

REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN ONLINE NEWS: STUDY OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Savira Uswatun Hasanah[✉]

Universitas Airlangga, Jl. Dharmawangsa Dalam, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia

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This study mainly investigates the representation of Muslim women in online news. This article analyzes the data using Corpus Linguistics combined with Critical Discourse analysis (CL-CDA) supported by the topic modeling method. The data used are the news articles with approximately 50 thousand-word tokens. The selected news is news published in 2013-2021. The news was chosen because it can represent the social view of Muslim women since the news has the power to influence people's perspectives. The results show that the direction of media representation towards Muslim women is gradually leading to a better direction. Factors that bring a negative image to Muslim women are generally due to the "black fashion," which is associated with "terrorism." However, modernization makes today's Muslim women more critical. They have the freedom to express their opinion, take important positions, and support feminism and gender equality movements. The use of the niqab is generally prohibited in European countries because it is considered an extremist. But, The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the image of the niqab to be more accepted in society. Niqab users are now seen as "face-covering experts," which attracts a lot of people.

[✉]Correspondence:

Email: savira.uswatun.hasanah-2020@fib.unair.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Media is closely related to society. The media is the right tool to identify a society, considering that the media reflects real-life situations. Print and electronic media function as a medium, a place for disseminating information. The information conveyed can then be considered entertainment or education to make the public aware of the current situation. The media also act as a place where our voices are published. There are various kinds of media that we can find, such as newspapers, books, magazines, and so on. In line with technological developments, electronic media such as TV news, the web, and social media have many important impacts on society. Technological developments make it easier for people to get information. They can get the information they want with just one click. With this convenience, one can observe whatever is being discussed (Nity & Singh, 2017).

Media has social power, considering that the media has a persuasive nature. The media can be a place to insert plans and opinions. Social power can be tied to various parties such as groups or institutions. These parties tend to be able to control the thoughts of those who are less powerful in society. Control includes actions to regulate or gain status, position, wealth, and so on (Dijk, 1995). The study of media framing is a topic that cannot be avoided because it plays an important role in society. Research on media framing has attracted the interest of several researchers such as D'Angelo and Lombard (2008), Ge and Wang (2018), Bornholm and Roland-Forsman (2019).

D'Angelo and Lombard (2008) examine the influence of the press in political campaigns. This study links political campaigns with audience perceptions. This perception is seen from two sides, namely positive aspects and negative aspects conveyed through media content. It was found that the media used three media framing methods, namely channel, strategy, and accountability. The results showed that the audience tends to have negative perceptions. Audiences also believe that the media, especially news, are the only reliable source of information (D'Angelo & Lombard, 2008).

Ge and Wang (2018) investigate the representation of ordinary people in the news. Technological developments make the media realize that the public wants to play an active role from the bottom up in the published news. So, people often act as the main focus in the news. This study examines how the media acts as a medium to represent the opinions of ordinary people, especially regarding social conflicts. The results show that ordinary people perform both positively and negatively. Both are closely related to the government, which tends to be presented as an antagonist. On the positive side, ordinary people are presented as parties who support government policies. On the other hand, as a negative side, ordinary

people are presented as parties who criticize, reject, or violate government policies (Ge & Wang, 2018).

Bornholm and Roland-Forsman (2019) analyze the representation of children as participatory identities on social media. The results showed that children perform three self-representation actions: receiving input, understanding others, and preparing to decide action. Through participation, children learn extensively and criticize situations (Bornholm & Roland-Forsman, 2019).

