

COUNTERMARGINALIZATION AND FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING: A CASE STUDY OF MUSLIM SEXUAL MINORITIES IN INDONESIA

Thesis

**Submitted to meet the Graduation Requirements of
Master's Degree (MA in Islamic Studies)**



by:

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

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Belonging: A Case Study of Muslim Sexual
Minorities in Indonesia**

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**Submitted to Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to fill the existing gap in the discussion between Islam and sexual minority groups by exploring the strategies and methods that are employed by Muslim sexual minorities group in Indonesia in claiming their part as wider Indonesian Muslims. The research object of this study is Amar Alfikar, a transmale individual that represents an understudied subject within sexuality discourse. This thesis intends to particularly observe the trajectory of the advocacy of Alfikar in promoting alternative interpretation in Islamic studies. By employing Social Identity Theory developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner as the theoretical framework, this thesis delves further into the advocacy and community of Alfikar and argues that Iqamah, an Islamic study community established by him serves as a representation of a new reality. The research methodology involves qualitative method, which focuses on analyzing his book 'Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies' and observing the Iqamah community. Literature review was used to critically analyze the ideas and alternative interpretations that Alfikar advocates in 'Queer Menafsir,' while digital ethnography is employed by being part of Iqamah to observe the activities of the members. The findings of the study indicate that to be part of the wider Indonesian Muslim community, Iqamah serves as an alternate reality that caters for their experiences as part of Indonesian Muslims and fosters their sense of belonging. This research also emphasizes the paradox of tolerance that is applied towards sexual minority communities in Indonesia and suggests that equating the definition of tolerance as one of possible solution in situating the position of minorities community within the wider Indonesian community.

Keywords: *Indonesian Muslim community, transmale, sexual minority, tolerance.*

ملخص البحث

الدراسة تهدف إلى سد الفجوة الحالية في المناقشة بين الإسلام ومجموعات الأقليات الجنسية من خلال استكشاف الاستراتيجيات والأساليب التي تستخدمها مجموعات الأقليات الجنسية المسلمة في إندونيسيا في المطالبة بجزءها كجزء من المسلمين الإندونيسيين بشكل أوسع. وكان موضوع البحث في هذه الدراسة هو أمر الفيكار، وهو فرد متحول جنسيًا يمثل موضوعًا لم يتم دراسته بشكل كبير في نقاش الجنسية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى مراقبة تحديدًا مسار الدعوة المستدامة لأمر الفيكار لتعزيز تفسيرات بديلة في دراسات الإسلام. باستخدام نظرية الهوية الاجتماعية التي وضعها هنري تاجفيل وجون تيرنر كإطار نظري، يناقش هذا البحث بعمق الدعوة والمجتمع التابع لأمر الفيكار وتقدم حجة تفيد بأن "الإقامة"، وهي مجتمع دراسات إسلامية أسسه أمر الفيكار، تمثل تمثيلًا لواقع جديد. منهجية البحث تشمل الأسلوب النوعي، حيث يتم التركيز على تحليل كتابه "تفسير الغريب: اللاهوت الإسلامي للجسم المتنوع" ومراقبة مجتمع "الإقامة". تم استخدام استعراض الأدب لتحليل الأفكار والتفسيرات البديلة التي يروج لها أمر الفيكار في "تفسير الغريب"، في حين تم توظيف الإثنوغرافيا الرقمية عن طريق المشاركة في "الإقامة" لمراقبة أنشطة الأعضاء. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن "الإقامة" تمثل واقعًا بديلًا يأخذ في اعتباره تجاربهم كجزء من المسلمين الإندونيسيين ويعزز شعورهم بالانتماء. تسلط هذه البحث الضوء أيضًا على تناقض التسامح الذي يتم تطبيقه تجاه مجتمعات الأقليات الجنسية في إندونيسيا وتشير إلى أن تسوية تعريف التسامح كإحدى الحلول الممكنة لوضع موقف مجتمعات الأقليات ضمن المجتمع الإندونيسي الأوسع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مجتمع المسلمين الإندونيسي، فرد متحول جنسيًا، الأقليات الجنسية، التسامح.

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

IJMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM FOR ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKISH

CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

	A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	—	ز	z	z	z	z	ك	k	k or g	k or ñ	k or n
ب	b	b	b	b or p	ژ	—	zh	j	j				ory	ory
پ	—	p	p	p	س	s	s	s	s				or ğ	or ğ
ت	t	t	t	t	ش	sh	sh	ş	ş	گ	—	g	g	g
ث	th	s	s	s	ص	ş	ş	ş	s	ل	l	l	l	l
ج	j	j	c	c	ض	ḍ	ẓ	ẓ	z	م	m	m	m	m
چ	—	ch	ç	ç	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	t	ن	n	n	n	n
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	h	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	z	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
خ	kh	kh	h	h	ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	—	و	w	v or u	v	v
د	d	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	g or ğ	g or ğ	ي	y	y	y	y
ذ	dh	z	z	z	ف	f	f	f	f	ة	a ²			
ر	r	r	r	r	ق	q	q	q	k	ال				

¹ When h is not final. ² In construct state: at. ³ For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

	ARABIC AND PERSIAN	OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH
<i>Long</i>	ا or آ ā	ā { words of Arabic and Persian origin only
	و ū	
	ي ī	
<i>Doubled</i>	ئِ iy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)
	وُ uw (final form ū)	uvv
<i>Diphthongs</i>	أ au or aw	ev
	أِ ai or ay	ey
<i>Short</i>	ا a	a or e
	و u	u or ü / o or ö
	ي i	i or i

For Ottoman Turkish, authors may either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography.

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With heartfelt gratitude,

Maysa Sonia Alam Rahman,

August 17, 2023

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CHAPTER I

Research Introductory

1.1. Introduction

The widespread and active movement from humanitarian organizations along with several associations aiming at advocating gender equality in Indonesia leads to increasingly interesting dynamic of sexual minority individuals in Indonesia. As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, the attitudes toward sexual minorities are influenced by Islamic teachings that can create certain challenges for these individuals. Criticism and rejections are expected reactions, considering the rise of Muslim hardliner organizations in Indonesia¹. However, there are certainly increased interest and awareness in the general discussion of Islam and sexuality and specifically in the queer discourse. One of the possible reasons for this is the mushrooming of LGBT movement – the term LGBT is used as an umbrella term for all people outside the heteronormative society – movement not only in Indonesia but also in other Muslim countries and Muslim-majority countries, which led to anti-LGBT movements from the majority of various Muslim organizations and figures. Therefore, there are numerous queer Muslims, activists, and scholars that are working towards an alternative interpretation on Quranic verses and hadiths that supposedly used in classical *fiqh* to determine the punishments for homosexual acts, such as Scott Kugle, Samar Habib, and Shannon Shah.

Albeit, the discussion of gender and sexuality in classical *fiqh* shows no further development in covering the intricacies in gender and sexuality issues that emerge nowadays, this discourse is not an unfamiliar topic in Islamic law. There are already several terms used to refer to people outside of heteronormativity, such as *khuntsa* and *mukhannats*. Biologically, *khuntsa* refers to intersex, a biological condition where people are born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definitions of male or female. Although, there are more detailed classification depends on the condition and inclination experienced by each individual, such as the genitals used for urinating, the growth of breasts, moustaches, and beards that may act as a reference to classify a person in a gender binary. Additionally, there are also *khuntsa musykil*, which refers to those whose sexuality may experience different case in which they have both female and male genitals.

¹ Muwahidah, “National (In)Security and Identity Boundaries: The Rise of Muslim Conservative Propaganda in Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.5.1.01>.

Meanwhile, *mukhannats* refers to those who are born anatomically as a male but acts and appears as a female. although *mukhannats* is more suitable to refer as transfemale, some still confuse it with homosexual behavior. One of the hadith regarding *mukhannath* is: *The Prophet cursed the effeminate men (al-mukhannathīn min al-rijāl) and masculine women (al-mutarajjilt min al-nisā) and said: "Chase them out of your homes."* (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5886).

Arguments that use this hadith (and other versions) against sexual minorities community, particularly transgender, has obtained a lot of opposition from recent academics who support or are part of queer Muslims, that stresses their argument strongly on the notion of humanity. Some of reformist scholars see that Qur'an and Hadith support the general movement of justice. However, they do not define the final form that justice should take². Therefore, they are working towards reforming *Sharī'a* and reinterpreting Quranic verses and Hadith and stressing on the notion of humanity that respect the worth of queer lives. Queer Muslims begin to negotiate their self-contradictions and create a safe space to express their gender and religion simultaneously. The emergence of the famous *pesantren* Al-Fatah for *waria* is one of the concrete forms of how people outside the norms of heteronormativity also need a place to express their religious freedom³.

However, in this scope of my research, I intend to fill the gap by observing the struggle of sexual minorities community in Indonesia by thoroughly examining the movement of Amar Alfikar as the representation of an understudied subject within sexual minorities community in Indonesia, which is transmale individuals. In comparison to transwomen or known in Indonesia as *waria* who have socially accepted in some level by broader Indonesian society, transmale individuals experience higher level of marginalization, both in terms of social acceptance and limited scholarly attention towards their dynamics in Indonesia⁴. The reasons behind this marginalization will be further elaborated in Chapter Three of this thesis, which will delve into the dynamics of sexual minorities community in Indonesia starting by the Anti-LGBT movement in Indonesia and

² Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (Oxford, England: Oneworld, 2011), 94.

³ Terje Toomistu, "Thinking through the s(k)in: Indonesian Waria and Bodily Negotiations of Belonging across Religious Sensitivities," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50, no. 146 (January 2, 2022): 92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2015187>.

⁴ Danny Gordon and Mario Prajna Pratama, "Mapping Discrimination Experienced by Indonesian Trans* FtM Persons," *Journal of Homosexuality* 64, no. 9 (July 29, 2017): 1284, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1244446>.

followed by transmale individuals in Indonesia represented by Amar Alfikar, a transmale individuals who attempts to claim his position within the broader Indonesian Muslim community.

This research will first delve into the discourse of sexual minorities community both in Islamic and Indonesian context, since a broader context is required before focusing on the alternative interpretation that accommodates sexual minorities community as part of wider Muslims that is advocated by Amar Alfikar through various means. Looking from historical context, people who are now included in the spectrum of LGBT community such as *waria* have enjoyed certain privileges in the colonial era due to the less bad stigmatization in which occurs in the recent era⁵. One of the main factors in the increase tension between sexual minorities community and Indonesian Muslims is the rise of Muslim hardliner organizations⁶. Among their various campaigns are propagating the Anti-LGBT movement. Their propaganda is proven to work with the rise of public rejections toward the queer community, one of them is the attack of *pesantren* Al Fatah by FJI (Jihad Islam Front) in 2016. *Pesantren* Al Fatah itself as an embodiment of a safe space created by Muslims of sexual minorities, where *pesantren* acts as the ‘new pattern of reality’ that accept them as part of the surroundings and a way to negotiate between religion and common punitive understanding regarding queer Muslims. Shanon Shah presents another example from his observation where *gay* men of Malaysia living in Britain creates their ‘new reality’ by holding *iftār* that provided *gay* Muslims with opportunities to express their religious identities freely⁷.

Wikke Jansen argues that there is classification in the body of sexual minorities community, where there have been less scholarly studies toward Muslim sexual minorities community that are born as female; which is queer female and transmale individuals⁸. The concept of visibility that Jansen displays in her argument focuses more toward the exposure to the heteronormative society and the different level of discrimination of both ‘visible’

⁵ Fran Martin, ed., *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 90.

⁶ Muwahidah, “National (In)Security and Identity Boundaries,” 3.

⁷ Shah Shanon, *The Making of a Gay Muslim: Religion, Sexuality and Identity in Malaysia and Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 151, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09637494.2018.1552578>.

⁸ Wikke Jansen, “Living on the Line: Gendered Invisibilities among Queer Women and Transmen in Indonesia,” *Asian Studies Review*, June 27, 2022, 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2022.2090502>.

and ‘invisible’ group, whereas Jansen argues that queer efforts in their social inclusion remain entangled with heteronormative and patriarchal structures which impacted on those who are born as with ‘female’ label. Her argument is intriguing as it affects the different approach of each group in negotiating their religion, and while invisibility has caused marginalization, Jansen argues that it also comes with certain privileges – that will be explained below – in the context of negotiating their position in heteronormative society.

This research will take a close observation in the struggle used by Amar Alfikar. Alfikar was then a daughter of a Kyai – title for respective religious leader – from Kendal, East Java. He was known as ‘Ning’ Amalia. ‘Ning’ is a term used as a title for a daughter of a Kyai. His religious background may be a potential reason why his coming out stands out from the others. However, Alfikar gained public attention after his transition went ‘viral’ on the internet in 2019, and recently in early 2023 where he published a book titled ‘Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies’ and the title appeared as a trending key word in Twitter. The emergence of Amar Alfikar immediately represents marginalized Muslim sexual minorities. His transition argues against common stereotypes, for instance that transsexuals were brought up in a household of females or their perceived sexual abuse history in their household⁹, owing to the fact that he grew up in a traditional religious Muslim family. He is now a transman queer activist advocating on inclusivity agenda on Islamic interpretation.

Among programs that he initiates in social media is Iqamah (Indonesian Queer Muslim dan Allies). Iqamah serves as a space for queer Muslims to express their piety and establishing religious discussions. Iqamah accepts members from diverse identities and backgrounds, including non-Muslim, because it also establishes cross-faith discussions, although the theological foundation of Iqamah is leaning toward Islamic theology. One of their activity is *ngaji* inklusi. *Ngaji* is Indonesian term that refers to act of studying and reciting Qur’an. *Ngaji* may also refers to act of engaging in Islamic discussions. While inklusi refers to alternative interpretations that are advocated by Amar Alfikar that accommodates the presence of sexual minorities individuals in Islamic context. This work observes how Amar Alfikar serves Iqamah with a similar objective – to provide a platform for sexual minority group to delve into teachings of Islam and explore issues pertaining to gender and sexuality issues. This initiative was driven by the lack of inclusivity in existing religious discussion spaces for sexual minority groups. This concept of a ‘safe space’ that

⁹ Teh, *AsiaPacifiQueer*, 125.

Iqamah employs resonates with the establishment of *pesantren* Al-Fatah¹⁰, in terms of creating inclusive environment for sexual minority groups that have been historically overlooked. Iqamah as a safe space is in line with Mary Douglas' theory of 'new pattern of reality,'¹¹ where religious and social rejection of sexual minorities community may lead an attempt to create an alternate reality in which they have a place to belong. Alfikar has also created a space of his own by using his social media accounts to express his gender identity and spread Islamic interpretation that aligns with his advocacy and understanding, with Iqamah as one of his representation of this 'safe space.' As an update to this research, Iqamah community has become a target of disapproval by several groups in Indonesian society due to the proposed ASEAN level meeting of LGBT community which was originally planned to take place in Jakarta under the auspices of the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus¹². Consequently, the official Iqamah Instagram account disappeared and an account claiming to be Iqamah emerged. However, the counterfeit account was eventually taken down, and the official account reappeared with different username and logo. Furthermore, the Iqamah WhatsApp group was disbanded to ensure the safety of its members and the group is relocates to another platform.

In extend, this research questions the limit of tolerance that is employed by wider Indonesian Muslims community towards sexual minorities community. The question raises from the seemingly a paradox between the rapid growth of Anti-LGBT advocacy in Indonesia and the recognition of publicly known queer figures such as the *waria* renowned celebrity Dorce Gamalama, Lucinta Luna, including Amar Alfikar. Setting limit of tolerance in the context of SOGIESC in Indonesia is deemed crucial for both Indonesian community and sexual minorities individual living in Indonesia, in terms of equating perception and definition of the tolerance itself to avoid potential fraction resulting from failing to accommodate the demand of marginalized groups particularly sexual minorities community to be part of wider Indonesian community.

Therefore, to make an attempt in unraveling this phenomenon, I intend to conduct my research that focusing on observing the attempts of sexual minorities community to

¹⁰ Pesantren Al-Fatah is a religious institution catering specifically for *waria*. It was founded by the late Shinta Ratri (D. 2023) located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

¹¹ Mary Douglas and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, vol. 2, Collected Works / Mary Douglas (London New York: Routledge, 2003), 39.

¹² Organization that advocates human rights of LGBTQIA, non-binary, and gender diverse persons in Southeast Asia.

counter their marginalization with Amar Alfikar and his advocacy as object of my research. The reason why I am interested to take Alfikar as my case study is because as a transman, Alfikar is part of the understudied subject in the queer subjectivities discourse in Southeast Asia. Hence, this research intends to fill the gap by observing the understudied subject within the scope of queer subjectivities and the struggle to claim the position as part of wider Indonesian Muslim community.

1.2. Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to fill the existing gap in the discussion between Islam and sexual minority groups, particularly regarding the dynamic of transmale individuals' experiences in Indonesia. While there is an abundance of research focusing on transfemales in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesian *waria*, there is a significant lack of research examining the dynamics of transmale individuals in Indonesia, unless it is in conjunction with other vulnerable groups (with a notable exception being the article by Danny Gordon and Mario Prajna Pratama in 2017 that focuses their research on discriminations toward transmale individuals in Indonesia). The purpose of this study is meticulously mapping the trajectory of Amar Alfikar's movement as representation of Muslim transmale in Indonesia which considerably has received limited scholarly attention. This research aims to map the advocacy of Amar Alfikar in promoting alternative interpretations that cater to sexual minority groups through critical analysis of Amar Alfikar's book "Queer Menafsir" and conducting digital ethnography on Iqamah.

Through this observation, the research aims to explore the strategies and methods employed by sexual minority groups in negotiating and asserting their position within both state and religion. Furthermore, the research seeks to understand the advocacy of Alfikar and place it in the broader context of Islamic discourse and SOGIESC. The thesis also aims to examine the strategies used by sexual minority groups in Indonesia, utilizing the case study of Amar Alfikar, in claiming their position as part of the majority Muslim community and navigate the challenges faced in negotiating interpretations that are accommodated by the government by using Islam as a means to foster a sense of belonging within broader Indonesian Muslim community. Additionally, this research attempts to set a limit of tolerance that is applied in Indonesia towards sexual minorities community that I argue crucial to avoid potential fraction among Indonesian community resulting from failing in equating expectation and accommodating the aspirations of marginalized minority groups.

1.3. Research Questions

This research aims to answer following questions: First, how does Muslim individuals of sexual minorities community attempt to be part of a wider Indonesian Muslim community? And second, how does Indonesian community set a limit of tolerance that is imposed toward sexual minorities community in Indonesia? By addressing these questions, this research aims to make a substantial contribution in the discourse of not only sexual minority groups but other minority groups, particularly in situating themselves within the wider Indonesian community.

