

**LEMBAR
HASIL PENILAIAN SEJAWAT SEBIDANG ATAU PEER REVIEW
KARYA ILMIAH : PROSIDING**

Judul Artikel : *The Strengthening of Veiled Women Self-Identity through Facebook and Instagram*
 Nama Pengusul : Tri Wahyuti, M.Si
 Jumlah Penulis : 2
 Status Pengusul : Penulis ke-2
 Identitas Prosiding : a. Judul Prosiding : *Annual International Conference on Social and Humanities (4.0 Revolution: Religiosity, Identity and Social Transformation*
 b. ISBN/ISSN : 2685-273X
 c. Thn. Terbit, Tempat: 2019, Jogjakarta
 d. Web Prosiding : http://aicosh.uin-suka.ac.id/media/dokumen_akademik/072_20200122_Buku%202020Proceeding%20ISSN.pdf
 e. Terindex di : -

Kategori Publikasi Prosiding (beri pada kategori yang tepat) :

Prosiding Internasional
 Prosiding Nasional
 Prosiding Terindex Scopus

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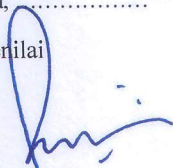
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Jakarta, 19/11/2021

Perilai



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 Jabatan Akademik (KUM) : Lektor (200)
 Pendidikan Terakhir : Doktor Ilmu Komunikasi

The Strengthening of Veiled Women Self-Identity through Facebook and Instagram

by Tri Wahyuti

Submission date: 11-Nov-2021 08:10PM (UTC-0500)

Submission ID: 1700273117

File name: 072_20200122_Buku_2_Proceeding_ISSN_copy-7-8.pdf (363.4K)

Word count: 3271

Character count: 17778

The Strengthening of Veiled Women Self-Identity through Facebook and Instagram

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Abstract— Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. Although Muslim is the major religion in the country, only a few moslem women wear veil. Veil or niqab (in Arabic) is a cloth for covering head or face (for women). Alvares Research Centre (2018) has revealed that the number of women wearing veil is less than 2%. The small number is caused by the society's different perspectives. To the pro, wearing a veil is a way to be closer to God and to elevate their Islam faith. Those who wear veil in the digital age do social relation through social media network such as Facebook and Instagram. They tend to do selfies in the hope to strengthen their self identity as a Moslem woman. The research objective is to know how veiled women show their identity in social media. According to Littlejohn, identity is meaning which is learned and obtained by self and is projected to others whenever they communicate (2). This is a descriptive qualitative research which explains the strengthening of veiled women self identity through Facebook and Instagram. This divides the results of research into two sections of self identity. Firstly, the subjective dimension, which is the emotion or feeling of veiled women when socializing in Facebook and Instagram. Secondly, the ascribed dimension, which is what others say about self, in this case the description of their followers about veiled women. The informants consist of four people; two veiled women who are active in social media and two women who are the followers of the accounts.

Keywords— veiled, women, self identity, subjective dimension, ascribed dimension, Facebook, Instagram

INTRODUCTION

Not only do clothes function as nonverbal communication, but they also act as culture representation. Regarding communication, veil or *niqab* or *cadar* has recently been worn to send messages that the user is a pious Moslem woman who has answered the calling of the Alquran and Hadits. Culturally, however, veil is widely worn by Arabic women since it is their traditional cloth. However, according to Shihab, covered clothes do not originate from Arab yet it is spread in the Persian nations (5). Still based on Shihab, the harsh condition faced by many people in the Arab region had resulted in the obligation of wearing a cover for woman (5). So, it was supposedly due to philosophical rationale, *jihad*, and safety (5).

What others say about a veiled woman? There are several controversies related to veil. Others who do not wear veil perceive that veiled women are not easy to socialize with. Furthermore, some stigmatize them as being close to terrorist. In contrast, some others accept veiled women as they are part of the community where they are living. As long as they can socialize with others, people will welcome them wholeheartedly.

