# The Image of Islam in Ms Marvel Series: An Analysis of Reception among Indonesian Muslim Audiences

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**Abstract:** The issue of Islamophobia has become a major concern of discussions, including regarding the representation of Muslims in Hollywood films, where Muslim characters are often portrayed as terrorists or perpetrators of violence. However, recently several Hollywood films are trying to create positive representations of Islam and Muslims, for example Ms Marvel film series, which features a Muslim superhero. This study aims to examine how Muslim audiences in Indonesia interpret the depiction of Islam in the Ms Marvel film series. The reception analysis is used to observe phenomena related to audience interpretation. The findings have illustrated that the Muslim audience tends to take exact acceptance of Hollywood's depiction of how Muslims dress in this film, which is called a dominant hegemonic position. However, some respondents have the opposite acceptance position and the negotiated position as well.

**Keywords:** Islamic image, Hollywood films, Muslim audience, reception analysis.

**Abstrak:** Isu islamophobia telah menjadi perhatian utama dalam berbagai diskusi, termasuk tentang representasi umat Islam di film-film Hollywood, di mana tokoh-tokoh Islam kerap digambarkan se–bagai teroris atau pelaku kekerasan. Namun demikian, belakangan ini beberapa film Hollywood berusaha menciptakan representasi positif tentang Islam dan umat Islam, misalnya film seri Ms Marvel yang menampilkan superhero Muslim. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana audien Muslim di Indonesia memaknai citra Islam dalam serial film Ms Marvel. Analisis resepsi digunakan untuk mengamati fenomena-fenomena yang berkaitan dengan interpretasi khalayak. Studi ini menemukan bahwa khalayak Muslim cenderung menerima sepenuhnya perihal penggambaran film Hollywood terkait tradisi Islam dan cara berpakaian Muslim, atau juga disebut sebagai posisi hegemonik dominan (*dominant hegemonic position*). Namun, beberapa responden mempunyai posisi penerimaan yang berlawanan *(opposite acceptance position)* dan juga posisi penerimaan negosiasi *(negotiated position)*.

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## Introduction

Islam in the United States of America (USA) has dynamically developed which differs from other Western countries. This might happen because the USA is inhabited by many immigrants who come from various Muslim countries with different cultural backgrounds. So that their understanding of Islam is also very diverse which results in frequent conflicts despite efforts to reconcile these differences (Barboza, 1996). In its development, the Muslim population in the United States has increased significantly wherein the Muslim community is looking for ways to strengthen social foundations and provide a good education for their generation. However, a series of events that occurred created an atmosphere that caused Islam and Muslims to become the target of criticism and slander (Espacito, 1995).

The bombing of the World Trade Center building that occurred on 11th September 2001 known as the 9/11 incident, which was allegedly carried out by an extremist group that claimed Islam as justification for their actions, became the momentum for the United States to launch its anti-Islam policy. This incident dramatically shook the United States so it influenced the perceptions and attitudes of the American people towards Islam and Muslims. This incident gave rise to a very massive Islamophobia movement in the USA, especially when President George W. Bush declared attacks on terrorism (Armstrong, 2001). He equated Islam with terrorism so that persecution of Muslims arose in a number of countries around the world (Dauda, 2020).

Based on the Pew Research Center's information, in 2015 there were nearly 3.3 million Muslims in the USA. In other words, in 2015 the Muslim population contributed 1% of the total population of 322 million. Since 2007, the number of Muslims has continued to increase both numerically and as a percentage of the total population. Over the next few decades, the Muslim population in the USA is expected to grow more rapidly than the Hindu and Jewish populations ((Tejomukti & Nashrullah, 2021). The dynamism of the development of Islam in the USA has increased rapidly in recent years, one of which is due to the openness of the West to investigate further about Islam so

that large numbers of people embrace Islam and become Muslims. However, some people still suspect Islam as a religion that is full of violence and crime, and has the potential to cause problems (Pratiwi, 2020). The incident of 9/11 seems to be the starting point for people in the USA getting to know Islam better. They ask a lot of questions about how the teachings were conveyed to their followers. The media also compete for answers to these questions, but the media has failed to overcome wrong assumptions about Islam and Muslims in public so that their assessment of Islam remains on the negative side by burying all the positive sides (Pertiwi, 2020).