A myriad of studies has been conducted to investigate the analysis of media framing. However, little information was found regarding media framing of the representation of Muslim women in the world. Thus, efforts to find framing media around the world are still considered incomplete. In this study, the researcher aims to identify the representation of Muslim women in online news as we know that the focus of news from year to year can be different. As in 2020-2021, the focus of the news will be on the COVID-19 pandemic situation. This research is corpus research because the researcher collects a lot of related news for analysis. News was chosen because it is a reflection of social situations. The topic of representation of Muslim women in the world was selected because this topic is a sensitive topic for several countries. Every country has its views on Muslim women depending on the environment, belief, culture, and many other aspects.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis

Currently, many theories work with corpus linguistics, such as applying corpus linguistics (CL) to the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Corpus linguistics is an empirical method that uses corpora or big data as the object of research. This method aims to analyze the tendencies, probabilities, patterns, and phenomena of language. Statistical significance is one of the results that can be obtained using corpus linguistics. In corpus linguistics, various aspects can be analyzed, such as word lists, collocations, concordance, and so on (Cheng, 2013).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one of the areas of linguistics that examines the relationship between language and ideology (Fairclough, 1995). Critical discourse analysis is generally criticized for having weaknesses in its analytical methods. CDA is considered to produce fragmentary or incomplete results because it uses qualitative methods. In addition, the qualitative method used also makes many people think that data analysis is only based on

subjective prejudice. Lack of academic rigor makes the results of CDA analysis easily questionable (Cheng, 2013).

Corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis are a good combination in investigating language phenomena. In textual analysis, random sampling is used to analyze big data. With the quantitative method of corpus linguistics, lexico-grammatical patterns and lexical collocations can be found. On the other hand, critical discourse analysis plays an important role in linking textual, cognitive, and social phenomena (Cheng, 2013).

The three-dimensional model is one of the CDA frameworks proposed by Fairclough. This model focuses on three important aspects, including discourse, interpretation, and social conditions. This method can be used to analyze textual features, reader interpretation, and relevance in real-life contexts (Fairclough, 1995). External factors cannot influence textual analysis. On the contrary, discursive analysis and social analysis are strongly influenced by external factors (Stilman, 1997).

Topic Modeling

The topic modeling algorithm is often used to analyze various things such as trend analysis, text mining, and article collection analysis (Lin & He, 2009). Topic modeling makes it possible to provide a “content map” supporting research because it can simplify research and increase accuracy in the analysis process. A broad and dense corpus can be revealed using topic modeling by investigating the patterns used. Inductively, this model can organize large amounts of text. Topic modeling can be used to investigate a wide range of topics without any hypothetical limitations. The basic idea of this model is that a document will relate directly to a topic seen from the group of words used (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). The stability aspect is built by the association of terms and semantic similarity (Belford & Greene, 2020).

Islamic World View

Sacred religion has influenced all aspects of social life. Religion is a reflection of one’s unanimity of mind that leads to the question of self-existence in this world and the hereafter. The Islamic perspective even affects aspects of political power and leadership. Al-Quran, as a guide, sees a leader as a person who has a high commitment to God and humans (Chak, 2012).

In society, many Muslims have immigrated to other countries, such as Europe. In fact, the existence of immigrants is considered only for a short time, not permanent. Many Muslims who wanted to settle longer in Europe ended up disappointed. They then return to

their identity by contacting mosques, spreading knowledge about their own country, and teaching Islam. Honor killings often appear instead of taking justice. Many non-Muslim majority societies associate Muslims with extremism, terrorism, and personal exile. Many problems like injustice, suicide attacks, lack of tolerance exist in society in the name of religion (Schirrmacher, 2008).

A very crucial topic related to Muslims in society is the position of women. In Islam, women are equal to men. Women are endowed with dignity, protection, and respect. However, in the view of western society, they consider women with headscarves and robes to be “oppressed creatures.” Muslim women are often the subject of discrimination in society (Schirrmacher, 2008).

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method to investigate the representation of Muslim women in online news. Qualitative research is an interpretative approach that can identify and define research problems. This method is advantageous in investigating social phenomena such as language’s role in social life (Palmer Palmer & Bolderston, 2006).

Sample

Corpus contained a collection of news about Muslim women around the world with approximately 50.000 words tokens became the data in this study. The top 25 results of word lists identified in Antconc became the sample data. Those word lists were used as an important aspect in determining topics.