The phenomenon of social media has also been captured by veiled community. To date more than 30 thousand people have followed niqabsquad's instagram and facebook accounts. Most of its posts are about sermon, altruism, Alquran and hadits reminders. Along with other similar accounts, researchers have been interested in obtaining deeper understanding about veiled women.

A number of authors have written about veiled women in various perspectives. However, only few have written about veiled women in social media. First, Syarifuddin, Nursalam, and Indra Tanra's research reveals that people in Luwu have negative perception on veiled women (6). Veiled women are regarded as strangers and therefore being alienated. This study uses descriptive qualitative method and case study approach. (Sociology study Equilibrium Journal ISSN e-2477-0221 p 2339-2401 Vol III, No.1, Mei 2015). Second, Rahman and Syafiq's research shows that the motivation to be pious Moslem women have triggered them to wear a veil although they are still facing stigma as fanatics or members of terrorist (7). They are dealing with the stigma by ignoring or clarifying it. (Psychology Journal, 2017, Vol 7, No.2, 103-115, ISSN 2087-1708). Next is a study about the communication of veiled women written by Musrifah. Using phenomenological perspective, the study shows that veiled women communicate in Arabic within their community. They are also aware of the labeling given by others (8). (Alam tara, Communication and Islam Broadcasting Journal, Volume I No 1, June 2017). Then, a paper written by Nurul Afifah regarding *syar'i* clothes, media, and piety construction has revealed that the discourse of *syar'i* clothing is part of the emergence of new Islamic movement in Indonesia (9). (Sociology Reflektif, Volume 3 No1, Oktober 2018). Finally Nasrullah's paper on the construction of Moslem identity in social media shows that modernity and technology have played important roles in shaping self-identity (10). The research has explained about the inner motivation and how they are coping with labeling (10). (Komunika, Preaching, and Communication Journal).

Based on the aforementioned papers, issues on the veiled women and their followers must be covered and analyzed. Therefore, it is interesting to know how they interact inside and outside their community. Also, it is important to acknowledge the perception of their followers on social media.

The main theory we use in this research is identity theory by Littlejohn. According to Littlejohn and Foss, identity is a mixture of individual and society which is connected by communication (2). Our identity defines our community membership through symbols, words, and meanings. Feeling, thought, action, and transcendence are identity dimensions (2). Although it stays, identity undergoes changing process. Identity is formed through social interaction and communication. The subjective dimensions of identity is your definition of yourself while the ascribed dimensions is other people's opinion about you. The subjective and ascribed dimensions both consist of four layers. First, personal layer. It is our concept within your social environment which comprises of feelings and ideas. Second, enactment layer. It is other people's perspectives about you based on your behavior, attitude, action, possession. Third, relational layer. It is an identity which encloses with your roles and builds through interactions with others. Lastly, communal layer. It is the identity that is attributed to bigger society or culture (2).

The supporting theory is symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead. Based on Littlejohn, *Symbolic Interactionism or SI is a movement within sociology focusing on the ways in which people form meaning and structure in society through conversation. SI is a way of thinking about mind, self, and society. With foundations in the field of sociology, SI teaches that as people interact with one another over time, they come to share meanings for terms and actions verbally and nonverbally. Through action and response, we come to assign meaning to words and actions and thereby come to understand events in particular ways (3)*. Symbolic interactionism has three main concepts namely mind, self, and society (3). Mind can be developed through interaction with others using languages as symbols of interaction (3). Self is defined as the ability to reflect self from other's point of views. Society is social structure or social network which consists of individuals and interaction (3).

The last concept we use is new media. There are five characteristics of new media, according to Friedman and Friedman, which are communication, collaboration, community, creativity, convergence (1). Communication occurs in new media is two ways in which user can also do such a collaboration with other users. Users can form new virtual community in the platform (1). Besides, new media channels provide its users with creativity experience through user-generated content (1). New media convergence is formed through media or technology convergence (1).