1.4. Literature Review

Although I already mentioned that *fiqh* are familiar with some of the non-heteronormative terms and issues, classical Muslim jurists argue against the existence of the queer community. The same case is applied to contemporary Muslim scholars that still adhere to the stance of their predecessors. Shaykh Yusuf Qaradawi, a pivotal contemporary Muslim scholar denounced the work of gay, lesbian, and transgender Muslim organizations. In an interview with Al-Jazeera TV¹³, Shaykh Qaradawi stated that homosexuality is against nature as the ultimate goal of the creation of man and woman is procreation. He also argues that homosexuality is part of Westernization disguised as human rights or medical science¹⁴. However, procreation as the goal of a pair receive critiques from the opposing side which states that human sexuality is complex. Gender identity is not only limited to reproductive anatomy and human as one of God's creation has the complex qualities, in which have mentioned in the Quran that God is both outer and inner, apparent and hidden (57: 3-4) and reflect in human as His creation.

Nonetheless, some activists and scholars argue the prevailing understanding of Muslim scholars toward sexual minorities community is influenced by a long-standing consensus established by classical Muslim jurists, which extracted through *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) as well as hadith and Quranic interpretation, which serves as the two main guidance for Muslim people. For instance, the story of Prophet Lut tribe, and several narrations of hadith which highlight the conflict between Prophet Muhammad and one of

¹³ <https://youtu.be/NxnVSnnZs0Q> accessed in 7/25/2023.

¹⁴ Scott Kugle and Stephen Hunt, "Masculinity, Homosexuality and the Defence of Islam: A Case Study of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's Media Fatwa," *Igitur Publishing 2* (2012): 266.

the *mukhannath*. Therefore, activists of the rights of sexual minorities offer a different approach to interpret the Quranic verses and Hadith. In the Quranic verses of the tribe of prophet Lut, they highlight that the condemnation of the people is because the inhuman action and the misuse of power rather than homosexuality, in which they use their power to perform non-consensual sex with married men who had no interest in other men¹⁵. Some of the scholars and activists of this discourse interpret the story of Lut's people by arguing that the act of people Lut involves more than *liwāt* but also sexual acts based on concupiscence and not based on consenting love, in addition to other crimes. Kugle also made the analogy of the Prophet Lut's tribe to the story of Prophet Salih's tribe. In the story of Prophet Salih, his tribe killed the sacred camel which Salih had already told to protect and cherish. Kugle stated that the reason of the camel-killing is to show Salih that they reject to believe the prophecy of Salih and the oneness of God, thus why God destroyed the cities of Thamud, and not specifically because of murder of the camel. Kugle argues it would be not suitable to interpret Salih's story as a forbid to slaughter a camel and charges whoever commit the act with death punishment. According to Kugle, applying the same analogy to the story of Lut's tribe means to put aside the 'literal' reading of these verses¹⁶.

In order to understand the wider scheme of the dynamic of LGBT community in Indonesia, we must first acknowledge the historical and political context that lay beneath the mushrooming of anti-LGBT movement as well as resistance of the queer people. The widespread discussion of LGBT emerged in 2016 when the rejection of official permit for SGRC (Support Group and Resource Center on Sexuality Studies) to function under Universitas Indonesia occurred¹⁷. Following this context, Thajib argues that the concept of 'shame' (*malu*) in Indonesia has a role in the actions taken by political figures, religious preachers as well as moral entrepreneurs to ostracize people of sexual minorities; as they share a common context¹⁸. Looking from its dynamic with Muslim communities in Indonesia, the anti-LGBT campaign was one of the three major campaigns that have been promoted by Muslim hardliners organizations as expansions of their conservative

¹⁵ Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed and Adi Bharat, *Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam: A Study of Scripture Confronting the Politics of Gender and Sexuality* (NL Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 27, <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463720311>.

¹⁶ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, 69.

¹⁷ Diego García Rodríguez and Ben Murtagh, "Situating Anti-LGBT Moral Panics in Indonesia: Homophobia, Criminalisation, Acceptance, and Religiosity," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50, no. 146 (January 2, 2022): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2038871>.

¹⁸ Ferdiansyah Thajib, "Discordant Emotions: The Affective Dynamics of Anti-LGBT Campaigns in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50, no. 146 (January 2, 2022): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2005312>.

narratives after the mega rallies *Aksi Bela Islam* that occurred in 2016¹⁹. This expectedly led to series of discriminations and even persecutions towards sexual minorities of Indonesia. The propaganda of Muslim hardliners organization has proven to work in limiting space for all subjects included in the LGBT community, including transsexuals. By associating LGBT with viruses, diseases, causes of disasters, and also Sodomites²⁰, this community have such limited religious freedom.

While there is quite extensive research on LGBT community in Indonesia, researchers on queer subjectivities in Southeast Asian tend to deal more with visible and anti-normative groups such as gay men and transwomen or *waria*. For instance, the negative actions toward homosexuals begun to start after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, as homosexuality has been intersected with religious issues. Therefore, gay men have to deal with at least three type of rejections: moral, social, and self-rejection. On the historical side, transfemale individuals tend to enjoy more freedom in the colonial era due to less bad stigmatization as what they are closely linked in recent era²¹. Even so, the theme of everyday struggle and self-contradictions of queer people of faith when it comes to negotiating their perceived gender and Islam are largely discussed. One of their embodied religious negotiations is Pesantren Al-Fatah for *waria*. Toomistu argues that religion – while being major site of moral contestations of *waria* – may potentially acts as site of empowerment in terms of self-acceptance and inclusion in Indonesian Muslim society²². However, it is noteworthy that although majority of sexual minorities individuals face negative stigmatization, each part of this community has to deal with different level of rejection.

On the other side, there are very limited studies that discuss transmale individuals, specifically their dynamic in religious and national context, which proves that transmale representation in contemporary mainstream activism and community spaces is understudied. A notable exception is the article by Danny Gordon & Mario Prajna Pratama with the title “Mapping Discrimination Experienced by Indonesian Trans* FtM Persons”²³. This article explores the experience of transmale individuals in establishing a public identity in Indonesian social and cultural context. Through literature review and digital ethnography, this article examines the challenges and obstacles faced by transmale

¹⁹ Muwahidah, “National (In)Security and Identity Boundaries,” 3.

²⁰ Muwahidah, 9.

²¹ Teh, *AsiaPacifiQueer*, 90.

²² Toomistu, “Thinking through the s(k)In,” 92.

²³ Gordon and Pratama, “Mapping Discrimination Experienced by Indonesian Trans* FtM Persons.”

individuals in navigating their identities within predominantly Muslim society of Indonesia. This article also highlights the strategies employed by sexual minorities community in claiming their position in national and religious context by engaging in religious practices and contributing in advocacy efforts.

Jansen argues that queer women and transmen – while there are detrimental sides to it – enjoy certain ‘privileges’ including the ability to form their mobility and safety in public places by being invisible, while gay men and *waria* as cis-men encounter more exposures and therefore struggle with higher level of discriminatory practices²⁴. Therefore, I intend to fill the gaps by conducting research on Amar Alfikar with Iqamah community as my case study. As a transmale individual with certain – what Jansen stated as – privileges, Alfikar attempts to break through the invisibility by disseminating Islamic Inclusivity through various programs in social media including ‘ngaji inklusi’ of Iqamah.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

In order to conduct this research, I will be using the Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. SIT is theory that assumes that identity of an individual is derived primarily from group memberships²⁵. According to this theory, people strive for their self-identification by adopting the shared identity and norms of their ingroup as part of their self-concept. This theory highlights that group membership is deemed crucial in shaping one’s behavior and attitudes. This theory also argues that social categorization within certain social groups helps individuals in creating a sense of belonging to a particular group.

1.6. Research Significance

The finding of this study will contribute in filling the gap within the existing studies of queer subjectivities in Southeast Asia by conducting research on considerably understudied subject within queer subjectivities, which is transmale individuals. Second, this research indicates that ‘a new pattern of reality’ is beneficial for minority groups in cater the experience of being part of a wider community without being part of the community and setting limit of tolerance and equating the definition of tolerance may be

²⁴ Jansen, “Living on the Line,” 8–9.

²⁵ Brown Rupert, “Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges,” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2000, 746.

useful for government apparatus in regulating law which situates minority groups within the national context. This work also contributes in the wider literatures of diverse gender and sexualities and its relationship and dynamic within Islamic context. It is hoped that this work will encourage more nuanced and comparative works within this discourse.

1.7. Research Methodology

This research will utilize qualitative method; a case study which focuses on Amar Alfikar's book and his Iqamah community. Focusing on two primary sources: The first one is the book that is published by Amar Alfikar in early 2023 which is 'Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies.' While my second primary source is Iqamah community. This thesis will examine the thoughts and advocacy of the alternative Islamic interpretations promoted by Amar Alfikar. This thesis thoroughly examines the book in Chapter Three and serves critical analysis on the book in Chapter Four. I conduct digital ethnography on Iqamah to experience how Iqamah serves as a safe space for sexual minorities individuals and at the same time an alternate reality where queer Muslims can experience a sense of belonging and experience as part of wider Indonesian Muslims. What I mean by this methodology is that the research is done by joining in Iqamah community as its member for six months and participating in their activities, including *pengajian* that all done online through social media.

1.8. Key Terminologies

Upon writing this thesis, it comes to my understanding that there are several terminologies within this discourse that requires further elaboration to avoid mislead information. Here are some of the terms that I use quite often in this work. It is important to note that some of the terms are still a subject to debate. Therefore, I think it is important to set the definition early on before delving further to the thesis.

- a. LGBT: The global movement that supports the right of non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. The term develops over time to accommodate individuals that lie outside Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. The reason why I choose to use the term LGBT instead of LGBTIQ+ is the former is used and is more

familiar in Indonesian context as an umbrella term to refer to all individuals included in sexual minorities community.

- b. SOGIESC: This term stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression, and Sex Characteristic. This term is introduced by some activists including Amar Alfikar to shift LGBT that some argue has failed to encapsulate diverse genders and sexualities without having connotations to have Western shared liberal values.
- c. Queer: The term queer initially started to refer sexual minorities individuals in a pejorative manner. Although the LGBT community has reshaped its meaning to encompass a wide spectrum of people that lie outside the heteronormativity to counter its derogatory, which is why I use the term in several parts of this research. However, it is important to note that some individuals use this as form of self-identification but others may still consider the term sensitive.

1.9. Research Outline

This research consists of five chapters with description as follows: Chapter One, Introduction. This chapter will explain Introductory explanation that consist of: historical background, literature review, research questions, and methodology. Chapter Two will cover conceptual debates of SOGIESC within the Islamic framework. It will delve further into sacred texts interpretations as well as Islamic regulations during the classical period regarding non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. Chapter Three focuses on the dynamics of sexual minorities community with the spotlight of the transgender comparison study of *waria* and transmale individuals. This chapter will discuss how both communities face different levels of social, national, and religious rejection resulted into distinct strategies in claiming their position within wider Indonesian community. This chapter also thoroughly observes the strategy in claiming position as Muslim employed by Amar Alfikar through a critical analysis of his book ‘Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies.’ This chapter will also discuss Iqamah established by Amar Alfikar as a ‘place to belong’ for sexual minority individuals that seek a safe space where they can express their piety and cater the experiences of being part of the majority to create a sense of belonging. This chapter focuses on Iqamah as an embodiment of a ‘new pattern of reality,’ where queer Muslims as anomalies are treated by creating an environment that considers their existence. This chapter will include the result of my digital ethnography as part of Iqamah members for six months. The last chapter will be the conclusion and the result of my research. Chapter Four will cover my critical analysis on the discourse of Islam & SOGIESC.

Starting by serving critical analysis on ‘Queer Menafsir.’ This chapter also questions the paradox of tolerance that is applied towards sexual minorities community, while attempting to equate the definition of tolerance and setting the limit of tolerance. Chapter Five contains the conclusion of my research.

CHAPTER II

Conceptual Debates of SOGIESC in Islamic Discourse

In this chapter, I will focus on the elaboration on fiqh laws and interpretations of sacred texts that underlie the rejection of sexual minority groups within the Islamic framework. This discussion is deemed important as one of the values advocated by queer activists and allies is the reformation of fiqh that in collaboration with the concept of SOGIESC, aiming for an inclusive law that encompasses sexual minority communities. Although, it is noteworthy that the goal of this chapter is not to accommodate those ideas, but to give a context of the dynamic in the discussion of Islam, Gender, and Sexuality.

The perspective of the absolute prohibition on homosexuality and diverse genders is driven by *ijma'* (consensus) of the classical Muslim period, which prohibits *liwāt* and interpretation of Quranic texts, particularly those concerning the people of Prophet Lut, as well as hadith narratives discussing on *mukhannath* and *mutarajjil*. The discussions among jurists around *liwāt* included how does it correlate to *zinā*, whether the analogy between the two is agreed among jurists, or whether *liwāt* is considered greater or less sin compared to *zinā*. El-Rouayheb argues that the comparison between *liwāt* and *zinā* is not between 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality,' but rather the performative sexual acts of 'anal intercourse between men' and 'illegitimate vaginal intercourse between men and women.'²⁶

This long-standing consensus poses a significant challenge for Muslim sexual minorities in asserting their position within mainstream Muslims community. Amar Alfikar is one of many queer Muslim activists who proposes the renewal of fiqh that acknowledge SOGIESC as one of the concepts that have to be integrated in Islamic law. In his book, Alfikar continuously advocate for the importance of applying more diverse and inclusive religious interpretations, based on his argument that religious discourse is not monolithic. However, this advocacy faces significant rejection as LGBT movement is often associated as one of the Western agendas in Indonesia, given the term 'LGBT' carries political implications and tends to be associated negatively within the discourse of Islamic studies. Consequently, this chapter aims to further explore the well-established laws upheld by

²⁶ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 127.

majority of Muslim clerics, while also examining the counterarguments put forth by queer Muslim activists who demand equality for sexual minority groups.

2.1. SOGIESC & Islam

Prior to delving into deeper discussion, it is important to acknowledge that our topic lies under the realm of Islam & Sexuality. For the last few years, the term LGBT has been challenged as having specific connotations with Western cultural settings, as we have seen from the growth of the globalization of sexual and gender diversities that face high level of resistance from non-Western countries. Hence, queer activists decided to popularize SOGIESC as an alternate term to LGBT. Additionally, the incapability of the term LGBT to encapsulate the diversity of genders and sexualities outside the western cultural settings also takes part in the invention of the term SOGIESC²⁷. Nevertheless, it remains a taboo topic in Indonesia. Therefore, Indonesian society is rather unfamiliar with the terms used to refer to sexual minorities' individuals. One of the terms that are raising lately is queer. This term began as a pejorative term to refer to sexual minority community. However, it is also worth noting that even though some people identify themselves as queer, not everyone under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella subscribes to this term, because many consider the term to be polemical and disorienting²⁸.

Foucault's 'History of Sexuality' argues that the concept of sexuality that is commonly understood is a part of historical, cultural, and social product, rather than an inherited concept. Further, he argues how knowledge gained power in shaping how sexuality is perceived by the society through various institutions such as religion, medicine, and law. Through these institutions, knowledge on sexuality is produced in ways that serves specific societal roles and political agenda. In addition, he introduces the term bio-power, which refers to modern states and societies that control and regulate biological parts of their individuals, for instance, their involvement of reproduction to control growth population²⁹. His argument emphasizes the importance of historical sides on the definition of sexuality, whereas culture and tradition influence the gender and sexual traditions and practices.

While male homosexuality is widely regarded as an abomination in Islamic tradition and prohibition against *liwāṭ* is widely enforced, an interesting contradiction arises when

²⁷ Hendri Yulius Wijaya, *Intimate Assemblages: The Politics of Queer Identities and Sexualities in Indonesia* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2020), 184, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2878-1>.

²⁸ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, 25.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 141.

examining the literary and poet tradition of the ottoman era that was replete with the expressions of admiration and praise for young men, where poets of that time were predominantly male. The notion that ‘poets say what they do not do’ allows for the coexistence between explicit literary expressions of same-sex attraction (particularly toward young men) and the absolute prohibition of *liwāt* as imposed by the jurists³⁰. The intention here is not to indicate that homosexuality is perceived differently at that period, but rather to highlight the fluid nature of gender and sexuality, which undergo changes influenced by specific factors. This phenomenon is not unique to homosexuality but is also experienced by other minority groups with distinct gender identities and sexual orientations, such as transfemale individuals. The terms used to describe transfemale vary from one country to another, and each term reflects the influence of tradition and culture, contributing to their uniqueness. In the context of Malaysia, transgender women are commonly referred to as *mak nyah*. While *mak nyah* faces negative societal perceptions today, it is interesting to note that during the colonial period, they experienced a relatively more comfortable existence due to broader economic opportunities compared to the present day. Only a small number of them resorted to working as sex workers, as many found employment in various professions such as bridal makeup artists (*mak andam*), artists, chefs, and more³¹.

In the context of history, colonialism has a significant influence on shaping the concept of sexuality. For instance, notions of sexuality, expressions, practices, and acceptable sexual behaviors were aligned with European standards of that time. This had an impact on colonized countries, such as the introduction of Western moral values and the criminalization of local practices that did not conform to the believed European notions. The introduction of religions other than local ones, such as Islam and Christianity, through colonization, trade, and intermarriage, has also had a significant impact on the formation of the understanding of gender in Indonesia³². Although some regions still retain their local practices, the shift from gender pluralism to gender binarism places minority genders and sexualities in an absurd position. For instance, Hijra of India, an intermediary of the divine power of Bahuchara Mata³³, which are recognized as a third-gender category; not

³⁰ Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, 111.

³¹ Martin, *AsiaPacifiQueer*, 90.

³² Petsy Jessy Ismoyo, “Gender Identities in Indonesia: A Study of Bissu 'The Trans-Religious Leader' in Bugis People,” *Paradigma: Jurnal Kajian Budaya* 10, no. 3 (December 11, 2020): 278, <https://doi.org/10.17510/paradigma.v10i3.404>.

³³ Goddess of chastity and fertility in Hindu tradition.

categorized as male nor female³⁴. Bissu, a leader of the ancient pre-Islamic Bugis religion considered sacred within the Bugis tribe, holds a crucial position due to this shifting concept³⁵.