Instrument

The researcher became an important instrument in data analysis. The AntConc application was used in this research to identify the Word List as the starting material for determining the topics.

Data collection

Several steps were taken to collect the data. Those steps are as follows:

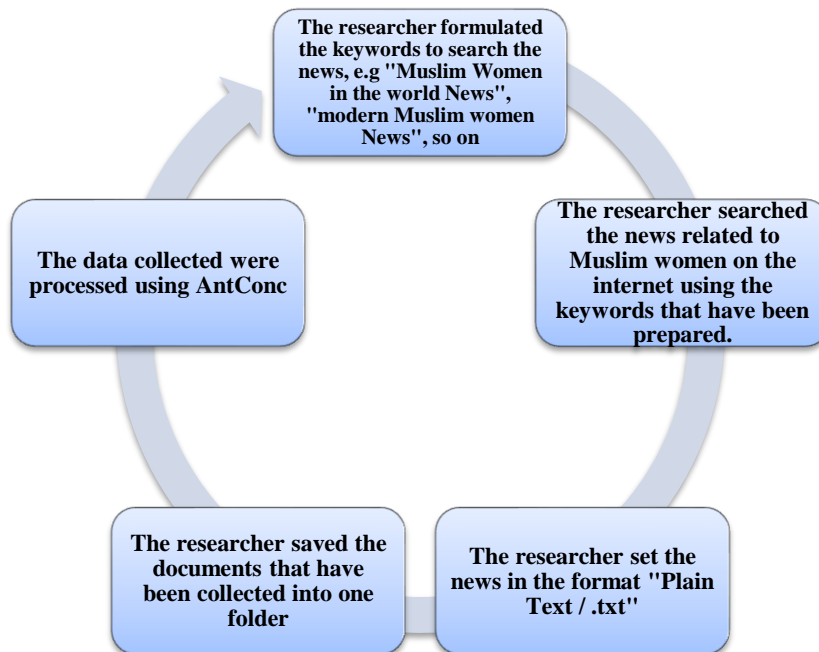


Figure 1: The procedures of data collections

Data Analysis

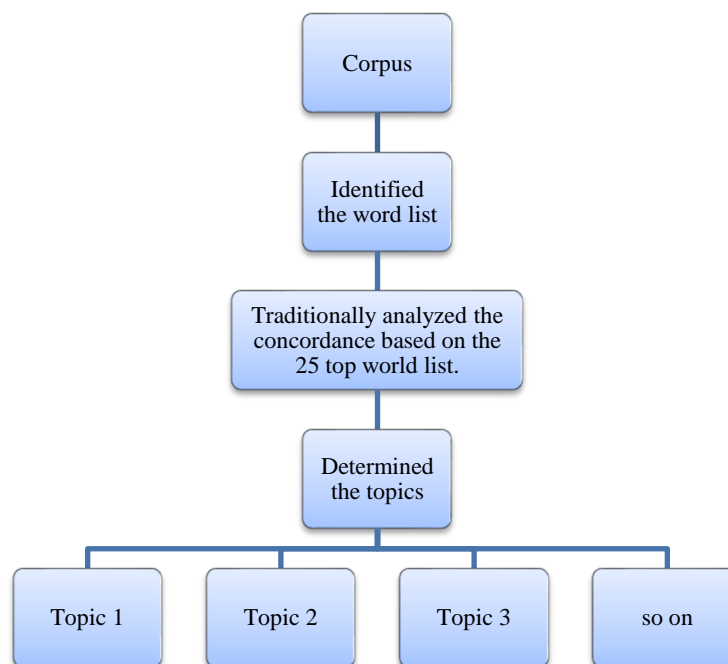


Figure 2: The process of data analysis

The topic modeling captured a discursive landscape that then reflected the situation and views of Muslim women in the world. The topics represented the events or problems related to the image of Muslim women. There are many ways to analyze the corpus,

including analyzing collocations, wordlists, keywords, or other elements (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). In this study, the researcher focused on investigating word lists which were then analyzed the concordance manually. The topics obtained were then examined and then explained in depth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The following is the word list that appears based on AntConc. The researcher took the top 25 word lists that can represent Muslim women in online news. Words such as Women, Muslim, Muslims, Islam, and so on were not included in the word list being considered. This is because the words are too broad or general, so they cannot define Muslim women.