RESEARCH METHOD

The research uses descriptive qualitative method. To gather data, we use in-depth interviews as primary data by interviewing four informants. They are IM, NG, CH, PU and they aged between 18-20 years old. They have been wearing veil since 2017. IM and NG are interviewed as social media users while CH and PU are as their followers. The social media platforms that they prefer using are instagram and facebook. The secondary data is gathered from observation and literary study. Neuwman stated that *... In qualitative studies, we measure with alternatives to numbers, and measurement is less a separate research step. Because the process is more inductive, we are measuring and creating new concepts simultaneously with the process of gathering data. In qualitative research, we measure while in when the data collection phase. Regarding data, in qualitative research, data sometimes come in the forms of numbers; more often the data are written or spoken words, actions, sounds, symbols, physical objects or visual images (e.g., maps, photographs, videos) ... a qualitative study does not convert all observations into a single, common medium such as numbers but leaves the data in a variety of nonstandard shapes, sizes, and forms. While numerical data convert information into a standard and condensed format, qualitative data are voluminous, diverse, and nonstandard. In qualitative research, we also reflect on concepts before gathering data ... In short, most of our thinking and measurement decisions occur in the midst of gathering data, and the data are in a diffuse form (4)*. Our concept of veil is taken from dictionary.com which means a piece of opaque or transparent material worn over the face for concealment, for protection from the elements, or to enhance the appearance. However, this definition is slightly different from our concept of veil because the veil worn by Moslem women is not transparent but rather thick material.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Self-Identity of the Veiled Women

Research has revealed that the informants' decision to wear veil is greatly influenced by the environment where they are attending religious studies. In the subjective dimension, veil for them is a piece of cloth that can bring comfort without worrying about the opposite sex's disturbance. Wearing veil also means a responsibility to God for becoming a better self, such as manner, speech and socialization.

In the first step, personal layer where an individual expresses self within social environment in this case through social media is by knowledge sharing in Facebook or Instagram. Self-identity of the veiled women is to become religious individuals. Since they wore veil, informants admit to have been more careful with the posts they want to share with. They usually confirm the information before sharing.

"This time I prefer posting for preaching such as how to do *sholat*, prayers, *sunnah* fasting and so on. I usually post with pictures and captions. The pictures shown are *Al Quran* verses or supporting hadits" (NG).

To reveal their self-identity, the veiled women never expose self-photo neither from the front, side nor back. They prefer changing it to objects like a bowl of soup or any other photo objects. However, the frequency of showing those photos are less often than that of preaching.

In the second layer, enactment layer, which is related to the self of a veiled woman, they said that they were associated with terrorists. However, they believe that the stigma will be fading if they maintain good relations with their social environment. By showing positive attitude their friends will be comfortable with their being. Enactment layer is also shown through how their friends can accept them. Nonetheless, they cannot deny that having been wearing veil, their friends or followers do not seem to favor their social media post even tend to debate their thoughts.

"To me, view differences in preaching is common. I usually try to explain my view but if my followers cannot accept it, I let it become a difference and do not impose people to accept my opinion" (NG).

On the third level, relational, the informants admit that social relationships have changed since the wore veil. For example, they do not date or have special relationship with opposite sex. They are more comfortable with *taaruf* concept. Informants NG and IM also reveal that they are not friends with males even their male followers or friends have never contacted them anymore. They realize that wearing veil bring such consequences, however, they believe that their male friends are doing it for positive reason due to their new identity as a veiled woman. The informants do not do other social relationship that commonly do by other youths.

"I used to watch movies with my friends but I do not watch movies anymore. I have stopped doing it since I wore a veil back in 2017 because I think watching movies is useless especially for my later life"(IM).

Fourth level, communal layer, IM and NG agree that social networking is useful only for better religion-based knowledge like attending community program for knowledge sharing. They think that attending religious studies can strengthen their spirituality and can bring lots of good deeds. Having attended these studies, they can later share the knowledge with other friends through social media. In short, their self-identity as a pious and obedient being is consistently implemented in daily routine activities. Anything opposing Alquran and *Sunnah* are strictly forbidden. They keep on trying to do things that are useful and are solely blessed by God Almighty.