Media is a tool to understand reality. Therefore, the media is always required to adapt to reality. When the media uses Islam as news, information about Islam will spread quickly and be developed as knowledge in society. After the 9/11 incidents, there was fear, fanaticism and extremism emerged, and Islamophobia grew. The media seeks to introduce a more moderate Islam. One of the media used to shape the audience's perceptions, views, and attitudes towards Islam and Muslims is film. In the context of Islamophobia, films can play an important role in helping to describe and provide an understanding of this issue. Martin and Ostwalt (1995) assert that films have the potential to reinforce, challenge, overturn, or crystallize a religious perspective, ideological assumptions and basic values. Films also reinforce or challenge the norms and grand narratives that we believe in or the truth that has been accepted so far. The audience often perceives that what is seen in the film is something that is rooted in reality, and is considered true as it is, even though the audience is aware that it is just fantasy.

The USA film industry, which is often called Hollywood, is the largest in the world. This industry dominates the list of top 10 films in the global market and national market despite the national film protection policies in each country. In addition to the financial benefits that are the target of distributing Hollywood films to various countries, Hollywood films have a cultural influence in other countries, namely spreading the values that are adhered to by the majority of the USA people (Crane, 2014). However, this cultural hegemony is not

something that is fixed but has shifted and changed. Film is an effective medium for transmitting values through certain messages implied in the story of the film. The message of a film sometimes depends on each person's description and interpretation of the contents of the film itself. Therefore, film is a tool of politics, education, and entertainment at the same time which is basically determined by the aspect of storytelling so that it can persuade the audience in various ways. Interestingly, this aspect of storytelling is able to raise a number of relevant issues including the issue of Islam. In this context, the representation of Islam in Hollywood films is important to understand how issues like Islamophobia are formed and spread widely in society. In a number of Hollywood films, Islam is depicted on a limited scale and often raises aspects of violence and terrorism. These negative representations can contribute to the spread and reinforcement of negative stereotypes against Muslims and Islam.

Several Hollywood films, such as Hotel Mumbai, Air Marshal, and Executive Decision, etc. have portrayed Islam negatively. However, there are also Hollywood films that provide positive representations of Islam, such as the film Ali. The global movement of Islam is accompanied by changes in the social and political constellation in many Muslim countries and the socio-political dynamics in the USA have changed the perception of the majority society. That's why the Hollywood film industry is trying to represent this phenomenon in the Ms Marvel film series.

The Ms Marvel serial film is an adaptation of the Marvel comic featuring a Muslim superhero named Kamala Khan. Through the character Kamala Khan, this film seeks to present a positive and inclusive representation of Islam. Furthermore, this series provides a more complex and humane picture of the life of an Muslim in USA. This film not only changes the way USA society views Islam, but also provides an opportunity for audiences to build empathy, expand understanding, and challenge their negative stereotypes of Islam. Thus, this film is an example of how film can contribute to influencing people's views and understanding of Islam. This film provides an opportunity to address Islamophobia, promote tolerance, and

strengthen awareness of the importance of inclusion and respect for religious and cultural diversity.

Based on the background of this study, the formulation of the problems are: 1) How is Islam (practice, culture, and value) depicted in the Ms Marvel series? 2) How is the shift in views of the people of the USA towards Islam reflected in the depiction of Islam in the Ms Marvel series? 3) How is the depiction of Islam in the Ms Marvel serial films interpreted by Muslim audiences in Indonesia?.

This study aims to describe and analyze the picture of Islam in films and how Muslim audiences in Indonesia interpret it, especially in the Ms Marvel series. This film reflects a shift in the views of the people of the USA towards Islam to become more positive, which previously had narrow views and often associated Islam with terrorism (Hafez, 2018). This study will take the point of view of Muslim audiences in Indonesia. In general, Muslim audiences in Indonesia have more in-depth knowledge and experience of Islamic religious practices, culture, and values compared to people in the USA. Therefore, there is a possibility that there is a gap in the understanding of Islam in Ms Marvel's film between people in the USA and Muslim audiences in Indonesia. This understanding gap is the main focus of this research.