Rank	Freq	Word	Rank	Freq	Word
1	106	public	14	65	communities
2	98	hijab	15	62	ban
3	98	niqab	16	61	against
4	97	fashion	17	59	community
5	96	wearing	18	59	france
6	95	face	19	58	law
7	91	wear	20	58	media
8	88	rights	21	57	french
9	80	woman	22	55	society
10	73	men	23	54	countries
11	69	social	24	54	political
12	68	clothing	25	53	burqa
13	66	uk			

From the results above, the following topics are concluded:

Islamophobia

The first topic is Islamophobia. Islamophobia is a topic that leads to Islam and Muslims in western countries (Bleich, 2012). Islamophobia can be likened to social anxiety towards Islam and Muslims. Many non-Muslims have a fear of Islam and Muslims (Abbas, 2004). This fear is caused by the mindset or stereotypes about Islam and Muslims that are spread. Negative stereotypes then make non-Muslims think that Muslims are enemies, so there are many rejections of Muslim groups (Zúquete, 2008).

Islamophobia comes with various forms of action. The most common of them are acts of violence in public places against Muslim women. This can be seen in the data below:

Data 1

“Earlier in October another video went viral, showing two New South Wales police officers verbally abusing two Muslim women, threatening to falsely charge them as an accessory to murder. In both cases, the victims were women and visibly Muslim, wearing a head covering (hijab), and the perpetrators were white men.”

Islamophobia mostly occurs in multicultural societies where various cultures, religions, and beliefs are in a place. European countries are one of the places where there is Islamophobia towards Muslim women. The data shows that two New South Wales police officers became perpetrators of public violence against two Muslim women. Verbal abuse was received in the form of threats of “terrorism or murder” charges. This is due to anxiety caused by negative stereotypes regarding the use of the hijab, which is associated with terrorism or extremism.

Muslim women’s “All black” fashion is the root of Islamophobia. Most Europeans think that using the burqa, niqab, and all kinds of Muslim identities is a form of extremism. It becomes a concern for the government. As the impacts, there are discriminations against Muslim women, such as banning the use of the niqab, burqa, burkini, and so on. This phenomenon occurs as the following data:

Data 2

“For at least a decade there have been calls to ban Muslim face coverings in the UK. In the aftermath of the Brexit referendum in 2016, more than half the British population said they supported a burqa ban.”

Data 3

“In the past, advocates of such laws have argued that face-covering is a sign of religious extremism, social separation and patriarchal oppression of Muslim women.”

Fashion “all blacks” such as the burqa, niqab, and hijab is a concern for western countries such as the UK. They consider that the religious attribute is a symbol of extremism that results in social separation. Thus, the government decided to ban the use of Muslim women’s attributes written into the law.

Women’s Empowerment

Women’s empowerment increased rapidly regarding their capacity or equality in the social, political, educational, and economic fields (Hasin et al., 2018). Freedom to make

choices in life, express oneself creatively, and occupy important positions are examples of women's empowerment actions. Women have always been portrayed as being governed and constrained by norms and rules. However, along with human awareness, women gradually get the right to determine their life choices freely. This can be seen from the narrative below:

Data 4

“But many of the refugee women in question have taken advantage of their new lives in western, secular societies to ask for divorce – often from abusive husbands they had to marry as young girls. They had not been forced to marry the men for religious reasons but often because they came from rural backgrounds where patriarchy (and patriarchal interpretations of Islam) were predominant.”