Sexuality, according to some activists and scholars, constitutes a major part of their lives and such an intimate part that is unique to each individual's experience. Thus, the concept of sexuality lay beyond mere sexual acts, which means sexuality does not only cover lust and sexual activities; it also includes emotional fulfillment, joy, and self-completeness that one experiences after intertwining body, mind, and soul with other beings. They believe that sexuality of a human consists of various components which contributes to each uniqueness. Among these components, sexual orientation plays a pivotal role in shaping one's sexuality. It may be freely interpreted as an attraction to other people both physically and emotionally, including the urge for a romantic relationship. Another essential element is gender identity, which encompasses one's freedom to be identified with a particular gender. It is worth highlighting to distinguish between the definition of gender with sex. Sex refers to the biological characteristics seen in males, females, or intersex. On the other hand, gender is a socially constructed concept that includes societal expectations attached to specific genders, such as clothing styles, obligations, and behaviors³⁶. While when we talk about gender, it incorporates various social aspects in which attached to specific roles and embedded within issue of cultures, desires, social status, and others³⁷. Queer activists believe that one should have a freedom to choose which role they want to be in gender concept. Meanwhile, a person's freedom to express himself as masculine, feminine, or androgynous is called gender expression.

On the other hand, sexual education taught in Indonesian educational institutions is limited to human reproduction and norms of sexual acts. For instance, the importance of marriage before having sexual intercourse to avoid free sex. However, sexual relations are more advanced and often discussed in Islamic studies in *Fiqh* discussion. Therefore, sexual education in Islamic boarding schools (read: *pesantren*) is discussed more thoroughly because it is covered in many ways in *kitāb* of *fiqh*. Starting from procedures and etiquette of intimate relations between husband and wife, adultery, and in some cases extended to

³⁴ Sharyn Graham Davies, *Gender Diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam and Queer Selves* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 42.

³⁵ Ismoyo, "Decoloizing Gender Identities in Indonesia," 285.

³⁶ Mary Crawford, "Gender and Humor in Social Context," *Journal of Pragmatics* 35, no. 9 (September 2003): 1417, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(02\)00183-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00183-2).

³⁷ Sharyn Graham Davies, *Gender Diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam and Queer Selves*, 16.

homosexuality. The book ‘*Uqūd-al-lijayn*³⁸ and *Fath-al-Izār*³⁹ are possibly the most popular books in the chapter on sexual education which are still part of the curriculum of some *salaf* pesantren. Although the two books have lately received criticism because some researchers argue contents contained in these literatures are still written through a male-centered perspective⁴⁰, these two books can be used as references to how sexual education is known and studied in Islamic institutions in Indonesia. This discussion is worth mentioning to understand the dynamic of Islam and sexual minorities in Indonesia.

2.1.1. SOGIESC in Sacred Texts: Quranic and Hadith Prevailing Interpretation

When Ali faced the *khawārij* – rebels who rejected Ali as a caliph – in an armed conflict, he gathered people while holding a copy of the Quran, saying “O Quran, speak to the people!”. Then the people exclaimed, “O Ali, do you mock us? It is only paper and ink, it is we (human beings) who speak on its behalf”. Ali stated, “The Quran is written in straight lines between two covers. It does not speak by itself. (In order for Quran to speak) It needs proper interpreters, and the interpreters are human beings”⁴¹.

Ali demonstrated the importance of human interpretation in speaking on behalf of the Quran. However, from this dialogue, he also implies that Quranic interpretation that we know today is always connected to educational background, socioeconomic status, political stances, and personal agenda of its interpreter. Thus, the demand of some reformist Muslim activists to reform *shari’a* including fiqh is based on the argument that the product of Muslim scholars, including Quranic interpretation is a product of human mind, debates, and contestation. Therefore, it is always ambiguous and contested. In the field of Islamic studies, the formation of legal decrees and interpretation on sacred texts were regulated based on heteronormativity norms, which restricts sexual activities solely to the marital bond between man and a woman or several. The opinion of Muslim clerics in the classical period did not consider the presence of diverse gender and sexualities

³⁸ Syekh Muhammad bin Umar An-Nawawi, *Syarḥu ‘Uqūdullijayn Fī Bayāni Ḥuqūqi Zawjayni* (Indonesia: Darul Ihya, n.d.).

³⁹ Abdullah Fauzi, *Fathul Izār*, n.d.

⁴⁰ Bannan Naelin, “Seksualitas Perempuan Dalam Kitab” 06, no. 01 (2021): 35.

⁴¹ Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*, (London, England: Oneworld 2010).

concept. The prevailing interpretations on Quranic verses regarding Sodom, the people of Lut, have resulted in legal rulings of most of fiqh schools, deeming *liwāt* as *hadd* crime warranting harshest penalties. The contentious debates rooted from several aspects. One of them being the confusion of *ikhtilāth al-nasab*, or confusion of the lineage, as some Muslim jurists argue that homosexuality prevents the ultimate goal of sex which is procreation⁴².

Activists of these sexual minority groups use the narrative of many stories of the Prophets where those who followed the instruction are the oppressed, to create an analogy that sexual minorities community is part of *mustad'afīn*⁴³. One of the goals of the revelation of Islam in Arabs land is liberating people from ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*), illiteracy, and polytheism, which can be observed by its verses about the unity of God and prohibition to worship idols which was popular at that time. Among the important messages that Quran brings is that it encourages solidarity with the oppressed groups. Quran starts as a challenge to fight oppression. In many verses, Quran mentions God will reward the strength and resilience of the oppressed. This idea of claiming sexual minorities as *mustad'afīn* has been the way in for queer activists including Alfikar to claim the rights of sexual minorities community while attempting to connect Islamic principles within this liberating movement.

Liberation theology refers to a theology that is applied to solve the core concerns of marginalization issues within the community in seek of social, political, and economic justice. Although as a movement, liberation theology is discovered in Latin America as a part of Catholic church's struggle to revive basic human values that are contained in Biblical texts, simultaneously, it becomes a world-class movement as other countries in Africa and Asia struggle against colonial domination⁴⁴. In Islamic context, liberation theology is marked by the messages reveled in Quran that denounces any form of oppression, injustice, and discrimination. Similar to Jesus in Christian theology, Prophet Muhammad serve as figure that liberated people not only from the oppression of Meccan upper-classes, but also from the ignorance era. This liberation theology may explain the association between prevailing interpretations in Islam toward sexual minority

⁴² Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, 128.

⁴³ weak people or those who needs saving from poverty, exclusion, and discrimination.

⁴⁴ Kaloi Abdul Rehman, "Islamic Liberation Theology: Qur'anic Hermeneutics for The Challenges of The Modern Age", n.d., 67.

individuals and the urge of activists to establish a connection between the quest for sexual minorities and religious principles. By emphasizing on humanity values within Islam.

In this following subchapter, I will focus my discussion on unraveling interpretations and legal rulings on diverse gender and sexualities in Islam. This subchapter aims to provide a clearer overview of the position of sexual minority communities within Islam. By comprehensively understanding the intricacies of this discourse, we can analyze the strategies employed by activists in advocating for the rights of this community, then critically examine and validate the arguments presented in this discourse.

2.1.1.1. SOGIESC & Fiqh

The connection between fiqh and sexuality is a multifaceted topic that has been thoroughly explored along with the increased awareness and understanding of this area. While more in-depth and thoroughly discussion on sexuality in fiqh realm is questioned by recent queer activists, preliminary research has shed some lights on some aspects to guide us to understand this connection. Preliminary research indicates that in Islamic context, fiqh provides a framework for regulating and guiding sexual behavior. It covers various aspects, such as sexual ethics, contraception, and marriage. Sexual pleasure in fact is an integral component of marriage and deemed a sacred contract in Islam. Marriage is one of the significant chapters in fiqh which its requirement, pillar, and manners are regulated in Islam. The Quran and Sunna mention its eminence many times, for instance:

“Marry those of you that are single, (whether men or women), and those of your male and female slaves that are righteous. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty” (An-Nur:32)

“It was narrated from Aishah that: the Messenger of Allah said: “Marriage is part of my sunnah, and whoever does not follow my sunnah has nothing to do with me. Get married, for I will boast of your great numbers before the nations. Whoever has the means, let him get married, and whoever does not, then he should fast, for it will diminish his desire.” (Sunan Ibn Majah).

The perception of sexuality in fiqh framework is often viewed through a lens of preserving chastity and the secrecy of marriage contract. Sexual relation in fiqh is

typically encouraged within the framework of heterosexual marriage. As an impact, any sexual activity outside of marriage is considered sinful. Therefore, the punishment is regulated by classical Muslim jurists. All forms of sexual relations outside of marriage are prohibited in Islam. Thus, traditional Muslim jurists all agreed on the prohibition of homosexuality. Most schools within the *Sunni* and *Shi'a* agree that *liwāt*⁴⁵ is given the same punishment as heterosexual fornication, and therefore those who committed homosexual intercourse are also subject to *hadd*⁴⁶. However, there is difference of opinion in the Hanafi school of thought - which analogizes passing as a criminal act, therefore they do not apply *hadd* as a punishment – and smaller schools in fiqh, such as *zāhirī* and *Rāfiḍah*. Even so, at that time, classical Muslim theologians and jurists had not interpreted religious propositions and determined laws with developed theory on sexual orientation. Although Islamic tradition has developed a complex understanding toward gender, queer activists argue that the understanding toward sexual orientation has not developed the same way and oftentimes they confuse between gender and sexual orientation⁴⁷.

The rise of global human rights organizations, including the equality of LGBTIQ+ rights, along with the growing visibility of queer individuals in digital realm, presents a challenge to the Islamic academic community, including in Indonesia. This challenge arises from the perceived conflict between religious and humanity values in the discussion of sexual minorities group.

In traditional Muslim setting, some of devout Muslims or commonly known as *santri* in Indonesia are familiar with the term *amrot-amrotan* (to play women), which is closely related to the term *mairil*⁴⁸. *Amrot-amrotan* is an activity where senior male students show affection to junior students and sometimes make them objects of their sexual desire by engaging in interfemoral sex. This activity is

⁴⁵ Translated to homosexual intercourse, even though it is worth highlighting that the term *liwāt* which has translated to English as sodomy is debatable because it is relatively a new term created by Islamic jurists in the classical period as a shorthand for 'the act of the people Lut'. Thus, it is never mentioned in the Qur'an. Some of scholars argue that *liwāt* was understood as a whole constellation of crimes committed by the tribe of Lut including rape and same-sex intercourse, which is believed to be non-consensual because it was also forced to married men.

⁴⁶ *Hadd* or *hudud* in plural form limitation and restriction in Arabic. It refers to punishment that have been prescribed by classical Muslim jurists for each *hadd* crime including theft, fornication, and all sexual relations outside of the marriage.

⁴⁷ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, 272.

⁴⁸ young boys with baby-faced features.

known by the *pesantren* and although this behavior includes same-sex sexual relations, it is condoned and quietly accepted by the *pesantren*.⁴⁹

Queer activists and allies believe that patriarchal values that were ingrained in Arabic culture have also influenced the decisions of classical Muslim jurists on homosexuality besides the legal rulings on heterosexual sexual activities. Kugle argues that Arab patriarchal values were inherited by Judaic custom, and the application of Judaic rituals in Islamic communities led to the preservation of patriarchal norms among Muslims⁵⁰. Judaic custom believes that women hold an inferior status to men. This belief is attributed to the narrative that woman is created from a man's rib, an understanding that many Muslims share and uphold.

While in sexual activities, Judaic tradition believes that the sole purpose of sex is procreation⁵¹, which is why homosexuality, bestiality, incest, and fornication lie within the scope of prohibited sexual activities due to their deviation from the ultimate purpose of procreation and potential production of illegitimate offspring. Judaism and Islam are two out of three Abrahamic religions, which explains the many similarities between these two religions. The influence of the Judaic teachings remained strong in Medina, its norms are highly influential, partly because some Jews converted to Islam and took an important role in Islamic studies.

2.1.1.2. Transgender in Islam

The reason why I choose to discuss gender & sexuality discourse within Islamic studies in this section is that I consider it crucial, particularly in exploring how contemporary Muslim clerics punish sexual minorities, including transgender people. Transgender individuals are defined as those who possess a gender identity that does not align with their assigned gender at birth. In the Islamic world, transgender has been known and mentioned in several hadith narrations refers as *mukhannath* (transfemale) and *mutarajjil* (transmale). Although the term *mukhannath* is often associated with homosexuality, some considers that *mukhannath* relates to gender and not sexuality. The mention of *mukhannath* and

⁴⁹ Alicia Izharuddin, "Same-Sex Intimacies in Syariffudin's *Mairil* and the Queering of Authenticity," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 2013): 538–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2013.831193>.

⁵⁰ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, 166.

⁵¹ al-Haqq Kugle, 167.

mutarajjil in these hadith not only shows that Islam in Arab period acknowledged sexual education, but also shows that the understanding goes deeper to the complexity of gender.

One of the most famous hadith on *mukhannath* is the one placed by Al Bukhari regarding one of Prophet Muhammad's wives, Umm Salam:

"The prophet, peace be upon him, cursed effeminate men among males and masculine women among females, and he said "Expel them from your houses".

And hadith narrated by Ahmad:

"The messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, cursed effeminate men who imitate women and masculine women who imitate men".

Queer Muslim activists and scholars argue that due to the limitation in gender discourse during the time of Prophet Muhammad, it remains unclear whether the prohibition mentioned encompasses solely gender expression or extends beyond the prohibition to change assigned gender identity. Nonetheless, the aforementioned hadiths are still widely understood today as a declaration that transgender individuals are not accepted by the majority of Muslim community. Within this context, there is a potential confusion in interpreting the word *mukhannath* and *mutarajjil* as both encompass notions of effeminacy, masculinity, transgender identity, or homosexuality. However, Ludovic argues that *mukhannath* is more appropriate to refer as transfemale and should not be correlated with homosexuality, as the word *khunthā* refers to gender and not sexuality⁵².

Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusi is one of the prominent Islamic scholars that the thought is intriguing to discuss in this chapter. He was a famous theologian and jurist from Cordoba, Spain. He pursued various scientific disciplines but was known as a prominent fiqh expert from the Zahiri school of thought. As the name suggests, Zahirism is a fiqh school that advocates literal interpretation of religious texts; Al-Quran and Sunnah in order to decide a law. Apart from being known as a leading *faqīh* because of his many opinions contradicting the majority of scholars, he is also known as a leading poet. One of his famous literary works is *tawq al-ḥamama*⁵³ that serves his literary works about love. In this book, he asserts that

⁵² Zahed and Bharat, *Homosexuality, Transidentity, and Islam*, 36.

⁵³ Ali ibn Ahmad Ibn Hazm, *Tawq Al-Ḥamāma Fī al-Uḥfah Wa al-Ullāf* (Matba'a al-Istiḳama, 1964).

sexual behavior between two men is a form of abomination and is cursed by Allah. Even so, his opinion about the sanctity of love has attracted attention because he believed that to love and to be loved is a gift and a natural thing that cannot be avoided, while sexual treatment is a different act that is condemned when it occurs outside of a marital bond or with female slaves for men.

Ibn Hazm vehemently denounces homosexuality between males and considers it abomination. However, he holds the view that *lūti* is subject to *ta'zir* punishment, rather than *ḥadd* punishment like other schools prescribes, as his own school that prevents him from using *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) to connect male homosexuality to *zina*. Ibn Hazm is an avid fan of love poetry, affecting his overall view of homosexuality in Islam. It is worth noting, however, that Ibn Hazm prohibits *liwāt*, but the reasoning does not derive from the same source as other schools. He wrote his poetry in his treatise on love in *ṭawq al-ḥamāmah*, where the treatise mostly focused on anecdotes between women and men, Ibn Hazm repeatedly mentions love stories between men.

In *ṭawq al-ḥamāma*, Ibn Hazm presents an eloquent and nuanced exploration of love, drawing upon his own experiences and observations. The work reflects his poetic admiration and philosophical reflections on love. However, it is crucial to note that this book is his broader literary and philosophical contribution and may not directly related to his views on Islamic law and religious doctrines, Kugle asserts that Ibn Hazm acknowledged love as the higher essence of a human being, whether it is the type of love that is commonly subscribed by people or not, and put it above his legal rulings and interpretations. In his book, Ibn Hazm provides a comprehensive explanation on the concept of love. He identifies and describes seven types of love, including love based on kinship, love driven by an intention to reach specific goal, and love stemming from shared social background. In the following subchapter, we will discuss Ibn Hazm's opinion regarding homosexuality. The reason why is because his opinion is mentioned in large part of Kugle's work, which serves as a large compendium in the discussion of homosexuality in Islamic framework. Kugle even stated: "*Ibn Hazm may not agree with the arguments of this book, but were he alive today I have confidence that he would see the wisdom in posing the arguments.*"⁵⁴ This nuanced exploration by Ibn Hazm adds unique dimension and new color to the discourse and distinguishes his

⁵⁴ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*, 37.

stance compared to other scholars, specifically in the realm of Fiqh. It is also worth noting that the tenets of the school he adheres to contributes to his understanding that the message contained in Quran and Sunna unambiguous thus not a subject of change, which diverges him with jurists of other schools⁵⁵.

2.1.1.3. Ibn Hazm: Jurisprudential Stand on Homosexuality

Kitab *Al-Muḥalla* by Ibn Hazm, which serves as a comprehensive compendium of the legal fiqh law of the Zahiri school, summarizes an extensive discussion on fiqh laws, including homosexuality, more commonly known in this discussion as *liwāt*. Unlike other schools of fiqh, which categorize male homosexuality as a grave sin (*kabāir*), placing it on par with sins such as fornication, eating pork and theft, Ibn Hazm diverges his opinion from other schools of fiqh. Ibn Hazm includes a discussion of homosexuality in forbidden acts subject to *ta'zir*⁵⁶ laws. From this, Ibn Hazm strictly differentiates his decision from others in the decision that *liwāt* does not incur maximum punishment (death penalty, or a hundred flogs). Instead, the punishment is left to the judgment of the authorities based on their understanding of Islamic principles while considering the best interest of society. Thus, *ta'zir* may vary depending on the judge's discretion and circumstances. In *Al-Muḥalla*, Ibn Hazm divides the views of scholars on the punishment for passing into seven and presents his views and criticisms of each opinion. The list is as follows:

1. Burning alive both the active and the passive partner.
2. Both of them should be thrown down from the highest spot of the town and pelted by rocks.
3. Both of them are stoned, without considering whether they are *muḥṣan* or not.
4. Both of them are to be executed by sword.
5. The active and passive partner are to be stoned if they are *muḥṣan*, but if the active one is not *muḥṣan*, then he is to be flogged with the same amount of lashes that incurs *hadd* punishment for *zina*. This is the view holds by Abu Ja'far Muhammad.

⁵⁵ Adam Sabra, "Ibn Hazm's Literalism: A Critic of Islamic Legal Theory," *Al-Qantara* XXVIII (2007): 10.

⁵⁶ *Ta'zir* refers to discretionary penalty that is not specifically regulated in Quran or hadith.