## Literature Review

### Islam in the USA

The United States of America (USA) was formed from 13 former British colonies and became independent on $4^{th}$ July 1776 which subsequently expanded massively. With an area of 9.83 million km$^2$ and a population of 309 million, The USA is the $4^{th}$ largest country based on total area and the $3^{rd}$ largest based on population. This country is a multiethnic and multicultural country due to the large number of immigrants from all over the world who live here (Ali, 2007). The economy is the largest in the world with an

estimated gross domestic product in 2008 of 14 trillion USD. Currently, the population of this country is around 270 million people with a composition of 55% Christian, 3% Jewish, 1.5% Muslim, and the rest are other religions. The Muslim population is descended from various ethnic groups who migrated there (Tohir, 2002).

Various speculations have arisen about the origin of the arrival of Islam in the USA, namely when Columbus managed to land on the America thanks to the help of a sailor and guide from Morocco. A Muslim geographer recounts that before Columbus discovered America, eight Muslim sailor had made a series of voyages from Lisbon to explore the area around the Atlantic Ocean. It is said that they eventually managed to cross the Atlantic Ocean and landed in the area around South America. This information was then used by Columbus to discover an area across the Atlantic Ocean which was named America (Tohir, 2002). The first Muslim migrants who arrived in the USA influenced the local indigenous people both directly and indirectly. The contact between local indigenous people and these migrants has an influence on the demography, politics, and economy of the USA (Praja, 1992).

As time went on, Islam continued to develop and an Islamic power emerged, known as "Black Muslims". Black Muslims were initiated by Elijah Muhammad in Chicago who were supported by the black community with the aim of fighting for equal rights. More than half of Muslim in the USA (56%) are immigrants and the other half are long-term permanent residents (Lebor, 1998). Although they are a minority, Islam in the USA is nothing new, because Muslims there were originally slaves from West Africa who were brought to America. In its development, Islam in the USA experienced a dynamic historical journey. They know Islam from the people they work as slaves, where the slaves always adhere to their faith and the Islam they profess. The attitudes and habits of the slaves were seen as a new belief system for the USA society (Supriyadi, 2008)

The development of Islam in the USA can also be seen from the establishment of a number of places of worship and centers of Islamic religious activities in several cities and towns. In Chicago, there is the

American Islamic College, in North Califonia there is the American Muslim School. In addition, many universities organize Islamic Studies programs such as the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Harvard University, UC Berkeley, New York University, Michigan University, University of Texas in Australia, University of Utah, Temple University (Supriyadi, 2008). With the existence of centers for Islamic studies, the understanding of the United States people, especially among intellectuals, towards Islam is getting better compared to before which was very negative. The development of Islam certainly influences the civilization and way of life of the people of the USA, either directly or indirectly (Mugiyono, 2013).

**Development of Islamophobia in the United States**

United States of America (USA) is one of the countries that adheres to the principles of liberal and secular democracy which prioritizes the separation between religion and the state or public space. As has been explained in the previous discussion, initially Islam was considered the religion of immigrants from the Middle East who settled and lived in several cities in the USA (Usman, 2003). The 9/11 incident became a new beginning to describe the current condition of Muslims in the USA. This incident became a strong foundation for George W. Bush to propagandize acts of eradicating terrorists and making Islam the scapegoat for terrorists (Widada, RH., Bush, & Hitler, 2007).

Islamophobia, which is rooted in world history, is now reappearing in a new form and format after the 9/11 incident. On the other hand, this incident seems to be the starting point for the people of the USA to learn about Islam. They ask a lot of questions about how the teachings are conveyed to their followers, so the media competes to get answers to these questions (Pertiwi, 2020). Furthermore, the dynamism of Islamic development, especially in the US, has increased rapidly in recent years with the opening of the West to further investigate Islam. The development of Islam, which is considered positive, in fact still makes the USA people suspect Islam as a religion that is full of violence and crime and has the potential to cause

problems. In fact, if we look at the history of the development of Islamophobia as a phenomenon that has been developing for a long time in the West, then Islamophobia is not a phenomenon that was born after the 9/11 incident (Hidayat et al, 2016)