Social Relations of the Veiled Women

The results of ascribed dimension are revealed from two informants who are the followers of NG and IM namely PU and CH. PU and CH state that befriending veiled individuals on social media are interesting. Although in the beginning they had disputes on wearing veil and their relation was put into a halt, CH admits that because of NG's good attitude and behavior, CH wants to befriend back with NG. Some aspects of relationship such as appreciation, patience, openness make them feel comfortable and not bother their friends' decision to wear veil. PU and CH say that their friends' social media posts are mostly about preaching and they often miss the posts when their friends' do not upload anything.

"I feel I am lost when there is no post of my friends NG and IM. Where are they..., maybe that makes a difference because what they post are more about preaching, *sunnah*, and so on"(PU).

Regarding social relations, PU and CH admire their friends' behavior when giving advice. They do not publish it publicly otherwise they direct-message them. Besides social media, they maintain close relation in real life. They still hang out, eat out or enjoy holiday together. In the context of ascribed dimension we can conclude that the followers' opinion on veiled women is positive because it can motivate them to be better individuals. Their veiled friends' approach make them comfortable so there is no difference between veiled and unveiled women. It is all due to the behavior.

B. Subjective Dimension

The personal layer of subjective dimension is how an individual feels about herself. In the case of veiled women, they perceive themselves as religious learners of Islam teachings. They use social media platforms to share knowledge and understanding about the religion. Quotes of Alquran and Hadits are common in their posts. The personal layer of ascribed dimension is what others perceive about you. The followers of veiled women see them as role models whose social media posts are learned and anticipated.

The enactment layer of subjective dimension focuses on your relations with others. In our research, veiled women have a strong relationship with others although their relations are commonly homogenous. Veiled women prefer relating with women to men due to religion restriction. Meanwhile, the enactment layer of ascribed dimension is focused on the followers' thoughts on the veiled women's posts and their relations with their veiled friends. They have been supportive with their friends and even longing for their posts.

The relational layer of subjective dimension focal point is the veiled women's position to others. The veiled women prefer commenting on other people's posts indirectly through direct messages. They do it because they do not want to embarrass others. They also prevent themselves from enjoying entertainment such as watching movies in cinemas and hanging out with men. The relational layer of ascribed dimension focuses on the followers' relation with their veiled friends. They keep befriending their friends who have decided to wear veil. They also think that their veiled friends are polite and kind human beings and worth their respect.

The communal layer of subjective dimension is about the veiled women's relations with bigger community. Veiled women do not necessarily join a community. They move from one preaching group to another because they are not attached with a particular group. Their main concern is the topic of the teaching not the group or community. The communal layer of ascribed dimension is about their perception on their veiled friends' relation in community. Since they are friends with their veiled friends, they do not see that their veiled friends take part in a certain community either on social media or in real life.

In relation to Mead's symbolic interactionism, the first way to understand about others is to comprehend self. The Mead's mind and society are associated with enactment, relational, and communal layers. By interacting with others, the self develops into a better individual or identity. So, both subjective and ascribed dimensions meet with Mead's symbolic interactionism.

CONCLUSION

Veil is a symbol of a Moslem woman's piety. Wearing a veil means a form of one's identity who has a solid understanding of Islam. Subjective dimension of the four layers namely personal, enactment, relational, and communal of a veiled woman is consistently implemented according to Alquran and Hadits principles. The veiled women believe that Alquran and Hadits are keys to truth and responsibilities.

In the context of ascribed dimensions, veiled women are positively linked to good deeds and deep understanding of the religion. Although in the beginning of wearing a veil a woman seemed to be detached with their friends and family – especially as it is identical with a terrorist – the stigma has faded due to the kindness and politeness shown by the veiled women themselves. They can maintain strong relationship and

socialization with their environment. All in all, there is no significant difference between veiled women and nonveiled women because what matter is the behavior when they interact with others..