6. Analogous to *zina*. The punishment does not consider their position during the act of *liwāt*, but their legal status, i.e., whether they *muḥṣan* or not, and will be punished with the same punishment as someone who commits *zina*.
7. *liwāt* incurs *ta'zir* and no *hadd* punishment is inflicted upon them. This is the view subscribed by Ibn Hazm, Abu Hanifa, and Dawud al-Isfahani⁵⁷.

In his compilation, Ibn Hazm not only presents a comprehensive list of these opinions, he also carefully examines and rebutes them, except for the seventh opinion which he personally holds. Ibn Hazm meticulously traces back the hadiths relied upon by other groups to support their argument and finds that these hadiths have weak chain of transmission, possessing either weak link or *munqathi'*. Additionally, Ibn Hazm addresses the viewpoint advocating the punishment of *luti* by throwing stones which based on the verses from the Quran regarding the people of Lut, such as (Al-A'raf:80-81, At-Taubah:70, Al-Haqqah:9). Ibn Hazm asserts that the punishment inflicted upon the people of Lut was not solely because of their engagement in homosexuality but instead encompassed other crimes, including disbelief (*kufr*). Based on this argument, Ibn Hazm contends that *luti* cannot be subjected to stoning unless they are an apostate. Hence, although Ibn Hazm concludes that *liwāt* is haram, his conclusion does not rely on punitive verses specifically addressing the people of Lut, which makes his stance may differs compared to the opinion of other Muslim scholars and jurists.

It is important to note that Ibn Hazm does not allow *liwāt* and categorizes *liwāt* as abomination. However, he does not consider it is punishable by *ḥadd* as he does not deem the hadith used by jurists who categorizes homosexuality as *ḥadd* to be sound. Ibn Hazm relies his argument on the Quranic verse that states Muslim's blood is only permissible to be shed under three circumstances: apostasy, *zinā* by *muḥṣān* (married person), and homicide. Outside of these aforementioned categories, it is forbidden for a Muslim to kill another Muslim, including those who does *liwāt*. Ibn Hazm also argues that homosexuality cannot be classified as *ḥadd* since there are no sacred texts that explicitly obligate it, neither in the Quran nor in the hadith. In addition, he also quotes a report from Al-Hakam ibn 'Utayba stating that the perpetrator of *liwāt* should be flogged but not to extent of *ḥadd* punishment.

⁵⁷ Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusī, *Al-Muḥallā Bil Ātsār* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Kotob Al-ilmiah, 2002), 388.

This view is shared by Ibn Hazm, Abu Hanifa, and Abu Dawud Al-Isfāhānī. Ibn Hazm asserts that society is responsible for providing rehabilitation facilities for individuals engaged in homosexuality, based on a hadith recorded in *ṣaḥīḥ* Bukhari concerning *mukhannath* and *mutarajjil*, that says “drag them out of their houses” i.e., removing them from society, possibly through imprisonment. Ibn Hazm holds a belief that it is appropriate to separate homosexual individuals from others as a means to discourage them from continuing this behavior (the embodiment of *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*).

Ibn Hazm employs a metaphor to address individuals advocating for the execution of homosexuals through the punishment of *ẓinā*. He highlights that if this viewpoint were applied consistently, it would necessitate the execution of all adulterers, including unmarried individuals who are usually subjected to flogging. He further extends this argument to those who consume alcohol or eat pork, implying that they too would face the death penalty. Ibn Hazm does not agree with what he thinks as excessive behavior in defending the religion: “*God forbid that we should legislate our corrupt views based on our personal views (bi-arā-inā). Let us pray God for granting us the adherence to Quran and Sunna!*”. Ibn Hazm’s view point is understandable given that he was Zahirite jurist. Zahirism distinguishes themselves from their fiqh school by refusing to employ analogical and metaphorical interpretations of religious sacred texts. Instead, Zahirism adopts a literal approach in understanding and implementing Islamic law, which explains his refutation towards other in *liwāt* punishment, including the analogy of *liwāt* and *ẓinā*.

2.2. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter encapsulates several fiqh discussions regarding issues from classical period that regulated conditions and behaviours that lie outside heteronormative norms. The sentiment of sexual minorities community is partly due to the *ijma'* or consensus among classical Muslim scholars on the absolute prohibition on *liwāt*. Nevertheless, queer activists believe that classical fiqh discussions on homosexuality and other non-heteronormative conditions indicate that the presence of sexual minorities was already acknowledged in the past, although without advanced information as it is today. Another reason of the sentiment stems from Quranic interpretation of verses pertaining the people of Prophet Lut. However, similar to reformist Muslims, queer activists view

interpretation as a human product which means a site of contestation. While in classical fiqh, sexual relationships are often seen as a means to preserve offspring and the sanctity of marriage. Therefore, any sexual acts outside the marital bond are deemed haram. However, Kugle challenges this perspective by pointing out that the patriarchal tradition and the procreation as the goal of marriage are inherited from Judaic customs. This chapter also discusses the thought of Ibn Hazm on homosexuality in a separate part, owing to the fact that some of Muslim queer activists or allies has built upon some interpretations of Ibn Hazm. Thus, discussing it will give us an understanding of the advocacy in this framework.

CHAPTER III

To Be A Piece of The Puzzle: Claiming Position as Part of Indonesian Muslims

In this chapter, I will focus on examining the discrimination faced by gender and sexual minority groups in Indonesia, particularly the surge of the Anti-LGBT movement in 2016, coinciding with the peak of Islamization in Indonesia. Additionally, I will delve into the nuanced thoughts of Amar Alfikar, as he strives to integrate himself into the mainstream Muslim community. The discussion in this chapter will be derived from his book, 'Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies' that published in the beginning of 2023. This work encapsulates the internal turmoil experienced by Amar Alfikar as a transmale individual growing up in a religious and traditional setting in Kendal, a city in Central Java, Indonesia. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on exploring the theological framework that underpins Alfikar's negotiation to reconcile his identity as a Muslim.

3.1. Anti-LGBT Movement and LGBTIQ+ Rights Movement in Indonesia

García Rodríguez elaborates in his article on what he considers 'progressive' Islamic movement in Indonesia and how they have spread its focus on gender and sexuality minorities. Rodríguez argues that the introduction of non-heteronormative issues of gender and sexuality came from dialogues built between LGBTQ+ rights organizations and religious leaders. This step was taken in response to the increased anti-LGBT movements based on religion. Therefore, dialogue with religious leaders is crucial in order to serve as a counterbalance to such understanding⁵⁸.

In Indonesian context, the widespread of LGBT heavily depends on how Muslim mass organizations in Indonesia perceive and portray LGBT. Apart from the sole reason that Indonesia holds the position as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, many of high-ranking members of these Islamic organizations also serve as political officers. Hence, the advocacy and propaganda promoted by these organizations found its way to disseminate rapidly because they are accommodated by political actors. This statement is supported by the wave of Anti-LGBT in 2016 which some Islamic mass

⁵⁸ Diego García Rodríguez, "Who Are the Allies of Queer Muslims?: Situating pro-Queer Religious Activism in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 50, no. 146 (January 2, 2022): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2015183>.

organizations have successfully advocated. This corrective narrative towards the non-heteronormative community has attracted the attention of significant numbers of Indonesian Muslims makes it even harder for queer Muslims to become part of wider Indonesian Muslims, especially with the mushrooming of Muslim hardliner organizations marked by the most significant Muslim rallies *Aksi Bela Islam* in 2016.

Researchers focusing on the dynamics of sexual minority communities in Indonesia often describe the rapid spread of Anti-LGBT propaganda as a 'moral panic'. Ben Murtagh and Rodríguez assert that 'panic' in this context is measured by how these societal and personal experiences do not correspond to threats such as hate speech: e.g., "folk devils" or "evil doers". He further argues that sexual and moral panic hold power in portraying certain subjects as 'threats' to the 'ideal' established social order, thus creating the division between the 'righteous' and the 'deviant' people⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, religion is not the only narrative used to argue the existence of non-heteronormative groups; several Muslim parties have considered LGBT as part of propaganda advocated by 'the West', sexual minority community is deemed not in accordance with Indonesian culture and tradition. In a letter circulated in 2014 by KPI (Indonesian Broadcasting Commission), all broadcasts that seemed to be promoting LGBT, including effeminate behavior which was – and still pretty much – popular in humor shows were banned from broadcasting because it is not in accordance with the broadcasting objectives, namely 'shaping the character and identity of a nation of faith and piety'⁶⁰. In the context of violating tradition, the argument often used by queer activists to subvert this assumption is the existence of *bissu* within the Bugis ethnic group. Attorionlong is a local religion in Sulawesi that is adhered to by the Buginese people which recognizes five genders: *oroané* (male), *makkunrai* (female), *calalai* (masculine female), *calabai* (feminine male), and *bissu*, or translated to a transvestite religious leader⁶¹. This indicates that Bugis tribe acknowledges the gender concepts that lie outside the heteronormativity, which includes those who are not typically recognized in the binary concept of gender, which is *calabai*, *calalai*, and *bissu*. The first term refers to those who assigned as male when they are born, but serve the roles and identities in social spheres that often associated with

⁵⁹ Rodríguez and Murtagh, "Situating Anti-LGBT Moral Panics in Indonesia," 2.

⁶⁰ <https://www.kpi.go.id/index.php/id/edaran-dan-sanksi/33258-edaran-kepada-seluruh-lembaga-penyiaran-untuk-program-yang-mengangkat-tema-lesbian-gay-biseksual-dan-transgender-lgbt>. accessed in: 04/11/2023.

⁶¹ Ismoyo, "Decolonizing Gender Identities in Indonesia," 283.

women. While *calalai* is the contrary of *calabai* and *bissu* refers to religious figures or shamans, as Davies refers⁶².

The marginalization of sexual minorities in Indonesia can be seen from the campaign carried out by Muslim hardliner organizations. The Anti-LGBT movement was one of three major campaigns in Indonesia that started from 2014 to 2016⁶³. This condition has created – or perpetuated the narrative of Islam vs LGBT, which some Muslim leaders and figures believe as part of 'Western' propaganda to undermine future generations of Muslims. The wave of Anti-LGBT movement can be delineated into two distinct perspectives espoused by its proponents. Firstly, a strand of Anti-LGBT sentiment driven by Islamic mass organizations, and second, Anti-LGBT promoted by political forces.

The two categories exhibit notable differences. While Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia lead significant numbers of followers, they lack authoritative power to enforce *fatwa*. Nevertheless, *fatwa* continue to hold significant reverence and serve as guiding principles for many Indonesian people, particularly among their followers. It is crucial to underscore the prominence of two most influential Islamic mass organization in Indonesia; Nahdlatul 'Ulama and Muhammadiyah. As the two mass organizations with the most significant influence in Indonesia, both of them do not justify homosexual acts and issue fatwas against the prohibition of homosexual acts. Although fatwas issued by mass organizations in Indonesia are not binding so that they can be followed or ignored, this rejection can be observed from the opinions of members on certain incidents. For instance, the conflict that was raised when the British embassy in Jakarta raised a flag that was suspected of being an LGBT flag⁶⁴. On the other hand, MUI has also issued a *fatwa* in 2014 on 'Lesbian, Gay, Sodomy, and Obscene,' which resulted in a conclusion that all forms of non-heteronormative behaviours are considered 'deviant' and therefore should be 'cured.' MUI is an independent institution that accommodates opinions of Muslims scholars in Indonesia. Although MUI is not part of governmental institution, Indonesian government regularly aids MUI's financial through *bansos* (social assistance schemes). Therefore, MUI has the authority to suggest the government to issue a law pertaining LGBT through its *fatwa*. On the same year, KPI has circulated a letter to televisions, newspapers, radios, etc. that prohibits the broadcast of all sorts of effeminate behaviors, as it implies that 'LGBT is

⁶² Sharyn Graham Davies, *Gender Diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam and Queer Selves*, 24.

⁶³ Muwahidah, "National (In)Security and Identity Boundaries," 3.

⁶⁴ <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20220521203459-106-799509/kemlu-kritik-bendera-lgbt-kedubes-inggris-di-ri-sangat-tidak-sensitif> accessed in 6/14/2023.

a normal thing.⁶⁵ In 2022, the sexual harassment bill (RUU-TPKS) which aimed to address sexual violence regulation went through a contentious debate. One of the reasons was the concern of certain groups pertaining a clause that some argue could potentially protect ‘deviant’ sexual acts. The clause stated that law enforcement should not interfere in judging individual lifestyles and moralities, including sexual activities. Additionally, some regions in Indonesia, such as Garut, Bandung, and Makassar, have proposed local regulations on LGBT⁶⁶. Meanwhile, Bogor already has regulated LGBT issues since 2021.

3.2. Waria: Transfemale of Indonesia

Despite from the prevailing negative attitudes towards LGBT community in Indonesia, it is noteworthy that transfemale and effeminate individuals are actually prevalent in the everyday life of Indonesian society. Trans-female is widely known in Indonesia as *waria*, an abbreviation of 'wanita-pria' or translates as 'female-male'. Boellstorff concludes that the classification of a *waria* should not be immediately linked to those engaging in homosexuality. Instead, someone can be identified as *waria* if they experience (a) a sense of having female soul within their male body, (b) if they are biologically born as male with a physical appearance in social interaction resembling a woman (c) if they meet both criteria⁶⁷.

The term *waria* is an improvisation of the previous term, namely *wadam* or 'hawa-adam' (Eve-Adam) proposed by Ali Sadikin, who served as Governor of DKI Jakarta in 1966. Sadikin sought to replace the term *waria* to change the derogatory term such as *banci*⁶⁸ and *bencong* that were derogatory in nature when referring to *waria*. It was during his tenure that the first organization for trans females was established under the name Himad (Himpunan Wadam Djakarta)⁶⁹. Although, the assistance and facilities provided by

⁶⁵ <https://www.kpi.go.id/index.php/id/edaran-dan-sanksi/33258-edaran-kepada-seluruh-lembaga-penyiaran-untuk-program-yang-mengangkat-tema-lesbian-gay-biseksual-dan-transgender-lgbt> accessed in 7/5/2023

⁶⁶ <https://www.konde.co/2023/02/marak-perda-anti-lgbt-diskriminasi-makin-banyak-terjadi.html/> accessed in 7/1/2023

⁶⁷ Tom Boellstorff, “Playing Back the Nation: Waria, Indonesian Transvestites,” *Cultural Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (May 2004): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1525/can.2004.19.2.159>.

⁶⁸ The term *banci* is an abbreviation from a local language which translates to “*bandule cilik*” or “(those who have) small testicles” to highlight their ‘unmasculine’ behavior.

⁶⁹ Transfemale association of Jakarta

the government were based off the understanding that transgender subjects suffer from psychological disabilities.

However, the term 'transgender' is often criticized for its perceived inability to encompass diverse gender expressions as well as performative identities resulted from various local traditions and cultures around the world. The concept of third gender was introduced and developed to accommodate gender categories that do not fit within the binary concept of gender that is socially accepted as a norm in wider society. However, the term has received criticism for potentially generalizing the diversity of gender and sexuality that lie outside the heteronormative values. The social acceptance of *waria* in wider Indonesian society is exemplified by the significant roles held by *bissu*. Similarly, in Indian society, *hijra* phenomenon represents a distinct non-heteronormative group with specific roles within their communities. The term *hijra* refers to individuals who are considered transfemale or intersex that serve as a vehicle of a divine power of Bahuchara Mata, a goddess of chastity and fertility of Hindu⁷⁰. To become a *hijra*, an individual, except intersex, is required to do emasculation which involves removing male genitalia, including penis, scrotum, and testicles.

The question of compartmentalization of diverse genders and sexualities has become a subject of intense discussion, particularly after the raise of HIV/AIDS issue that occurred on international level, including India. The observation shows that homosexuals, as a group with a high risk of HIV/AIDS exposure, may not fully acknowledged in terms of existing cross-cultural gender and sexualities. As a result, international NGOs adopted the term MSM or 'men who have sex with men' as a way to categorize and address this specific risk group⁷¹. These cases of *bissu* and *hijra* indicate that some cultures and traditions are familiar with diverse expressions of non-heteronormative behaviors. Moreover, these two cases hold a significant role in social and religious spheres of their community. However, these cases also show the limitation of such terms such as transgender and homosexual to portray the whole variation of the cross-cultural identities and expressions that exist around the world, as *bissu* and *hijra* hold specific societal roles within their communities.

⁷⁰ Sharyn Graham Davies, *Gender Diversity in Indonesia: Sexuality, Islam and Queer Selves*, 42.

⁷¹ Gayatri Reddy, "Paradigms of Thirdness: Analyzing the Past, Present, and Potential Futures of Gender and Sexual Meaning in India," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 5, no. 3 (October 1, 2018): 50, <https://doi.org/10.14321/qed.5.3.0048>.

Other instances can be observed from several aspects, with one of the crucial aspects being the inclusion of effeminate males⁷² to play roles in Indonesian cultural performances, such as the Javanese dramatic performance called *ludruk* and *Bissu Magiri* dance from Sulawesi. This indicates that the existence of effeminate male – or in this case may extend to transfemale – is accepted and even regarded as part of Indonesian cultural expression. In addition to that point, Indonesia is home for numerous well-known transfemale celebrities, such as the late Dorce Gamalama and Lucinta Luna. Despite the KPI issuing a circular letter prohibiting this behavior, it continues to be applied due to its humorous appeal. Effeminate behavior is also frequently exhibited by comedians or television presenters, as it is considered entertaining and draws the audience attention.

Nevertheless, access to employment is limited for transfemales because societal restrictions and prevailing stigma circling around them. As a consequence, transfemale individuals in Indonesia are often associated with the marginalized existence referred as ‘street life’, which denotes an impolite and uncivilized style that are usually associated with the life of thugs, buskers, and commercial sex workers, including trans females, as highlighted by Toomistu in her interview with Shinta Ratri⁷³:

*“... Because if you live on the street for a long time, then you will have street morality not a society morality. They are two very different moralities. In street morality it is fine to disrupt anyone, but society morality is more complex. We have to maintain harmony and humanity in society. I hope their morality will change.”*⁷⁴

Owing to the limited availability of employment opportunities, many trans females find themselves working as buskers and engaging in sex work, which explains ‘street morality’ that Shinta uses to describe the manners of trans females in the interview. It is important to mention that there is also significant presence of *waria* in beauty industry, particularly in salons. Moreover, historical evidence shows that *waria* have been part of society since the 1800s. There are scattered references documenting the existence of effeminate men in coastal trading hubs, engaged as small-scale traders, low class entertainers and sex workers⁷⁵. While economic factors strongly influence the employment

⁷² The choice of 'effeminate male' to refer to traditional performers here is to avoid generalizing gender and sexuality of performers who do not identify as transgender or express themselves as women outside of the performance. However, the research conducted by Boellstorff shows that *ludruk* performers have effeminate behavior outside of their traditional performances.