Islamophobia is derived from the words Islam and Phobia. According to the College Dictionary, a phobia is an unreasonable fear without reference to a particular object, behavior, or event that motivates people to avoid or be afraid of that situation (Zulian, 2019). With this explanation, Islamophobia can be interpreted as an abnormal fear of Islam so activities that have an Islamic nuance must be eliminated. Islamophobia is related to prejudice or discrimination against Islam or Muslims. Islamophobia is also an attitude that discriminates against Muslims by isolating them from economic, social, and public relations (Khomsani, 2020)

Islamophobia that developed in the 2000s is often associated with the 9/11 incident, while others associate it with the increasing presence of Muslims in the Western world (Khomsani, 2020). The 9/11 incident also became a momentum for the United States to launch its anti-Islamic politics, but on the other hand, with this event, Islamic da'wah became increasingly intense. In addition, violence and discrimination that befell Muslims, especially those in the USA since the 9/11 incident reached 1717 cases where the most cases as many as 372 cases were cases of sexual harassment against Muslim women who wore headscarves (Ali, 2018).

**The Representation of Islam in Hollywood Films**

A film is a product of a contemporary culture that is enjoyed by most of modern society and is also capable of expressing important issues faced by humans in history (Miles, 1996) so it can be concluded that film has more power than just entertainment media. Martin and Ostwalt (1995) emphasized that film has the potential to strengthen, challenge, overturn, or crystallize a religious perspective, ideological assumptions, and basic values. Films are also able to reinforce or challenge norms, grand narratives that we believe in and the truth that has been accepted so far. Often the audience perceives that what is seen

in the film is something that is rooted in reality, and is considered to be true as it is, even though the audience is aware that the film is a fantasy.

The USA film industry, which is often referred to as Hollywood, is the largest in the world. Hollywood films and films co-produced by Hollywood dominate the list of top 10 films in the global market and national markets. In addition to the financial benefits that are the target of distributing Hollywood films to various countries, Hollywood films have a cultural influence on other countries, namely spreading American values. However, this cultural hegemony is not something fixed, but experiencing shifts and changes. The strategy to increase profits by attracting as many global audiences as possible has resulted in various changes in the Hollywood film narrative, so that it does not merely spread Americanization through films (Crane, 2014)

Hollywood films also play an important role to voicing the interests of the United States government in projecting its foreign policy. When a country becomes an enemy of the US, that country will be represented as an evil character. Meanwhile, countries that are considered as friends will be represented as good people (Totman, 2009). The representation of Muslim terrorists that emerged in Hollywood in the 1990s was a response by Hollywood filmmakers to the public interest sparked by the incident of 9/11. Hollywood films carry the theme of new terrorism as a trend in various films, as can be seen in several films such as True Lies, Executive Decision, Air Force One , and The Siege. These films portray the criminals as Muslim jihadist terrorists who commit acts that endanger the security of society and threaten democracy. However, there are also Hollywood films that provide positive representations of Islam, such as the film Ali (Riegler, 2009)

Thomas Riegler (2009) argues that the portrayal of terrorism in Hollywood films has developed according to the socio-political context. This terrorism-themed film presents an interpretation of terrorism, namely people's fears, fantasies, and projections of terrorism. Often films are also a means of reproducing hegemonic ideas promoted by politicians, the media, or experts. The representation of Muslims in

Hollywood films is almost always negative even though it has experienced a positive shift. In the 1920s Muslims were often depicted as someone with a bushy beard, while today many are presented as a group of fundamentalists and fanatics who carry out suicide bombings (Shaheen, 2001). Recurring negative stereotypes against Muslims narrow and obscure reality. The representation of Muslims in Hollywood films has also been developed by Hollywood through various terrorist-themed action films that view the issue of terrorism from the USA point of view (Ramji, 2005). The negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims that are represented in these films are clarified by their representation as Muslim terrorist figures which cannot be tolerated in Western culture and Islam is still represented as a threat to the West.