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is an independent study based on the basic theme of research at Department of Communication Studies, Universitas Paramadina. We would like to thank the Faculty of Philosophy and Civilization and Department of Communication Studies, Universitas Paramadina, Jakarta. We would also like to thank the informants for their valuable contribution.

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EVIDENCE

Choose a variety of credible sources that relate the topic.

ADVANCED	The writing identifies the most appropriate, credible sources that relate to the chosen topic. A sufficient variety of sources is presented.
PROFICIENT	The writing identifies sufficient, credible sources that relate to the chosen topic. A variety of sources is presented.
DEVELOPING	The writing mostly identifies sources that relate to the chosen topic, but some sources may be insufficient and/or lack credibility. A variety of sources may be lacking.
EMERGING	The writing does not identify sources that relate to the topic and/or sources lack credibility. Few sources are present.

SUMMARY

Present summaries of the sources.

ADVANCED	The writing presents accurate, clear summaries of the sources. Each summary thoroughly addresses the main idea and key supporting details.
PROFICIENT	The writing presents accurate summaries of the sources. Each summary includes the main idea and key supporting details.
DEVELOPING	The writing presents summaries of the sources, but summaries may be incomplete and/or inaccurate. Some summaries may be missing the main idea and/or key supporting details.
EMERGING	The writing presents minimal summaries of the sources and/or summaries are missing.

ANALYSIS

Demonstrate analysis and discussion of the sources, and articulate their connections to the topic.

ADVANCED	The writing demonstrates an insightful critical analysis and discussion of the sources. The writing thoroughly examines why sources were selected and how they relate to the topic. The writing draws connections between sources and broader ideas in the topic.
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PROFICIENT	The writing demonstrates a critical analysis and discussion of the sources. The writing examines why sources were selected and how they relate to the topic. The writing may draw some connections between sources and broader ideas in the topic.
DEVELOPING	The writing demonstrates some analysis and/or discussion of the sources. The writing attempts to describe why sources were selected and/or how they relate to the topic.
EMERGING	The writing demonstrates little to no analysis and/or discussion of the sources. The writing does not describe why sources were selected and/or how they relate to the topic.

CITATION

Produce citations in the standard bibliographic format.

ADVANCED	The writing follows the defined bibliographic format to accurately cite the sources. Citations are complete and error-free.
PROFICIENT	The writing follows the defined bibliographic format to cite the sources. Citations are complete, but may include minimal errors.
DEVELOPING	The writing attempts to follow the defined bibliographic format to cite the sources. Citations may be incomplete and/or include errors.
EMERGING	The writing does not follow the defined bibliographic format to cite the sources. Citations may be missing and/or include several errors.

FORMAT

Follow the specified format for the assignment.

ADVANCED	The writing adheres to the precise format (i.e. line spacing, indentation, number of entries, entry length, etc.) specified for the assignment.
PROFICIENT	The writing generally adheres to the appropriate format (i.e. line spacing, indentation, number of entries, entry length, etc.) specified for the assignment.
DEVELOPING	The writing attempts to adhere to the appropriate format (i.e. line spacing, indentation, number of entries, entry length, etc.) specified for the assignment, but strays at times.
EMERGING	The writing does not adhere to the appropriate format (i.e. line spacing, indentation, number of entries, entry length, etc.) specified for the assignment.

LANGUAGE

Use domain-specific vocabulary and appropriate language to communicate ideas.

ADVANCED	The writing uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to discuss the sources. If errors are present, they do not interfere with meaning.
PROFICIENT	The writing generally uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to discuss the sources. The writing may contain some errors, but they do not interfere with meaning.
DEVELOPING	The writing uses some precise language that may be domain-specific at times to discuss the sources. The writing contains some errors that may interfere with meaning.
EMERGING	The writing presents general language and is not domain-specific. The writing contains several errors that interfere with meaning.