⁷³ Shinta Ratri is the leader of *pesantren* Al-Fatah for *waria* in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. She passed away on 1st February, 2023.

⁷⁴ Toomistu, “Thinking through the s(k)In,” 84.

⁷⁵ Boellstorff, “Playing Back the Nation,” 163.

of *waria* as sex workers, they often describe streets nightlife industry as a means of their self-expression which is frequently suppressed during daylight and a platform of their social interaction⁷⁶.

Nevertheless, the term *wadam* has received criticism, particularly from Islamic religious leaders due to potential blasphemous connotation associated with using the name of the Prophet Adam. Tom Boellstorff, an expert on transgender in Indonesia argues that the term *waria* is more appropriate to be interpreted as male transvestite rather than transgender individual⁷⁷. Transvestite refers to people who express their outer appearance with the attribute that conventionally associated with the opposite sex.

There are several reasons why I chose to begin the discussion with *waria*. First, as part of sexual minorities, they tend to have higher exposure to the majority of normative Indonesian society in comparison to other sexual minority groups, as previously elaborated. Secondly, their unique position that are associated with historical and cultural aspects within Indonesian society that distinguish them from transfemales in other countries. This is primarily due to the lack of international connection between *waria* with their transfemale counterparts around the world, while other groups such as gay Indonesians share a common context with gay individuals globally as they ‘desire the same’⁷⁸. I argue that the potential cause of this is the complexity of *waria* as an entity surpasses the traditional understanding of transgender’s existence that challenges prevailing prejudices about sexuality and gender binary. *Waria* have integrated themselves into Indonesian society as part of long-standing tradition, exemplified by their involvement in various traditional dance practices. This does not demonstrate that *waria* are solely accepted during their performances – as some may presume, because they maintain their identity as *waria*⁷⁹ offstage. Instead, it highlights the incomplete national acceptance of *waria*. Through their feminine expression, *waria* do not claim for authentic female identity, but rather a claim for their own femininity. According to Boellstorff, their playback⁸⁰ of woman’s femininity blurs the boundary between authentic and inauthentic. This fraction between original and inauthentic allows the existence of an ‘in-between’ genre which depicts in an acronym ‘aspal’ for *asli-palsu* or real-but-false. This eliminates the position

⁷⁶ Toomistu, “Thinking through the s(k)In.”

⁷⁷ Boellstorff, “Playing Back the Nation,” 161.

⁷⁸ Boellstorff, 172.

⁷⁹ With the exception of those who view these traditional dances as a mere means of livelihood

⁸⁰ Playback refers to the act of reproducing recorded video or audio content (lip-sync). Akin to how playback allows people to enjoy existing audio that has been previously restored, *waria* perform ‘playback’ of femininity through wearing female attributes and in many cases, sexual favor.

of *waria* as authentic but also distinguishes the for being deceptive. Hence, this serves as the way for them to claim their national belonging.

However, the high exposure experienced by *waria* subjects them to increased public scrutiny. In addition, Sexual minorities face obstacles in adapting and integrating into broader Indonesian society, due to the relatively negative stigma they receive, particularly in religious contexts. However, *pesantren* Al-Fatah in Jogjakarta is recognized as the first *pesantren* devoted to becoming a forum for trans females to deepen Islamic knowledge. *Pesantren* are closely related to Muslims in Indonesia, as the largest Islamic education institution in Indonesia. Despite eliciting support and opposition from other Indonesian Islamic mass organizations, the existence of Al-Fatah shows the higher religious exposure experienced by *waria* compared to other groups within the LGBT community. This exposure has given rise to several factors such as an organized system within the *waria* community, and ‘space’ in the wider Muslim Indonesian community to express their religious embodiment. Albeit, with the death of Shinta Ratri, its sustainability is not yet known.

Pesantren is regarded as an iconic traditional and Islamic institution that distinguishes themselves from the conventional Islamic boarding schools in general, although they share some similarities. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nahdlatul 'Ulama, the largest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia with an estimated number of followers reaching 95 million people is responsible for overseeing at least 23,372 out of 28,000 *pesantren* in Indonesia in 2021⁸¹. It is common for religious leaders or *Kyai* of Nahdlatul 'Ulama to establish and serve as caretakers of *pesantren*. It is from the established connection of *pesantren* alumni that Nahdlatul 'ulama built a network of cadre successors to the organization, one of which was by collaborating with respective universities in the Middle East, where Nahdlatul 'Ulama cadres who continued their joined the special branch management organization of Nahdlatul 'Ulama. Most of *pesantren* under the auspices of Nahdlatul 'Ulama are traditional *pesantren* or commonly referred to as *salaf pesantren*⁸² that emphasizes on teaching classical Arab scriptures.

⁸¹<https://kemlu.go.id/phnompenh/id/news/9660/kbri-prakarsai-kerja-sama-pendidikan-kepesantrenan-di-kamboja-dengan-rmi-nu>, accessed in: 5/2/2023

⁸² The term 'salaf' here refers to the original form of *pesantren* as an educational institution that focuses on teaching *kitab kuning* or classical Arabic scriptures and has no correlation with salafi-wahabi school. Albeit, there are several *pesantren* that adhere to this school and usually refers as *pondok salafi*.

It is worth noting that despite the public opinion of sexual education at the formal education level is taboo, it is commonly taught in many salaf *pesantren*. Furthermore, two reference *kitab* used as references in the theme of sexual education were written by Indonesian scholars in Arabic⁸³. However, most of the material discussed in sexual education in *pesantren* is limited to the rules of sexual relations in Islam, which includes procedures, prohibitions, and etiquettes in sexual intercourse according to Islam, particularly between husbands and wives. In-depth studies of sexuality, gender, or sexual intercourse outside of marriage are not typically included, as Islamic studies generally do not claim heteronormativity in the sexual matter and classify fornication as a grave sin.

In the discussion of the relationship between *pesantren* and sexual education, I will raise one interesting phenomenon which may counter the implications may be raised that santri have for non-normative sexual behavior, namely *Mairil*. The portrayal of *Mairil* that takes place behind the walls of the Islamic boarding school may be surprising to some people. Even so, this phenomenon is very common in *pesantren*, although with different terms. *Mairil* is an abbreviation of the Arabic sentence '*mar'ah fi layl*' or 'a woman at night'. This term refers to male *santri*, who are usually younger, and have softer facial features than typical male features so they appear to have more 'feminine' or baby-faced looks which are used as objects of affection for senior *santri*. The first literary work about *Mairil* is a novel by Syarifuddin entitled 'Mairil: An Erotic Story in the Pesantren'⁸⁴. Through his work, Syarifuddin introduces readers to intimate same-sex relationships in traditional Islamic settings. Thus, contradict certain assumptions about *pesantren* as free from non-normative concept of sexual behavior⁸⁵. However, it is worth highlighting that Syarifuddin distincts *mairil* dan *nyempet*⁸⁶ in his novel from common definition of homosexual acts. In his opinion, santri do this simply as a means of sexual needs fulfillment, and *pesantren* this behaviour or several reasons, including the low frequency of *santri* to meet the opposite sex and the instinct of releasing sexual desire cannot be avoided at their age⁸⁷.

3.3. The Overlooked Footnote in History: Transmale As Part of the 'Invisible'

⁸³ '*Uqudujjain Fi Huquq Azzaujain* by Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani and *Fathu Al-Izar fi Kasyfi Al-Asrar Al-Awqar Al-Hartsu wa Khilqah Al-Abkar* by Kyai Abdullah Fauzi.

⁸⁴ Written in Indonesia as 'Mairil: Sepenggal Kisah Biru di Pesantren'.

⁸⁵ Izharuddin, "Same-Sex Intimacies in Syarifuddin's *Mairil* and the Queering of Authenticity."

⁸⁶ Interfemoral sex, the action of placing penis between two thighs to the point of orgasm. *Mairil* are object to this act in traditional *pesantren*.

⁸⁷ Izharuddin, "Same-Sex Intimacies in Syarifuddin's *Mairil* and the Queering of Authenticity," 544.

By exploring the topic of *waria* in the previous section, we have gained a clearer understanding of how sexual minority groups strive for national and religious acceptance in Indonesia. However, can the situation of *waria* be compared to the position of transmale individuals in Indonesia? The answer is no. Just as *waria*'s circumstances differ from transfemales in other part of the world due to each unique socio-historical context, sexual minority groups within the same country also experience distinct dynamics influenced by various factors shaping different level of societal and national acceptance. According to a study conducted by Wikke Jansen in 2022, gender binarism significantly affects the acceptance of transmale in Indonesia. According to this argument, non-normative gender and sexuality practices performed by 'men' pose more challenges than those practiced among 'women'⁸⁸. This gendered dichotomy places *waria* and transmale individuals in opposing categories. In addition to the marginalization of transmale, there are wealth sources of research discussing about *waria* and transfemale individuals in Southeast Asia compared to the very limited studies on transmale, particularly in Indonesia⁸⁹.

The impact of this gender dichotomy on transmale in Indonesia leads to a higher degree of marginalization compared to *waria*, primarily influenced by the long-standing patriarchal system in the country. It is noteworthy that *waria*, as individuals who were born with the gender that aligns with the patriarchal order, have received some level of acceptance from Indonesian society, as aforementioned above. Conversely, Jansen categorizes transmale as part of the 'invisible' group, in contrast to the visibility presence of *waria*. However, this invisibility experienced by transmale has paradox, which is while the public eye may overlook them, this invisibility also provides a sense of security and grants them freedom of mobilization, as they are liberated from public scrutiny. This notion is in line with the argument put forth by Blackwood and Wieringa that invisibility can be both imposed or sought after, as the marginalized may find comfort from living behind the wall of seclusion.

Then, to what extent does this invisibility grant transmale individuals the privilege of being secured? Firstly, it is important to understand the criteria that classify an individual as transmale. Boellstorff concludes that being recognized as *waria* is not solely determined by undergoing sex change operation or exhibiting 'soft' behaviors that resemble women,

⁸⁸ Jansen, "Living on the Line," 5.

⁸⁹ Gordon and Pratama, "Mapping Discrimination Experienced by Indonesian Trans* FtM Persons," 1285.

but rather through the performative act of making up called ‘dandan’ that turns into *déndong*, refers to *gay* language (borrowing how Boellstorff term it). This means that no matter how many silicone injections one puts in her body or female hormones one takes daily, one’s identity would not go through a shift to *waria* if one does not perform *déndong*, as it is the key that distinguishes *waria* from effeminate male⁹⁰.

In contrast to *waria*, transmale individuals do not engage in a similar way *déndong* has been practiced by *waria* to distinguish themselves from the gender identity imposed by societal pressures upon them. While gender expression can be also observed through clothing choices, it is important to emphasize that dressing in a traditionally ‘masculine’ manner does not automatically invalidate one’s identity as women. This is primarily due to the challenge of defining objective standards to what society considers as ‘masculine’ attire. A single piece of clothing or a specific hairstyle, does not determine one’s masculinity, including in this case of transmales. In addition, the concept of femininity and masculinity becomes blurred with the existence of the term *tomboi* women which refers to women who exhibit masculine traits. This way, their performative act to express their masculinity will not directly fall under transmale category unlike *déndong* which defines *waria*, unless they undergo physical change to diminish their feminine features. However, Jansen argues that those who undergo mastectomy⁹¹ often privileged by having supportive environment and finance stability which will not be disrupted by their disclosure of being transmale. While the rest opted to conceal their identity to preserve the stability of their lives including acceptance continuity and job security⁹². In other words, I conclude that the stability and security experienced by transmale individuals are a result of the vague and blurred perception of masculinity, which grants them ample room to express their own sense of masculinity without being considered deviating their birth-assigned gender, as long as they do not diminish their feminine features that are inherent to their body.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that transmale individuals face challenges in differentiating themselves from women if it just based solely on outward appearance that highlights their masculinity. In contrast to *waria*, one will only be considered a transmale

⁹⁰ The shift in the term 'dandan' to *déndong* may also contain a shift in meaning from ‘ordinary’ make-up to make-up applied to *waria* that usually comes in the form of bold and to soften their male features, although it should be noted that the purpose of *waria* in doing *déndong* is not to claim their position as a woman, because in many cases they do distinct themselves from women. *Déndong* is used as an expression of femininity that they feel they own.

⁹¹ Mastectomy refers to the surgical removal of one or both breasts.

⁹² Jansen, “Living on the Line,” 51.

when they undergo physical changes, either through sex change operation or testosterone intake. However, not all transmale individuals desire the freedom to express their gender through physical change, as doing so would reveal their concealed identity, which could potentially have consequences, including the removal of their privileges they enjoy by living behind the wall of seclusion. Hence, there are transmale individuals that consciously choose not to fully express their gender as a means to maintain a sense of safety in terms of social acceptance, financial stability, as well as freedom mobilization.

Amar Alfikar serves as a relevant example as a transmale who chose to reveal his gender identity through physical changes. Alfikar hails from a religious background. His family owns pesantren inherited from his grandfather, which makes his parents Kyai and Nyai. During his search for his own identity, he was diagnosed with ‘gender dysphoria’, refers to a condition in which one’s gender identity does not align with their assigned birth sex. He completes his Master’s degree in Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham with the support of Chevening scholarship. He is now involved in activism and actively participate in interfaith dialogue as well as an advocate for diverse gender and sexual orientations.

3.3.1. Amar Alfikar: A Study Case

The case of Amar Alfikar is captivating due to the distinctive way he expresses his shift to transmale, which goes beyond the conventional the physical transformations associated with a transmale such as facial hair growth or mastectomy procedure. However, this alone does not ensure his position within broader Indonesian Muslims society. Upon his transition, he forfeits the privileges he once gained ad part of the community. He is no longer fitting into the gray ambiguous category of a ‘*tomboi* woman’. This aligns with Jansen’s argument that invisibility acts as a barrier, shielding individuals from public recognition⁹³. His privilege of being invisible is far gone when his transition to a transmale gained widespread attention online. Thus, what sets him apart from other transmale individuals?

The emergence of sexual minorities in Indonesia is not a recent development, although it remains a sensitive subject within Indonesian wider society. This is primarily due to religious interpretations that condemn their existence and negative

⁹³ Jansen, 3.

connotations associated with the term ‘LGBT’, which is often correlated to contagious virus or a source of calamity. Additionally, within Islamic framework, an analogy can be drawn that likens community to a human body. A hadith narration recorded in a renowned collection of hadith, ṣaḥīḥ Al-bukhāri mentions: “*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.”*” This analogy serves as a poignant reminder for the Muslim community to uphold the principles of purity, cleanliness, and security within their shared social body, aligning with the core Islamic concept known as ‘*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*’ or ‘enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.’ In this analogy the Muslim community is metaphorically depicted as a healthy and morally pure body, while LGBT community considered polluting and threatening to the health of the body as they are seen as ‘foreign’ elements that come from outside of the ‘body’⁹⁴.

However, Amar Alfikar’s upbringing took place in this ideally ‘healthy body’. In contrast to the belief of some Indonesian Muslims that sexual minority individuals are a product of ‘Western’ exposure or born into non-religious environments. The early life of Alfikar unfolded in the midst of a respected religious family within traditional *pesantren*. Throughout his performative years, he grew within an environment that devoid of the perceived ‘Western’ influences that some may associate with LGBT individuals. What sets him apart is his choice to incorporate his traditional and Islamic identity by wearing *peci* and *sarong*. In this context, *peci* and *sarong* not only typically worn by Malay male Muslim to perform devotion, or to any similar formal occasions, these attributes hold significant symbolic value for him, by wearing these Muslim traditional attributes, Amar Alfikar highlights two things. First, it is representation for his non-compliance acts against the common prevailing understanding that sexual minority communities are unable to authentically express their religious notion. Second, he also challenges the binary expectations surrounding gender expression, as *sarong* and *peci* are traditionally reserved for Muslim men. By consistently wearing this traditional Muslim attire daily, Alfikar showcases his personal journey of self-

⁹⁴ Muwahidah, “National (In)Security and Identity Boundaries.”

expression and resilience. Amar challenges prevailing religious interpretations regarding sexual minorities⁹⁵.

It is intriguing to see how Alfikar transforms a simple piece of clothing into a tangible symbol of resistance that not only defies gender binary norms but also confronts Quranic interpretations that he assumes detrimental to the existence of queer Muslims in Indonesia. The piece of fabric he consistently wears signifies his shared with the predominantly Muslim community in Indonesia following his transition. A comparable scenario arose with the late renowned presenter, Dorce Gamalama, born as Dedi Yuliardi. Dorce was a prominent transgender celebrity of the time, acclaimed as a talk show host often referred as Indonesia's equivalent of Oprah Winfrey due to her compelling oratory style. However, toward the end of her life, Dorce decided to wear hijab, a decision that elicited ridicule and disapproval from many members of the Indonesian community. Furthermore, Dorce had performed Hajj pilgrimage in 1991. Nonetheless, upon the agreement of the family, Dorce was religiously buried as a male. While Dorce and Amar Alfikar express their gender and piety simultaneously, it is important to acknowledge that their cases cannot be simply equated due to their differing backgrounds and circumstances, as Dorce did not originate from notably religious background and instead gained social standing through her highly regarded position as prominent *waria* celebrity. Conversely, Amar Alfikar's presence remained concealed until his transition, yet he hails from a religious background and grew within respectable family with religious authority. Nevertheless, both instances shed light on the notion that the integration of religion and diverse gender identities remains unfamiliar, carries negative connotations, and may even be considered blasphemous. While this research does not try to assume that Amar is not the the first transmale to defy societal norms while risking the freedoms gained from being excluded, this thesis implies that his religious background may lead to different outcomes compared to the 'coming out' of other transmale individuals. His distinct position arises from the widely recognized social structure, where his family religious background and his education in pesantren gave him access to religious authority.

⁹⁵ Amar Alfikar, *Queer Menafsir: Teologi Islam Untuk Ragam Ketubuhan* (Penerbit Gading, 2023), 154.

We have briefly discussed the significant respect of Indonesian Muslim society afforded to religious figures, including *kyais* that own *pesantren*. Dhofier argues that Indonesian *pesantren* is similar to small kingdom, where *kyai* serves as king that holds absolute power and authority over his *santris*. This analogy holds merit in several aspects, including the monarchical system adopted by salaf *pesantren* and the inheritance of absolute leadership for the children of *kyai* (particularly males). Consequently, the position holds by Alfikar enables him to access a higher level of religious authority than individuals who are not born as legal successor of this 'kingdom'. Alfikar does not just advocate a more inclusive religious interpretation, he is a walking representation of how fractured social and religious identities may become. To what extent can Muslim identity be embedded in a person? What is the standard for someone to be considered by society as a Muslim?