The fact that the distribution of the Muslim population massively increased is inevitable. Many Muslim women become immigrants and move to western countries. The Muslim woman takes advantage of this situation to make a decision in her life to divorce, which she cannot do in the country of Muslim women. There are various prohibitions, regulations, consequences regarding divorce. There are various considerations for the divorce that they take, including the abusive attitude of the husband due to patriarchal understanding and early marriage.

Technological developments and the rapid use of social media play an important role in women's empowerment movements. Muslim women can actively and creatively express their talents through their works, one of which is fashion development. This can be seen from the narrative below.

Data 5

“The biggest players in the development of Islamic fashion are young Muslim fashion bloggers. These young Muslim women, sharing ideas, styles and trends with one another, have become pseudo-celebrities within the blogging world.”

Muslim women understand that there is a developmental technology across the world. Muslim women are now actively promoting women's fashion, empowerment, and gender equality through social media. The data shows that the development of Islamic fashion is closely related to the efforts of young Muslim bloggers in sharing ideas, styles, trends. Thus, Muslim women's fashion, which was previously known to be closed or even associated with acts of terrorism, now appears more fashionable, trendy, and modern to be more accepted by the wider community.

Modern women often become role models for other Muslim women. They are the drivers of women's empowerment, gender equality. They take an important position as the main

focus of the news. The following is an example of a character whose work has been exposed by the news:

Data 6

“Sydney-based blogger Delina Darusman-Gala created the first Muslim fashion blog in Australia, posting images of herself wearing “everyday” hijab styles. Such blogs have encouraged other Muslim women to freely express themselves without political constraints.”

Many Muslim women are the focus of the news because of their work and achievements, one of which is Delina Darusman-Gala. Delina became the first woman who dared to express her freedom by posting herself wearing a casual hijab. This is a sign of Delina’s critique of political constraints. Delina considers that political constraints cannot prevent Muslim women from wearing anything their wishes and beliefs.

Stereotype shift

From early 2020 to 2021, all countries in the world have experienced a COVID-19 pandemic which requires people to be careful by keeping a distance, maintaining cleanliness, and using masks. The use of masks with the same appearance as the niqab makes Muslim women more accepted by non-Muslim societies. Many prohibitions on the use of the niqab are considered a barrier to the communication process, but the pandemic has refuted, requiring masks. A niqab is not a barrier to communication. Today, Muslim women are even considered “experts on covering face” whose experience has become interesting for non-Muslims. This can be seen in the following narrative:

Data 7

“In January I was able to reach 16 women who agreed to be interviewed about their experiences of wearing the niqab one year into the pandemic. I found that many recently adopted the niqab because walking around with a covered face became less daunting as more people appeared in public with face masks. As I found, many wanted to wear the niqab to underscore the religious character of this practice.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a positive impact on Muslim women in western countries. They become more confident in using the niqab or face covering, considering that many people use face masks to ward off the virus. They are no longer considered “weird” and “dangerous” in society. In fact, they are more accepted by society.

Muslim women in restraint

Muslim women are highly guarded by religious rules and societal norms. Thus, Muslim women tend to lack their rights in making decisions. This often happens in Muslim-majority

countries or Middle East countries. These prohibitions can take the form of a ban on roaming outside the home, early marriage, a driving ban, and so on. One of them can be seen as follows:

Data 8

“Yet even those girls and parents who would like to delay marriage often have little choice because of poverty and the fact that women in slum neighborhoods have fewer opportunities to earn an income than men do.”

Women are often the victims of social norms. Muslim women who work are considered inappropriate, so they choose to marry early. They do not have equal opportunities as men in finding work, especially poor Muslim women, who are shaped by society to continue to depend on men.

