the essential meaning of covering the intimate parts is the spirit of providing protection to women (Alghafli et al., 2017) from harassment and creating a safe environment for women (Sunesti, 2020) including protecting women from sexual harassment. This view was reinforced by Imam Nahe'i, an Indonesian ulema who stated that lowering your gaze means not closing your eyes but rather not looking at people outside the boundaries of humanity, lowering your gaze from harassing women, and lowering your gaze from considering women as sexual creatures (Isti'anah, 2021). The gaze of the eyes is one of the doors to adultery as the Prophet said: "The gaze of the eyes is a poisoned arrow from the devil" Whoever abandons it out of fear of Allah, Allah will give him faith whose pleasure is felt in his heart" (HR. Hakim). The Prophet gave advice to Ali "O Ali, do not replace the first view with the second view, because the first view is unintentional while the second view is no longer permitted (HR. Abu Daud).

However, the socio-cultural context of a country or society also determines women's comfort in clothing and women's protection. In Muslim-majority countries or communities, where the hijab or covering of the private parts is a type of clothing commonly worn by women, wearing a veil or headscarf can provide comfort for women. However, in Muslim minority countries, women who cover their private parts are stereotyped (Tariq-munir, 2014) or stigmatized and discriminated against in public spaces. In Western countries, the hijab is synonymous with radicalism and terrorism. Likewise, the belief that covering the private parts alone is not enough to protect women from sexual violence. Sumanto al-Qurtuby, an Indonesian Islamic thinker who teaches in Saudi Arabia, revealed that sexual violence is not because women do not cover their intimate parts but because men have dirty minds, who consider women as sexual objects (Qurtuby, 2016). Gender-based violence occurs in various places, including Muslim countries, as experienced by one of the previous sources. Data from the National Commission on Women states that there is no significant relationship between clothing and sexual violence. Women can be victims of sexual violence whether they wear closed clothes (using a veil or hijab) or openly (open private parts/not wearing a head covering) (Bilal Ramadhan, 2023).

Starting from the problem above, Husein Muhammad, Indonesian feminist ulema, reinterpreted the meaning of the hijab, which is currently synonymous with head covering. The hijab was originally known as a partition or curtain that separated the space between men and women, then its meaning was expanded to cover women's bodies with the aim of giving the impression of piety and religious obedience, avoiding sexual disorders and purifying the heart. On the other hand, women who do not cover their intimate parts (do not wear a veil or hijab) are seen as disobedient women (Muhammad, 2020). This perception is not entirely correct. According to Husein Muhammad, this perspective tends to be legal formal, simplifying problems and shallow thinking. According to him, purity of heart or piety does not lie in the cloth that covers a woman's head but in the human perspective, thoughts and heart as stated in the Quran, Surah al-A'raf: 26 as the clothing of piety (Muhammad, 2020). Taqwa is the act of closing your heart and actions from things that are prohibited by religion, closing you from views that make you uncomfortable and guarding against shame. Covering the private parts is not only related to physical clothing that covers the human body and body, but is also related to morals, controlling thoughts and actions. The spirit of covering the private parts functions as an insulator, separating actions that are prohibited by religion (swararahima, 2018a).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that differences in Muslim interpretations of private parts/Awrah based on the texts of the Quran and hadith have an impact on the diversity of models and forms of women's clothing in public spaces. Ulemas interpret Awrah in two forms, namely the boundaries of the Awrah and women's clothing models. The debate about the boundaries of private parts is not only influenced by their knowledge of verses and hadith, but is also influenced by local customs of the local community. In the Indonesian context, the reason why women use intimate coverings is not only because of religion, but also because of the environment, modernity and maintaining local traditions.

This article finds that there are efforts to reread the Awrah (intimate parts) based on the spirit of the text of the Quran and hadith relating to ethics, morals and modesty as well as the protection of women. Covering the private parts is a form of self-protection for women from various forms of sexual violence that can occur in misogynistic and patriarchal environments. In the end, the Quran emphasizes that taqwa clothing is the best which is a form of self-control from actions that are prohibited by religion, maintaining the purity of the heart and cleanliness of the soul without being determined by whether the private parts are closed or open. This study was limited to online news and confirmed to the sources, women who wear veils, cadar, headscarves and do not cover their private parts. For future studies, a comprehensive study is needed to gain a deep understanding of the meaning of Awrah and its practice in Muslim life.

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