In 2019, Amar Alfikar gained widespread attention across the internet when he publicly came out as a transmale. This significant event sparked numerous headlines, highlighting his journey as the former daughter of a *kyai* who embraced his identity as a transman. Given the conservative social and religious norms prevalent in Indonesian and Muslim societies, it is not surprising that such news made waves, as these societies often firmly adhere to interpretations that consider his act as committing grave sins. Despite facing social pressures, Amar alfikar is now actively involved in writing, exemplified by his recently published book titled "Queer Menafsir: Teologi Islam dan Ragam Ketubuhan," which delves into the intersection of queer experiences and Islamic theology.

'Queer Menafsir' is a recently published work by Alfikar in 2023. Spanning a total of 487 pages, this book comprises 16 chapters that explore various issues and solutions within Muslim queer community. In this book, Alfikar delves into two main discussions: the discourse on diverse bodily negotiations and religious aspects within sexual minority individuals. In this recently published book, Amar Alfikar appears to prioritize multiple aspects, which will be further expounded on in this subsequent section. First, he endeavors to present this book as an invitation for the reconstruction of *fiqh*, he argues that current situation requires legal rulings that overrule patriarchal tradition and incorporate an understanding of SOGIESC concepts. Another key focus highlighted in his book pertains to the recognition of bodily diversity such as genders and sexualities, as what Alfikar believes. In this chapter, I will delve deeper into Alfikar's intricate ideas in part of his contribution

to reclaim his position as part of wider Muslims community as part of queer Muslim, an activist, and – arguably – a religious figure for some people⁹⁶.

3.3.2. Queer Menafsir: Immersing into Theological Thoughts and Acceptance Strategies of Amar Alfikar

In this subchapter, we will examine the ideas put forth by Amar Alfikar in his book titled “Queer Menafsir: Teologi Islam Untuk Ragam Ketubuhan” (Queer Interpretation: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies). The focus will be on how Amar negotiates his gender identity and religious beliefs. It is noteworthy that this research does not claim that Alfikar’s thoughts are revolutionary. However, his identity as a Muslim who grew up in a traditional upbringing adds unique perspective to his introspective journey depicted in the book. The chapter will provide a thorough analysis of the arguments presented in the book and will also include criticism that have arisen during the reading process.

Based on my observation of this book, Alfikar organizes his work into three distinct sections, focusing on different aspects related to relationship between sexual minorities community with Islam and with wider Muslim community. The first section covers the intersection of queerness, religion, and the interpretation thereof, while the second section delves into the dynamics between queers and Muslim society, and the third one focuses on self and bodily acceptance. In this section, I will focus on the first issue. Within the chapter titled ‘God & Gender’, Alfikar mentions a meeting between a famous Muslim preacher, Cak Nun⁹⁷ and a transfemale individual named Mirelle. This meeting took place amidst his *pengajian*, which he regularly conducts across various cities. He emphasizes a lot on theological and sufistic reflection to deal with the existence of Queer Muslims. Alfikar cites several notable Indonesian Muslim who share similar viewpoints with Alfikar. I argue that this inclusion serves as strategic utilization of the religious

⁹⁶ Alfikar also appears to represent himself as ‘religious’ by occasionally wearing ‘Islamic’ attribute such as *peci* and *sarong* – traditional clothing Indonesian and Malay male Muslims wear to perform prayer – and accepting the title ‘gus’ attached to him as a son of *kyai*.

⁹⁷ Muhammad Ainun Nadjib or best known as Emha Ainun Nadjib is Indonesian Muslim intellectual and prominent poet and artist. He established Maiyah which stands as abbreviation for ‘Majelis Ilmu Al- Qur’an Yogyakarta’ that serves as a gathering for his followers.

authority held by these individuals, aiming to foster acceptance of this vulnerable community within the broader scope of Indonesian Muslim community.

In the context at hand, Alfikar places significant emphasis on reconstructing Islamic law and interpreting sacred texts by incorporating Islamic studies and SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression, and Sex Characteristic). This integration aims to acknowledge the presence of queer Muslims. The reform of *shari'a* law has been a subject of discussion among jurists, such as Al-Shātibī. According to Al-Shātibī, the interpretation of the Quran and hadith must fulfill five basic human interests: *dīn* (religion), *nafs* (life), *nasl* (reproduction), *māl* (property), and *'aql* (reason). Religion refers to the preservation of belief in God and moral conduct in Islam. Life entails protecting human beings from disease, disasters, murder, and other constraints that hinder their survival. Reproduction refers to maintaining the lineage. Thus, *shari'a* law addresses the responsibilities of parents in raising and educating their children, including matters of inheritance. Property means safeguarding the wealth of the Muslim community from theft, robbery, and corruption. Last, reason involves safeguarding human intellect and discernment, making individuals capable to take responsibility of their actions. Therefore, according to Al-Shātibī's perspective, *shari'a* law should be flexible and adaptable to the changing times in order to uphold these five essential objectives. His views have been embraced by contemporary Muslim reformist scholars such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. These reformist scholars believe that Quran and Hadith sacred texts advocate principles of justice but do not define how justice would depict in its final form⁹⁸.

Alfikar advocates similar ideas, although his specific focus is on SOGIESC issues one common issue that arises is the question of religious practices, particularly regarding the differentiated rituals between men and women in Islam. For instance, we previously discussed the case of Dorce Gamalama's burial procession, where he was buried as a male despite being officially recognized as a female after undergoing sex change operation. While this may only be a concern for some transgender individuals, it stems from the absence of specific fiqh laws governing worship regulation for these sexual minority groups. Only a few have

⁹⁸ al-Haqq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam*.

enjoyed the privilege of worshipping in public mosques, while their perspective on their own bodies also varies. Some believe that being transgender is divine destiny that should not be altered⁹⁹, while others view sex change operation as a way to care for the bodies God has given them, including Alfikar.

In this discussion, while Alfikar suggests a development in fiqh that may accommodate the lives of Muslim queer individuals, he does not delve into the practicalities required for reconstructing fiqh, as such discussion itself may necessitate more than one book. In his book, Alfikar employs predominantly a theological approach, reflecting on his personal journey. In the chapter titled ‘Worship’ (Ibadah), Alfikar elaborates on how he went through many consultations with many Muslim scholars pertaining to his issue in worship. Some scholars that he met assert that worship should be performed according to biological conditions. However, Alfikar argues that this answer does not provide him with desired tranquility. Hence, he decided to follow the opinion that accommodates his preferences. It is the view of Abdul Muiz Ghazali, a Muslim scholar actively involved as a lecturer at the Fahmina Institute for Islamic Studies (ISIF)¹⁰⁰.

Furthermore, Alfikar extensively explores the phenomenon of queer Muslims within Sufistic framework. In a chapter called ‘Soul & Body’, he examines further the concept of gender in the Sufi realm. He concludes that the existence of gender identities and expressions that transcend binary framework is not uncommon in spiritual traditions in the Islamic world. Although it is worth noting that the cross-dressing employed in Sufism does not necessarily determine the gender identity or sexuality of those who engage in such practices. Sufism, also known as *taṣawwuf*, is an approach commonly utilized by Muslim individuals in sexual minority groups in navigating their journey. This particular approach places emphasis on embracing inclusivity, self-acceptance, and universal love. Its primary goal is integrating gender and sexual identities with spiritual aspects to gain more profound comprehension and harmony in practicing Islam. Through *taṣawwuf* approach, many queer scholars endeavor to connect with readers through a unique yet

⁹⁹ Toomistu, “Thinking through the s(k)In,” 87.

¹⁰⁰ Fahmina Institute is an independent institution established by Kyai Husein Muhammad, Affandi Mukhtar, Marzuki Wahid dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir pada tahun 1999. Kyai Husein Muhammad received *honoris causa* title from UIN Wali Songo for his thoughts in dissecting paradigmatic interpretations, especially in the field of gender.

recognizable and familiar perspective for Muslim community and aim to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic teaching and contemporary discourse on equality.

In this particular context, Alfikar mentions the story of Sheikh Musa, also known by his sobriquet, Sadā Suhāg. He was a devoted follower of the Chistiyyah, a Sunnī Sufi order originating from Afghanistan. He gained reputation as a distinctive Sufi due to his seclusion with the common people. Instead, he preferred to live among street dancers and eunuchs. He also dressed like a traditional Indian bride, wearing red traditional garments adorned with accessories such as glass bangles and a nose ring. The devotees of Sadā Suhāgiyyah adopt a similar dress style as a tribute to him. The story has it that the spiritual awakening of Sheikh Musa began when he admonished sex workers and street women who were singing and dancing at the tomb of Sheikh Nizāmu-al-dīn Awliyā'. During his pilgrimage, he received a spiritual message indicating that his actions had displeased Sheikh Nizāmu-al-dīn, rendering him unworthy of visiting the tomb of Prophet Muhammad. On his journey back, he recalled the influence of Amīr Khusrau¹⁰¹, who had successfully pleased Sheikh Nizāmu-al-dīn through singing and dancing while dressed as a courtesan. Sheikh Musa incorporated it into his own practices. It was during one of these rituals that he experienced spiritual enlightenment. Hence, after the occurrence, he chose to adopt the attire of an Indian bride as an enduring symbol of his spiritual transformation.

Alfikar highlights the Islamic and historical context through the story of Sadā Suhāg. Alfikar strengthens his position within religious and national framework by highlighting common context. The story of Sadā Suhāg implies that gender expression beyond binary constructs have existed throughout Islamic history, dispelling the notion that diverse gender is unfamiliar within Islamic framework. While it is unclear how society perceived the sect of Sadā Suhāgiyyah. It is noteworthy that Sheikh Musa was a notable Muslim scholar during the early stage

¹⁰¹ Amīr Khusrau also known as Parrot of India (*Tuti e Hind*) is a spiritual disciple of Nizāmu-al-dīn Awliya'.

of his lifestyle. However, he chose to embrace a nonconformist lifestyle, characterized by an androgynous appearance¹⁰².

3.3.3. Bees of A Hive: Creating A Place to Belong

“*Birds of a feather flock together*” is indeed a fitting metaphor that illustrates how individuals tend to associate themselves with those who are similar to them. It implies that people naturally navigate towards those who share similar traits, whether it be in terms of appearance, hobbies, or identity. Communities are part of the social fabric where individuals often find their social identity. For example, individuals with a passion for poetry are more likely to come together in a community of poets compared to those who do not have an interest in poetry. Indonesian students studying abroad often join associations of Indonesian students, as it aligns with their Indonesian identity. These associations usually have branches based on institution, shared interests, or organizational affiliations, such as alumni associations of specific schools or organizations such as HMI (Islamic Student Association) and PCINU (Special Branch Management of Nahdlatul Ulama).

The Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, explains how individuals find a sense of belonging and identity within specific groups. The theory suggests that finding a place to belong provides individuals with social satisfaction and self-esteem. However, SIT also acknowledges that strong group identification can lead to a positive perception of the ingroup (ingroup favoritism) and, conversely, a negative perception of outgroups. This can result in intergroup conflicts and discrimination. In his article, Brown criticizes that SIT has primarily focused on single social identities, while in reality, individuals can belong to multiple social groups simultaneously¹⁰³.

However, this theory is not easily applicable to Muslim sexual minority groups due to the potential negative interpretations, which could lead to accusations of blasphemy, discrimination, and conflict resulting in physical and material harm. As a result, these communities must exercise great caution when expressing their identities. In this context, minority groups are compelled to make a choice between

¹⁰² Tanvir Anjum, “The Perpetually Wedded Wife of God: A Study of Shaykh Musa ‘Sadā Suhāg’ as the Founder of Sadā Suhāgiyya *Silsilah*: The Perpetually Wedded Wife of God,” *Journal of Religious History* 39, no. 3 (September 2015): 420–34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12226>.

¹⁰³ Rupert, “Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems and Future Challenges,” 760.

practicing their identities as both Muslims and non-heteronormative individuals separately or selecting one identity over the other. According to Shanon Shah's research on *gay* Muslims in Malaysia and Britain, it is noted that these individuals navigate a 'middle ground' where they reconcile their sexual orientation and religious identity. This process involves being exposed to specific interpretations of Islam, which eventually leads them to discover alternative perspectives that accommodate both aspects of their identities. Nevertheless, the acceptance and recognition of their dual identities often require 'role adjustments' within broader social context¹⁰⁴. *Ruqyah*¹⁰⁵ is a method commonly employed to prevent or stop 'deviant' behaviors of diverse genders and sexual orientations, demonstrating that the compartmentalization of identities within social norms does not allow non-heteronormativity to be freely associated with other identities, including religious identity.

This circumstance necessitates the non-heteronormative community to create their own space to freely express their religious beliefs. These spaces provide a sense of belonging that is often elusive for queer individuals. Al-Fatah *pesantren* serves as a relevant example in establishing a secure environment for queer individuals to practice their faith. Shinta Ratri, the caretaker of Al-Fatah shares a close relationship with Alfikar. He dedicates Queer Menafsir as a tribute to Ratri's enduring advocacy: "*For Shinta Ratri, your struggle is eternal.*" According to Counterpublic theory of Habermas, minority groups create a subculture in response to the exclusion of their voices in the dominant public space. The counterpublic serves as a space for these groups to communicate and explore their identities. Over time, this concept has been applied in diverse contexts of minority groups, including the LGBTIQ+ community.

Alfikar's activism primarily revolves around advocating the rights of queer individuals, with a specific focus on reconciling religion and sexual minority communities through alternative interpretations that he believes foster inclusivity and compassion. Alongside his activism, Alfikar established Iqamah. Iqamah serves as a safe space for non-heteronormative individuals to explore their faith. On behalf of my observation, I had the privilege of participating in Iqamah and

¹⁰⁴ Shanon, *The Making of a Gay Muslim*, 183.

¹⁰⁵ *Ruqyah* involves reciting Quranic verses and Islamic prayers as a means of spiritual purification. This practice sometimes used by some individuals as an attempt to align their non-heteronormative loved ones with heteronormative norms.

engaging in its activities for six months. Notably, one of the activities is known as *ngaji inklusi*. The term ‘*ngaji*’ derived from *pengajian* is an Indonesian term that refers to a study session where Islamic teachings are conducted and led by an *ustadz* (Islamic teacher). While *inklusi* refers to what Alfikar believes as alternative interpretation from widely understood understanding that has detrimental tendency towards queer individuals.

Ngaji inklusi adopts similarities with *pengajian*, with restricted participants base consisting of members of Iqamah. Iqamah established by Alfikar serves as a platform for Islamic discourse and discussion specifically catering Queer Muslims and allies. However, it is important to note that the discussions in Iqamah differ from conventional *pengajian* understood in Indonesian context for several reasons. Firstly, while *pengajian* usually takes place in mosques, Islamic centers, or in some occasions private homes, Iqamah is conducted online. Although, the shift to online platforms has become prevalent for many *pengajian* since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, regular *pengajian* is typically led by a religious preacher in a one-way manner, may followed by a question-and-answer session. In contrast, Iqamah fosters a two-way interactive discussion format, resembling a conversation facilitated by alternating participants. Hence, the use of the term ‘*ngaji*’ here signifies that the presented material aims to advocate for alternative religious interpretations that embrace and accommodate sexual minority groups.

The registration process for Iqamah involves initiating registration through a link provided on the @iqamah.id account, although the link is no longer publicly available. The link requires individuals to provide their personal information and respond to questions regarding the meaning of inclusivity and its relevance within the religious context. This step may have been implemented to prevent potential conflicts with individuals who do not share the same beliefs during the study session. IQAMAH sessions are typically conducted once a week, with the Zoom link shared privately through WhatsApp and prohibited for public distribution. Each session commences with the recitation of a verse from the Quran as part of the regular *tadārus* program. However, the study session then proceeds by creating a relaxed atmosphere, where participants are individually asked about something that brought them joy that day. This approach aims to foster an intimate sense among Iqamah members. Another notable aspect is that *tadārus* can be performed

by anyone who is willing, without any compulsion, even if the reader may still in the process of becoming fluent in their recitation.

While discussions are held in an open manner, Alfikar seems to highlight Iqamah as a secure and judgment-free space where queer Muslims can freely express their religious beliefs. Alfikar stated in one of *ngaji* session “*we are all equal and our opinion are valid as long as it contains humanity values.*” This principle allows the discussions to focus on the common objective of finding inner harmony with their faith. Nevertheless, despite his consistency to find members with shared vision and mission, Iqamah accept members from diverse backgrounds. Iqamah serves inter-cultural and inter-faith discussion within sexual minorities community, and with that reason, Iqamah accepts sexual minorities individuals from various background. Therefore, I see that *ngaji inklusi* of Iqamah serves beyond the conventional subjects typically addressed in *pengajian*. It serves as a space for queer Muslims to explore their self-identities and establish connections within individuals who share similar experiences, enabling them to find a place to belong.

3.3.4 Analyzing the Interplay between Religious Beliefs and Queer Identity Formation

In addition to functioning as a safe space for its members, Iqamah also serves as a platform for Alfikar to promote an inclusive religious narrative among these marginalized individuals, emphasizing the importance of human values as a means for queer Muslims to embrace their identity and be accepted by wider society. The discussions within Iqamah provide a supportive environment for queer Muslims to reflect on their identity struggles and navigate the intricacies of being both Muslim and queer. One particular Iqamah session I attended focused on ‘religious trauma,’ where participants were encouraged to share their poignant experiences of facing resistance from their non-acceptance surroundings due to their ‘deviation’ from religious norms.

This particular discussion session differs slightly from the ones I have previously observed. It is specifically focused on exploring traumatic experiences related to religion, these experiences can encompass social exclusion, ideological imposition, and other actions carried out in the name of religion. Unlike the interactive discussions in previous sessions, this one involves more introspection and

listening, as some participants voluntarily share their personal experiences. The atmosphere during this particular session became emotionally charged, with some participants shedding tears while listening to others. Due to privacy concerns, I am unable to disclose the specific stories shared. However, it is evident that the religious journeys undertaken by Iqamah members have often involved profound inner turmoil, ultimately leading them to discover and embrace Iqamah as a supportive space.

In this context, Iqamah plays a crucial role in providing a safe and supportive environment for its members, enabling them to freely express their emotions during these sessions. However, it is important to note that appealing to members' emotions also serves as a potential avenue for Alfikar to promote his advocacy. According to Lerner, emotions play a significant role in decision-making by evoking individuals' moral intuitions and influencing their judgments of what is right and wrong. Nevertheless, there are additional factors including specific emotions experienced and diverse backgrounds of individuals. Therefore, the impact of emotions can vary based on factors such as educational background and cultural upbringing.