The essence of hijab in Islam

Muslim women are very closely related to the obligation to use the hijab, which is written and regulated in the Koran. Hijab is not only a form of fashion, but the hijab has a philosophical history in it. There are many reasons why the hijab is an important aspect for Muslim women, including:

Data 9

“However, at the same time others started to wear the hijab to show their commitment to their religious faith. The hijab therefore cannot be a fixed symbol, but is far more flexible and changeable – and certainly cannot be deemed a marker of terrorism.”

Data 10

“Today, some women wear the hijab to signal pride in their ethnic identity. This is more so for immigrants in Europe and the United States, where there has been an increase in Islamophobia.”

In its function, the hijab is written in the Koran as a protector of women. Many Muslim women use the hijab as a form of commitment to their religious beliefs. Muslim women use the hijab as the pride of their identity, even in European society, which is attached to Islamophobia.

DISCUSSION

Muslim women in online media are often represented as weak, oppressed, and constrained. Concerning the Muslim diaspora, Muslim women are often the targets of public violence by non-Muslim communities. This is very reasonable considering the many negative stereotype views against Muslims, including acts of terrorism. Also, Muslim women with

Muslim attributes become the targets of violence due to anxiety about acts of extremism. This phenomenon has even become an important concern for the government so that there are discriminatory actions and bans on the use of Muslim women's attributes.

However, the direction of media representation of Muslim women is gradually leading to a better direction. The number of women who promote women's empowerment and gender equality increases the confidence of Muslim women to express opinions, share experiences and make decisions. Even Muslim women can also take an important role in a public position, one of which is being an important figure in developing Muslims globally. The development of technology is very helpful for women's empowerment. Women become more active in sharing ideas, experiences, styles, and even women become more confident to show their identity as Muslims.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has opened the eyes of the non-Islamic community that covering one's face will not interfere with the communication process. Muslim women with the niqab or face covering are becoming more accepted in non-Muslim societies. They can blend in and not feel "weird." This is because of the policy on the use of masks. Even this pandemic has made Muslim women wearing the niqab become important speakers about their experiences while covering their faces. Many non-Muslim communities later became interested in "learning to cover their faces."

The issue of gender inequality and the image of women in the media has become an essential issue in several countries. This issue is always detrimental to women. Not only in non-Muslim countries, but this issue also occurs in Muslim-majority countries. It was found that women in the media are the ones who get less justice. In addition, Muslim women are also very close to the patriarchal ideology that makes women inferior (Dalton, 2019; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013; Yasmin, 2021). However, the changing of times and situations are also important aspects in constructing the image of Muslim women. In recent years, several phenomena have been implied in the media, including the existence of Islamophobia caused by several extremism events associated with Islam as a terrorist religion in several western countries. However, over time, the issue was closed with news about efforts to empower women. These efforts lead to a stereotype shift that makes western society more accepting Islamic women as beings who also have human rights. The results show that the media portrays a new face for Muslim women who are more accepted in society. Apart from the fact that women have talents that must be considered, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented them from being "weird" because of the "all black fashion" that characterizes them.

Language plays a vital role in women's self-actualization in the modern era. Language becomes a tool to express women's freedom in showing their identity. In line with Fairclough's opinion about the power of the media, the media has the ability to persuade the thoughts of the readers. In the media, there are intentions to be conveyed to society with various strategies used. The strategy can be in the form of diction selection, persuasion of interpretation, and media association with the relevance of the current situation in society (Fairclough, 1995; Hidayah & Milal, 2016). This phenomenon can be seen from the results in this study that the media can change society's view of the image of Muslim women in a more positive direction. Initially, women were marginalized, but modernization made women play an active role in society.

CONCLUSION

The direction of media representation of Muslim women is gradually leading to a better direction. Factors that bring a negative image to Muslim women are generally due to "black fashion" associated with "terrorism." However, modernization makes today's women more critical. They can express opinions, take important positions, and support feminism and gender equality movements. The use of the niqab is generally prohibited in European countries because it is considered an extremist. The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the image of the niqab to be more accepted in society.

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