The presence of sexual minorities is often viewed as incompatible with the prevailing religious narrative embraced by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia. Their existence is considered as an antithesis, as Indonesia is recognized as the world's largest Muslim-populated nation. The aforementioned strategies to discourage and reject the LGBT community are part of a broader strategy toward this marginalized community. Another example occurred recently when MUI refused the entry of the band from London, Coldplay, alleging that the band supports LGBT and supporting them equals to supporting those who advocate LGBT rights¹⁰⁶. Religion poses a vulnerable space for queer Muslims, often serving as a platform to reject their presence. Although several activists, including Alfikar, attempt to merge the two through alternative interpretations, their struggle requires considerable amount of time to overcome.

However, the personal efforts of queer individuals to make sense of their identity within the context of Islam have given rise to interpretations that differ from those understood by most Muslims in Indonesia. Queer Muslim individuals represent

¹⁰⁶<https://metro.suara.com/read/2023/05/19/172431/usai-pa-212-giliran-mui-ikut-tolak-konser-coldplay-di-indonesia-langgar-pancasila-dan-uud-1945> accessed in 6/25/2023.

anomaly as they deviate from societal norms and strive to bridge the perceived gap between their supposedly conflicting identities. The endeavors undertaken by queer Muslims also encounter internal challenges since there are no rigid regulations and guidelines for queer individuals to follow in practicing their faith, as Fiqh does not address their specific circumstances. Consequently, diverse opinions and variations in religious practices exist among queer individuals that are influenced by their personal approach to Islam. This can be exemplified by divergent views on the number of layers of burial shrouds to be used for transgender individuals or the extent of the *aurat* (body coverage) required for the validity of prayer.

Mary Douglas argues that treating anomalies may be divided into negative and positive treatments, whereas negative treatments involve ignoring and condemning them. In contrast, positive treatments involve creating a ‘new pattern of reality’ where anomalies are treated as part of the surroundings¹⁰⁷. In this regard, I see Iqamah as an embodiment of this ‘new reality.’ It strives to engage in activities that are commonly practiced within the wider Muslim community, allowing its members to experience a sense of belonging as part of Indonesian Muslims. This ‘new reality’ provides a space for minorities with a place to belong, a neutral space where they are liberated from the duality of beliefs regarding what is permissible and impermissible, legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate within religious beliefs. In addition, Toomistu’s research highlights a growing trend among *waria* individuals embracing ‘Islamic’ attire and incorporate piety into their daily lives. This choice allows them to feel a sense of belonging and caters their experience of being ‘ordinary Indonesians.’¹⁰⁸

Iqamah creates this sense through *ngaji inklusi*, which commences with *tadārus* as part of their *khataman*¹⁰⁹ program. These sessions are enriched with friendly interactive religious discussions led by Alfikar, who is always seen wearing *peci* while advocating alternative understanding of Islam that he believes. Participants gain the experience of being Muslims while expressing their appearance and behavior as one. Contrasting prevailing interpretations that tend to have detrimental effects on the existence of sexual minorities community. By employing

¹⁰⁷ Douglas and Douglas, *Food in the Social Order*, 2:39.

¹⁰⁸ Toomistu, “Thinking through the s(k)In,” 92.

¹⁰⁹ Refers to the act of completing entire Quran. Can be performed individually or collectively as religious practice.

religious narratives, they assert their belongingness to the larger Muslim community, highlighting the notion that religion, in addition to being a site of vulnerability, can also serve as a means for strategic inclusion and self-acceptance.¹¹⁰

3.4. Conclusion

The presence of *waria* and transmale individuals in Indonesia faces different circumstances influenced by various factors. However, both groups experience religious rejections, although to varying extents. Dorce Gamalama and Amar Alfikar serve as two individuals who, despite their social privilege of fame and coming from families with religious authority background have chosen to express their religious identity after transitioning. This chapter focuses on Amar Alfikar's ideas as presented in his recently published book, "Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies."

"Queer Menafsir" has generated significant discussions since its publications, receiving both positive feedbacks from marginalized Muslim sexual minority who feel represented as well as negative opinion from groups that opposed religious discourse in sexual minorities community context. The book's title even became a popular a search term on Twitter since it was recently published. It successfully documented Alfikar's personal journey in reconciling his religious identity with his gender preference. Drawing on theological and sufistic approaches, Alfikar strives to explore the experiences of embodiment from a fresh and unique standpoint, influenced by his Islamic and traditional upbringing. He skillfully employs metaphor and poetic language to convey his ideas effectively. Additionally, Alfikar endeavors to find historical and cultural context that may accommodate the existence of sexual minorities community.

However, the book has faced criticism from wider Indonesian Muslim community. The term 'menafsir' is considered incongruous with the content of the book, which primarily focuses on Alfikar's personal life experiences rather than providing a clear interpretative methodology on tafsir. Furthermore, the book contains subjective elements that lean towards criticizing groups that opposed the presence of Muslim queer individuals, with several arguments lacking further elaborations. Alfikar appears to prioritize capturing sexual minorities community as 'the oppressed', neglecting explanations necessary for the general public to understand his idea. It remains unclear whether the strategy is part of his

¹¹⁰ Toomistu, "Thinking through the s(k)In," 93.

advocacy to claim position within the wider Muslim community or not, as fostering a sense of humanism towards queer individuals may be more effective to adopt rather than engaging in continuous debates that involve diverse and fresh perspectives in evaluating diverse genders and sexual orientation.

As part of his endeavor to establish his identity as an Indonesian Muslim, Alfikar established Iqamah as a safe space where he and other Muslim individuals who identify themselves as sexual minorities individuals or their allies can openly express and discuss religious issues without the risk of contentious debates. Iqamah represents as ‘new pattern of reality’ as popularized by Mary Douglas, where marginalized groups create an alternate reality which allows them in activities in a manner that aligns with ‘mainstream norms.’ Iqamah achieves a similar purpose through its own version of *pengajian*, where participants may freely express their religious identity for instance, through *hijab*, *peci*, and *sarung*, while engaging in Islamic discussions in an openly and friendly manner.

CHAPTER IV

Critical Approach to Islam & Queer Muslims in Indonesian Context

4. Background

In the previous chapters, we have gained a better understanding of sexual minority groups, including their dynamics, discourses, and the challenges they face both within Islamic framework and Indonesian context, specifically focusing on the transgender community and more particularly on transmen individuals. We have also explored the alternative interpretations advocated by activists through analysis of Amar Alfikar's idea that contained in his book. In this chapter, I will shift my focus to a critical analysis of SOGIESC discourse in Indonesian context and the efforts of sexual minorities community in claiming and establishing a position as part of Indonesian society.

Firstly, the shift in terminology from LGBT to SOGIESC is motivated by several reasons. First, the term SOGIESC encompasses a broader range of gender and sexuality dimensions, including gender expressions and sexual characteristics that were not comprehensively included in the former term. But, most importantly, the shift aims at redirecting the definition of the concept that allows for advocacy that avoids negative stigmas associated with being trapped in the discourse of 'West vs Islam' and other political inclinations. Alfikar prefers traditional and cultural aspects to represent him; using the title *gus*, wearing *peci*, and *sarong* that are worn most of the time. The reason may be intriguing to be furtherly discussed, as Alfikar is part of GIN-SSOGIE (Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expression), a global NGO that comprises individuals and organizations that engaged with genders and sexualities. It is important to remember the tension that is often employed in political agendas pertaining 'Western influences that aimed to destroy the mentality of young Muslim generation,' which is why ideas, terms, agendas, with westernized terms such as pluralism, secularism, and LGBT advocacy are more difficult to be introduced to broader Indonesian society as some will see it as part of liberalization and westernization of nation and religion. For Alfikar to deliberately state that he is part of the global movement of LGBT advocacy will potentially risk him to be labeled as '*antek Barat*,¹¹¹ which may lead him to lose his

¹¹¹ *Antek Barat* or translated as 'Western lackey' is a pejorative term used to describe individuals or groups that excessively align with 'Western influence'. The term is commonly used in political context to call out someone as a traitor for their own nation, culture, principles in favor of Western agendas.

credibility as a scholar and arguably a religious figure in the eyes of significant part of Indonesian society. Similar to the concept of *keberagaman* (diversity) is embraced more readily than pluralism for several reasons, including its broader and more acceptable nature. Politically and socially, the term *keberagaman* is more widely accepted because it allows for a wider range of perspectives and identities. On the other hand, the term pluralism can be challenging and may encounter resistance from more conservative communities due to its potential implications of accommodating differing beliefs and values. I argue that showcasing as ordinary *gus* of traditional *pesantren*, as well as using SOGIESC instead of LGBT can be potentially his effort to claim a position as part of wider Indonesian Muslim society. Although this does not necessarily deny his position as part of global LGBT advocacy movement.

However, the introduction of SOGIESC as new terminology does not necessarily simplify the advocacy of sexual minority groups in Indonesia, particularly when it comes to their relationship with Islam. While there are aforementioned exceptions such as Amar Alfikar, Dorce Gamalama, and other *waria* celebrities, it is important to acknowledge the different challenges faced by *waria* individuals in Indonesia. Describing *waria* community as marginalized member of society requires careful consideration, as it implies accepting their inclusion in society, which is debatable among mainstream Indonesian community. However, it is worth noting that certain individuals, including Dorce, have managed to gain a higher level of tolerance. Dorce, a well-known celebrity renowned for her talk show, 'Dorce Show,' publicly embraced her transformed identity after undergoing sex change operation in 1983. Dorce had openly expressed her piety by, for instance, wearing a *hijab* and performing *hajj* pilgrimage, despite being buried as a male at the end of her life, defying her expectation. The point I intend to emphasize is that despite the contradictions she faced, Dorce has gained full access from society to freely express her religious beliefs, despite her position as a public figure required her to get higher exposure than other people. This case is similar to Alfikar that currently embraces his identity as a Muslim transmale. Then, what factors contribute to their acceptance and understanding? Is the limit of tolerance differs for each individual or group depending on the specific circumstances? What are the influencing factors that determine the acceptance of Dorce and Alfikar in this context? This chapter aims to serve a critical analysis on the book 'Queer Menafsir' as part of Alfikar's attempt to advocate alternate interpretations that accommodate sexual minorities as part of wider Muslim society. This chapter also attempts to delve further into the tolerance that is employed by wider Indonesian community toward Muslim queer individuals by

differentiate among tolerance, respect, and civility, as well as attempting to find the limit of tolerance that is employed.

4.1. Unveiling Insights and Assessing Perspectives: Critical Analysis on Queer Menafsir

Amar Alfikar has successfully presented his thoughts in a coherent and easily comprehensible language, enriched with literary elements. The book adopts a theological approach that allows readers to examine the experience of diverse genders and sexualities from different point of views – both in personal and theoretical context. Regardless, upon reading the book, there are certain aspects that I would like to highlight: First, the title of the book. The word ‘menafsir’ in the title “Queer Menafsir” appears inadequate for its contents. The term ‘menafsir’ is derived from the word ‘tafsir’ which refers to providing explanations or clarification of the verses of the Quran for a better understanding. However, in the Islamic context, Muslim scholars believe that not all Muslims possess the capacity to interpret Quranic verses. Even Muslim clerics must qualify and fulfill the requirements in order to be a *mufassir* (Quranic interpreters). Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi has outlined specific criteria that scholars must meet to be authorized as *mufassir*:

1. Proficiency in the Arabic language: A *mufassir* must possess expertise in Arabic language encompassing *ṣarf* and *naḥwu*, *balāghah*, morphology, wide range of vocabulary, and all aspects related to semantics and rhetoric.
2. Mastery of Quranic Sciences: A *mufassir* should have a thorough understanding of Quranic sciences. This includes knowledge of *tajwīd* (rules of Quranic recitation), *qirā’at* (different recitations), and *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reasons of revelation).
3. Proficiency in Islamic studies: Before becoming a *mufassir*, a scholar should have mastered various disciplines within Islamic studies, such as *fiqh*, and *‘ilm kalām* (Islamic theology).
4. Proficiency in Hadith Sciences: A *mufassir* must have a strong grasp of hadith related disciplines, including the study of *jarḥ wa ta’dīl* (narrator criticism).
5. A broad knowledge: In addition to Islamic legal sciences, a *mufassir* should possess a wide-ranging knowledge in other fields such as philosophy, logic, and history. This is necessary to understand the cultural and historical context of Quranic verses.

With these requirements in mind, ‘menafsir’ cannot be undertaken by any Muslim. While Alfikar may not have intended this book to be *tafsir* book, readers may interpret it as such from the title. Whether the book is intended as a *tafsir* or a self-reflective journey in Alfikar’s quest to discover God is not yet to be known. However, the title may also serve as a way to attract Indonesian readers who are likely question the content of the book as soon as they read ‘Queer Menafsir.’

The second point to note is that the book mainly focuses on constructing Alfikar’s argument by selectively citing supporting opinions, which creates an impression that Alfikar lacks awareness of opposing viewpoints. It would have been proper and beneficial to present counterarguments to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the situation and context at hand. Given the current situation faced by sexual minority groups who are often face obstacles to express their religious identity, Amar could have utilized his scholarly expertise to present refutation through valid data. Rather, he only includes statistics data in attempted suicide among queer teenagers and sexual minority individuals in general, whereas statistic is crucial in his claim about minority and majority population. Instead, the book primarily adopts theological and humanistic approach, using poetic language to evoke sense of humanity of the readers.

Three, as a scholarly work, this book exhibits a noticeable level of subjectivity. The work appears to heavily emphasize constructing strong arguments, which leads to the neglect or negative treatment of arguments that do not align with his perspective on bodily diversity. While Alfikar acknowledges the concept of cherry-picking in the context of seeking evidence and does not appear to be against it, Alfikar utilizes it excessively in this work. It is a crucial side to note, although Alfikar proclaims himself as a devoted activist – it is important to maintain the objectivity in his scholarly work, as neglecting this may be beneficial for his advocacy but would leave an impression of understanding Islam selectively.

Fourthly, the construction of arguments. Amar Alfikar heavily relies on reasoning and arguments, emphasizing the connection between gender and self-identities with the notions of ‘nature’ and ‘instinct’ ingrained in individuals. However, during the reading process, I noticed that Alfikar leaves several crucial arguments underdeveloped in this book, which could benefit from further elaboration and clarification. Alfikar stated that he perceives the phenomenon of ‘hijrah’¹¹² in Indonesia to be closely associated with a

¹¹² In the context of islamization in Indonesia, hijrah refers to the process of transition from what is considered incompatible with specific Islamic teaching, toward beliefs and practices that align with

narrative of ‘playing victim’ as majority community, who feels oppressed by those who deemed ‘Anti-Islam’. In questioning this perspective, he writes: “*How it can be perceived that a predominantly Islamic nation would feel constrained by oppressors who harbor animosity towards Islam?*” It remains unclear whether emphasizing sexual minority groups as oppressed and in need of assistance by employing the term *mustad’afīn* is part of his deliberate advocacy tactic aimed at securing place for themselves within Indonesian society. Alfikar stated: By identifying themselves as part of an oppressed collective, they present themselves as a minority group fighting against the established norms hindering queer individuals from freely expressing their identities along with their religious beliefs. Amar Alfikar associates scholars who support sexual minorities with terms such as ‘progressive’, pluralistic, and ‘advocates *rahmatan lil ‘alamīn*’, while branding opposing groups as ‘conservative’, ‘extremist’, and ‘oppressive.’ Some of the instances are: “*Look at how terrifying the loud chants of takbir are, that uttered only to intimidate and spread fear.*”¹¹³, “*...The rise of conservative and even extremist religious ideologies also triggers and increasingly grips the thought patterns of religious groups with takfīrī arguments and interpretations*”¹¹⁴.

This portrayal places queer Muslims as a marginalized group that requires defense within the framework of the Quran. Nevertheless, I argue that this constructed image relies on simplistic and generalized arguments. These labels are applied from a single perspective without taking into account other considerations. As a result, Alfikar’s criticism pertaining tolerance and empathy towards queer groups in this book does not adequately represented by him in the opposing viewpoints presented in the text.

The suggestion that arose during my reading is that the arguments presented in this book have the potential to extend beyond theological, social, and historical discussions. While it is commendable to emphasize a particular approach, I believe that delving into other academic disciplines is necessary to provide a broader understanding and avoid endless sociological interplay debates. For instance, considering author’s personal experience of being diagnosed with gender dysphoria, it would be valuable to explore diverse gender and sexualities from a clinical standpoint. This would add a fresh perspective to the ongoing discourse. Despite there are researches that already address sexual orientation and gender diversity from genetic, hormonal, and neurological aspects.

this teaching. The definition of hijrah in this context may vary depending on different sources and perspectives.

¹¹³ Alfikar, *Queer Menafsir: Teologi Islam Untuk Ragam Ketubuhan*, 88.

¹¹⁴ Alfikar, 162.

Incorporating clinical discussions within the framework of Islamic studies could provide a unique and insightful contribution in this discourse. In fact, Amar briefly mentioned scientific discussion, though in the context of Muslims who reject the presence of sexual minority individuals as those who dismiss science. Alfikar argues: *“Isn’t it bizarre that some Muslims take pride in the great scientific discoveries that have emerged from Muslim scholars, yet simultaneously refuse to embrace the development of scientific knowledge?”*¹¹⁵ However, Alfikar does not serve any further elaboration on this discussion that would be beneficial in enriching the scope of the discussion.

However, Alfikar has successfully created a cohesive and compelling piece that delves into his personal journey as marginalized individual seeking a sense of belonging within Islam. Through his work, Alfikar manages to encapsulate diverse interpretations that offer a novel and distinct perspective in understanding Islam. This critique aims to ignite more nuanced and critical discourse, thereby allowing subsequent works to gain wider recognition among broader audiences.

In light of SOGIESC in Indonesian context, we have briefly discussed the policies implemented by various institutions and the government towards the sexual minority community in Indonesia. These actions indicate that Indonesia provides a legal framework that accommodates the Anti-LGBT advocacy. In addition, despite the existence of *waria* celebrities, KPI (Indonesian Broadcasting Commission) issued a circular letter in 2014 that prohibited ‘effeminate’ behavior, citing it as ‘potentially promoting LGBT.’ With a rapid growth of certain Islamic organizations advocating against sexual minorities community. Hence, although Indonesia is often considered a relatively tolerant country, it is not the most favorable environment for sexual minority to freely express their religious beliefs. Prominent Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, known for advocating tolerance and progressiveness, have officially rejected providing support to the LGBT community.

An individual’s interpretation and expression of religion are shaped by various complex factors and personal experiences. However, within given cultural settings, certain interpretations tend to dominate over others. Alfikar incorporates cultural and historical elements into his advocacy efforts, aiming at introducing Indonesian Muslims to find a common context where broader Indonesian Muslim community relates to sexual minority individuals. This step may be crucial in challenging the perception that associates this

¹¹⁵ Alfikar, 41.

community to Western cultural settings due to the term LGBT. Therefore, Alfikar prefers using the term SOGIESC to engage people and present a more neutral and inclusive impression. By shifting the terminology, Alfikar may effectively convey the same message while avoiding negative impressions.

4.2. The Ambiguity of Being ‘Religiously Tolerant’

Before delving into the discussion of the boundaries of tolerance practiced by Indonesian Muslim towards sexual minorities, it is essential to establish a common understanding of tolerance. The challenge lies in the absence of universally standardized definition for the term tolerance and other terms related to it, such as intolerance and discrimination, as they carry subjective meanings that vary depending on individual perspectives. This part attempts to delve on observing the limit of tolerance that is set by wider Indonesian Muslim community toward queer Muslim individuals.

However, why questioning limit of tolerance becomes crucial in this discussion? We have explored the rise of Anti-LGBT advocacy in Indonesia, where both Islamic organizations and government bodies exhibit resistance towards sexual minorities and non-heteronormative behavior. Nevertheless, despite this prevailing opposition, there are some levels of tolerance within Indonesian society for certain cases of sexual minorities, as seen from *waria* celebrities such as Dorce Gamalama, Lucinta Luna, and Millen Cyrus. Although these *waria* may not always receive positive feedbacks, their overall experience of public recognition and continued involvement in the entertainment industry reflect a certain level of tolerance. I argue that this in order to thoroughly examine this paradox, we have to equate the definition of tolerance in order to set the limit of tolerance that is employed in Indonesia toward queer Muslim individuals.

Defining these terms accurately and recognizing their distinctions will lead in a better comprehension of tolerance. Tolerance refers to the willingness to tolerate or to put up with someone or something, especially opinions or behavior that you cannot agree with. The concept of *maḥabbah*, which was promoted by renowned Sufi Jalaluddin Rumi, emphasizes that tolerance represents a universal form of love that goes beyond the confines of religious boxes and beliefs. Rumi suggests that human should possess the ability to recognize the beauty present in every religious tradition and reject any tendencies towards fanaticism. However, do these definitions cover the complexity of religious tolerance?

One of the approaches that is used to define tolerance is to equate it with respect and civility. Although, in some cases these concepts are interconnected one to another, in

their implementation, these concepts represent distinct definitions. Westacott divides respect into several categories, including respect for one to hold a belief and respect for a particular belief, while respect for a belief is subdivided into six parts: epistemic, moral, historical, intellectual, aesthetic, and pragmatic¹¹⁶. This categorization allows for the possibility to withhold a belief while still honoring the intellectual aspects or appreciating the beauty inherent in a particular thought. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two also emphasizes both differences. With this division, it is conceivable to hold respect for a viewpoint without having to tolerate it. For instance, scientists may hold respect for the intellectual aspects of the geocentric theory¹¹⁷, as it was once believed and embraced by significant number of scientists during classical period. However, with the advancement of technology, scientific evidence proves the accuracy of the heliocentric theory¹¹⁸. Hence, recent scientist who adhere to the geocentric theory would not be tolerated in the present day, as it violates basic astronomical knowledge.

While civility refers to polite and decency in societal interactions. Civility promotes the ability to express opinion or disagreement without leading into personal attacks and to treat other beings with kindness and fairness. In its interconnection with tolerance, civility prevents one to deliberately say to a *hijabi* girl passing the street '*Muslim women are oppressed by wearing hijab!*' and to remain quiet, although shouting opinion does not violate any law or causing physical harm to the girl, it showcases uncivilized action. On the other hand, respect and civility go hand in hand. Yet, respect is focused on valuing different individual, belief, or perspective, while civility represents the behavior and not merely intellectual stances¹¹⁹. Additionally, in this case, Levinovitz argues that combining religious tolerance and civility may tempts individuals to adopt intellectually irresponsible position¹²⁰. How? Valuing one's opinion or principles requires deeper knowledge that takes time and effort, and at the same time does not exclude the possibility of pointing out those differences in a discussion – in a polite manner. Nevertheless, in the realm of religion, criticizing one's belief potentially leads to contentious debates. Hence, many individuals opt to adopt more comforting vision such as: "no religion condones violence," "differences in beliefs are subjective," and "all religions promote kindness," or

¹¹⁶ Emrys Westacott, *The Virtues of Our Vices* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁷ A belief that Earth is the center of the universe with all of the planets, moon, stars including sun revolving around it.

¹¹⁸ An understanding that sun is the center of the universe.

¹¹⁹ Alan Jay Levinovitz, *The Limits of Religious Tolerance*, Public Works (Amherst, Massachusetts: Amherst College Press, 2016), 7.

¹²⁰ Levinovitz, 11.

even remain quiet rather than run the risk of confrontation. In other words, tolerance is an act of *accepting* individuals, communities, beliefs, or perspectives that are different from us, respect is an act of *valuing* them, while civility is a behavior that prevent one to express disagreement in unfair manner.

However, when it comes to religious tolerance, discussions require to be approached with careful consideration. Tolerance, initially arises from the coexistence of differing interpretations, where distinct subjects; individuals, communities, perspective, interpretations may coexist and live in harmony. In this context, criticizing someone's belief, particularly within the sacred realm, requires careful consideration, as it has the potential to be perceived as insulting or derogatory. This is because for numerous individuals, their religious beliefs are deeply intertwined with their sense of self, and our perspectives on someone's beliefs may have a significant impact on overall relationship with this particular individual. If we hold the view that someone's religious convictions are misguided or ignorant, we do not only oppose a standpoint but also conflicting his identity with – what we believe – his false beliefs, which could be the definition of being intolerant.

After, in this chapter I will focus my discussion on observing what kind of definition is suitable to define tolerance that is applied to sexual minorities in Indonesia. Tolerance is influenced by the context and the object of tolerance itself. Being tolerant in religion and the realm of science certainly requires distinct parameters. Saying “*If according to you, argument A is true, then it is true for you,*” is more likely to be found in religious discussions than in scientific discussions that often present valid and indisputable evidence. Levinovitz argues that in the realm of religion, it is easier to expand the definition of truth rather than narrowing down the definition of religion to avoid potentially intolerance attitude¹²¹. By suggesting that there is no objective way to determine the truth, individuals may avoid religious debate. Despite the prevailing regulations and advocacy against sexual minority communities, there are respective religious figures who defend the rights of these communities whether in an open or implicit manner. Prominent examples include Husein Muhammad, Marzuki Wahid, and Siti Musdah Mulia. In addition, these scholars collaborated and compiled a book ‘*Fiqh Seksualitas: Risalah Islam untuk Pemenuhan Hak-hak Seksualitas*¹²²’ (Fiqh of Sexuality), which addresses broader topics of

¹²¹ Levinovitz, 12.

¹²² Husein Muhammad, Marzuki Wahid, and Siti Musdah Mulia, *Fiqh Seksualitas: Risalah Islam Untuk Pemenuhan Hak-Hak Seksualitas* (Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia, 2011).

sexualities that are still widely considered as taboo including homosexuality and *mukhannats*.

It is also crucial to consider the influence of cultural and historical aspects in shaping societal tolerance towards different issues. One example is the *waria* community in Indonesia which has become an integral part of society due to its strong historical roots and active involvement in Indonesian cultural traditions. Boellstorff introduces the term of Ethnolocalized Professional Homosexual and transvestite subject positions (ETPs), which refers to the specific roles and identities shaped by cultural norms within a particular context¹²³. This highlights the diverse and intricate nature of transvestism and homosexuality, influenced by the specific roles and identities shaped by intersection of cultural norms, individual identities, and social roles. The popular examples are *bissu* from Sulawesi and *warok* from Ponorogo. As we have discussed, *bissu* is one of the five genders recognized in classical Bugis religion, playing a significant spiritual role in Bugis culture. On the other hand, *warok* is closely associated with *reog* of Ponorogo, a renowned traditional dance known for its magical elements and distinct properties such as *kuda lumping* (Bamboo horses) and lion headed mask. *Warok* is deemed as a respected and powerful male figure known for practicing ‘female fasting,’ which involves abstaining from sexual relations with women. It is believed that *warok* can enhance and maintain their skills by taking care of young teen males known as *gemblak*. The connection between *warok* and *gemblak*, although not always, can exceed boundaries of a typical teacher-student relationship¹²⁴. Up to the early 20th century, it was prevalent for *warok* to compete fiercely and even resort to deadly conflicts to assert their dominance over the most talented *gemblak* performers¹²⁵. However, over time, this unique relationship between *warok* and *gemblak* has faded away, primarily due to the decline of the *reog* tradition, which was partly perpetrated during the New Order regime. While *reog* has occasional performances in certain areas nowadays, its popularity has waned, and the prominence of the *warok-gemblak* relationship has significantly diminished compared to earlier times. These examples may be crucial in observing how tolerance is implemented differently by broader Indonesian community to sexual minorities individuals.

So, what is the limit of tolerance? Practices like human sacrifice in the ancient times may have been considered religious practices in certain religions, but it would be

¹²³ Boellstorff, “Playing Back the Nation,” 163.

¹²⁴ Boellstorff, 163.

¹²⁵ <https://www.vice.com/id/article/vb9m8b/relasi-mistis-dan-sensual-rumit-antara-warok-gemblak-di-ponorogo> accessed in 1/7/2023.

vehemently condemned today. Similarly, practices like cutting off the hands of thieves or stoning adulterers in Islamic culture, are not implemented in Islamic or majority Muslim countries anymore. This suggests that tolerance is context-dependent and influenced by social and cultural norms prevailing at a specific time and place. If tolerance is a concept where two seemingly opposing entities may coexist harmoniously, can we indicate that the limit of tolerance lies in the aspect of ‘harming’ others, as harmonious living cannot occur if each subject inflicts harm on the other subject?

With this concept, sexual minority individuals in Indonesia have the possibility to live alongside broader Indonesian society, although tolerance does not necessarily guarantee respect and civility. This explains why the Anti-LGBT advocacy is rapidly growing in Indonesia, supported by government regulations, coinciding with public recognition of sexual minority individuals, for instance *waria* celebrities, Amar Alfikar, and other individual that perform acts that deviate from heteronormative behavior. In other words, queer individuals may potentially live in Indonesia with the possibility of facing negative stigmas and discriminatory treatment as minority throughout their lives.

While the potential of harming others serves as line that can be a double-edged sword that acts as a ‘boundary’ for both sides not to exceed in expressing their opinions. This implies that individuals have the freedom to critique issues concerning sexual minorities as long as it does not harm the group, and vice versa. This limit explains the resistance of broader Indonesian Muslim community towards the LGBT campaign, as this grassroots is part of the global LGBT movement which potentially ‘harm’ the long-standing law system both in nation and religion, while sexual minorities individual does not pose the same ‘potential threat’ to the system.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter contributes to my critical analysis within this discourse. First aspect is illustrated through Alfikar, who positions himself as an individual shaped by a traditional Muslim upbringing, represented by employing the *gus* title, wearing *peci* and *sarung*. The reason he creates a distance between himself from a broader global LGBT agenda may have to do with avoiding negative stigmas and pejorative terms that often associated with Westernization agenda that could affect his credibility as a scholar and arguably a religious figure, despite his actual affiliation with GIN-SSOGIE.

The next part of this chapter contains my critical analysis on the book “Queer Menafsir.” While the book addresses the existing gap by providing academic insights from

a transmale individuals through a theological approach, there are areas that I believe can be further developed. Firstly, the use of the term ‘menafsir’ in the title of the book may not accurately represent its content. Although it reflects Alfikar’s personal interpretation of Islam, the term ‘menafsir’ that is derived from *tafsīr* requires meeting specific qualifications to be considered as a *mufassir*. Although, the choice of the word ‘menafsir’ may be intentional to attract readers when they see the title. On top of that, the arguments presented in his book appear to be influenced by his stances as an activist, which leads to subjective impression. Furthermore, some arguments lack sufficient elaboration and confirmation, leaving readers with questions. A possible suggestion is to separate his standing between his role as an academic and also an activist. This will allow reader to set expectations and lessen the possibility of misleading perceptions.

This chapter also explores the boundaries of tolerance applied to sexual minorities community in Indonesia. In this part I question the limit of tolerance that is employed toward sexual minorities community in Indonesia. The reason why this is worth questioning is because there is seemingly a paradox between the mushrooming of Anti-LGBT agenda in Indonesia while at the same time acknowledging the public recognition of some queer public figures. Detangling the paradox result to a clearer vision on the limit of tolerance that may aid both parties to meet each satisfaction, in which government may preserve their set of law system and regulation while Muslim sexual minorities individual can live alongside the broader Indonesian community by working toward the same definition of tolerance. Upon writing, I emphasize on the difference among tolerance, respect, and civility. Where tolerance serves as an act of *accepting* different individuals, communities, beliefs, or perspectives, respect represents as an act of *valuing* them, while civility is a behavior to preserve good communication by preventing one to involve in contentious debate.

This chapter examines the presence of openly acknowledged sexual minority individuals such as *waria* celebrities that are deemed as *wajar* or part of the ‘normalcy’ within the societal context. Tolerance in Indonesia is strongly influenced by cultural norms, where certain regions of Indonesia provide specific roles for sexual minorities individual. Although, actions or expressions within these roles are not always align with one’s gender or sexual orientation, these factors contribute to a sense of *kewajaran* or normalcy within the heteronormative Indonesian society. This chapter also highlights the distinction between tolerance, respect, and civility. While these concepts often overlap, this distinction can also create an alternate perspective where tolerance may exist without exhibiting

respect or civility. While the limit of tolerance are actions that potentially causing harm to others. This concept aligns with the negative stigma that sometimes expressed sexual minorities community and the mushrooming Anti-LGBT campaign, while at the same time, acknowledges public acceptance of *waria* public figures.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The global LGBT movement's progress has impacted the dynamics of sexual minority groups in Indonesia, particularly in their interactions with the broader Muslim community and the government. This is evident through the increasing prominence of the Anti-LGBT movement following the mega rallies of *Aksi Bela Islam* (Defending Islam Rally), accompanied by region-specific regulations addressing LGBT issues. As there are significant number of Muslim populations in Indonesia, the advocacy of Anti-LGBT gained more interest among Indonesian Muslim community supported by the consensus among classical Muslim jurists regarding the prohibition of *liwāt* and religious interpretations that do not endorse non-heteronormative genders and sexualities. Therefore, it is crucial in this research to delve further on SOGIESC in Islamic context, including how Islamic law sees homosexuality, *mukhannats*, and *mutarajjil*, and how does it correlate with recent dynamics of Islam and SOGIESC in Indonesian context. Meanwhile, several regions like Garut, Bandung, and Bogor have discussed and even issued local regulations that impose sanctions on LGBT groups. Muslim mass organizations and MUI have also issued *fatwas* declaring homosexuality as forbidden and suggested the government to formulate laws that prevent individuals from engaging in homosexual acts. one of the reasons of the increased sentiment is that LGBT advocacy in Indonesia is seen as part of a Western agenda aimed at undermining the moral values of Muslim young generation.

While from cultural and historical context, cultural backgrounds that assigned specific roles for sexual minority groups has an impact in creating a sense of *kewajaran* or 'normalcy,' and acceptance that exclude public recognition of certain sexual minority individuals or behavior, portrayed in the presence of *waria* celebrities and Amar Alfikar that gained recognition in 2019. The attention he received mostly comes from his appearance as a Muslim transmale individuals, showcased by his *peci* and *sarung* that is close to traditional Islam culture in Indonesia. I argue that this strategy may be useful to create a gap between his movement and the wider global movement of LGBT campaign. By emphasizing his background as an individual growing up in a traditional Muslim setting, Alfikar can prevent himself from being associated with the whole label of 'West vs Islam.' Despite his affiliation with GIN-SSOGIE. Alfikar also establishes Iqamah (Indonesian Queer Muslim and Allies), that establishes weekly *pengajian* or Islamic study sessions online with its members. This paper argues that Iqamah is a representation of a 'new pattern of reality,' where marginalized group create an alternate reality where they can experience

a sense of belonging. In this case, Iqamah create their own version of *pengajian* where their presence is accepted and they can be part of wider Indonesian Muslim community.

the book 'Queer Menafsir: Islamic Theology for Diverse Bodies' by Amar Alfikar enriches the scholarly discourse in exploring the relationship between Islam and sexual minorities individuals, there are some significant concerns that I would like to highlight in this paper. One of them being the term 'menafsir' that is derived from the word *tafsir* is inadequate with the content of the book. Although, the choice of the title may be in purpose to attract wider audience, the title may cause misleading expectation on the content of the book. It remains unclear whether Alfikar writes this book with his position as an activist rather than a scholar. Nonetheless, the book lacks objectivity and is more focused towards constructing his own argument which leads to neglecting opposing arguments and a biased impression which could influence his credibility as a scholar. Although, adopting this method may be beneficial for his advocacy, this act may leave an impression of interpreting Islam in selective manner. I argue that acknowledging opposing views, which is the view that is commonly understood among Muslims will stand for his credibility as a scholar and attract wider audience that may not be knowledgeable in the topic to read his book.

The last discussion of thesis explores the limits of tolerance imposed on sexual minority groups in Indonesia, where limit of tolerance is questioned due to the paradox between (1) the rise of Anti-LGBT campaigns advocates by several Muslim mass organizations, the *fatwas* issued by Muslim mass organizations, and government regulations regarding LGBT issues, and (2) the acceptance of queer individuals who receive public recognition, This paper argues that in order to determine the limit of tolerance. This paper concludes that tolerance is an act of accepting individuals, communities, perspectives, or beliefs that are different from us, respect is an act of valuing those that differ from us, and civility is the behavior that prevents one from expressing disagreement in unfair manner. These differences allow one of these concepts to be implemented without interconnecting with others. I argue that Indonesian society can still practice tolerance by 'accepting' their existence without implementing the other two concepts, thus allowing for Anti-LGBT campaigns and marginalization toward sexual minorities to continue without crossing the boundary of being intolerant, which limit is harming other individuals or groups.

In conclusion, the arguments presented in my thesis can be summarized as follows: (1) to create a sense of belonging in minority groups that are excluded from wider society, Muslims in sexual minorities community create an alternative reality that cater the sense

of belonging as part of the majority community. Through this 'new pattern of reality,' they can establish a sense of being 'part' of the community without actually being part of the community. (2) Establishing limit and equating the definition of tolerance can serve as one of a possible solution to help state governance and legislation to situate the position within the nation of not only sexual minorities community but other minority groups in general.

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