**Characteristics of Muslims in Indonesia**

Indonesian Islam has distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from the characteristics of Islam from other regions, especially Middle Eastern Islam which influences Islam in various parts of the world. Indonesia has a number of uniqueness, including geographical, socio-political, and civilizational uniqueness (Sahal & Aziz, 2015). Indonesian Islam has a long historical journey since its presence and spread in the Indonesian region. Socio-cultural aspects of society and certain historical events are aspects that shape Indonesian Islam so it has its own character. Indonesian Islam cannot be separated from the socio-history of the Indonesian nation. Inter-religious and socio-cultural unity is a process that enriches the life of the Archipelago Islam. According to Gus Dur, this is referred to as the "indigenization of Islam." Furthermore, the indigenization of Islam is part of Islamic history both in the country of origin and in countries where Islam has spread, such as Indonesia. In indigenization, Islam only considers local needs in formulating religious laws without changing the law itself (Wahid, 2001).

Muslims in Indonesia are Muslims who are friendly, open, inclusive, and able to provide solutions to the nation's problems. They are more dynamic and friendly with various cultural, sub-cultural, and

religious environments. Characteristics of Muslims in Indonesia are depicted with faces that are moderate, tolerant, love peace, and respect diversity (Sahal & Aziz, 2015). Muslims who embrace not hitting, Muslims who build not insult; Muslims who wear hearts are not cursing; Muslims who invite repentance are not blaspheming, and Muslims who give understanding are not imposing.

Since the beginning, Indonesian Islam has had its own style and typology, namely friendly and moderate Islam (Sucipto, 2007). The character of Indonesian Muslims is in the middle, balanced, does not stand at the extreme poles, both in understanding and experience of Islam (Azra, 2015). In addition, Islam in Indonesia has high religious tolerance, not narrow fanaticism, and is open to new ideas. This kind of Islam is not found in other countries. This is due to the cultural accommodation of the local community which has long been embedded in Islam (Kahin, 2013).

### Overview of the Film Serial Ms. Marvel

Serial Ms Marvel is a superhero genre series that regularly appears on the Disney+ subscription streaming service. This film was adapted by Bisha K. Ali from Marvel comics. Character Ms Marvel itself first appeared in Captain Marvel Comics Vol.7 #14. This film tells the story of Ms Marvel, superhero girl with an alter ego named Kamala Khan. Kamala Khan is a 16-year-old Pakistani-American Muslim girl who lives in Jersey City, USA. This film stars Iman Vellani as the character Kamala Khan or Ms. Marvel. Kamala was able to balance her identity as an American and Muslim. Even though Kamala is Pakistani descent who was born and raised in USA, she was brought up with American culture and values. However, being a Muslim teenager did not make Kamala leave Islamic rules and being a minority did not prevent her from becoming part of American citizen. Apart from telling Kamala's journey to becoming a superhero in a non-Muslim majority country, this film also provides an overview of how a Muslim is treated and how the non-Muslim community responds to Kamala's presence in Jersey City. This film has very little racist treatment of Muslim Americans, even the people of the USA are very tolerant of

this Muslim minority. The treatment of tolerance shown in this film is thought to emerge if the American knows the Muslim community well, but if you don't know them, that person will experience discrimination (Safira, 2023)

This film is interesting to study because Ms. Marvel is the first super hero character released by Marvel Studios with a Muslim girl background who lives and grows up in USA. This is clearly different from the characters in other Marvel comics where the religious background of each character is often not explained. The Islamic aspect which is the background of Kamala Khan's religion is also appointed as a part of the Ms Marvel series. This indicates that Islam is slowly entering the realm of pop culture in the USA.

## Methodology

This study used reception analysis as theoretical outlook. The reception analysis seeks to explore the experiences and meanings of the audience, namely the results of contextualizing media messages that are packaged using verbal and visual texts (Schroder, 2016). Before determining the title of the film to be studied, a survey was conducted where the respondents of this study were 84 students of the Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya. The purpose of the survey was to find out students' film knowledge, especially films with an Islamic theme.

This study is divided into two stages. The first stage focuses on content analysis or encoding, specifically studying the Ms Marvel film series where this film is obtained from the results of a survey that was previously conducted. In the second stage, decoding was carried out through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) by involving selected subjects who met certain criteria, namely a student of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences Universitas Brawijaya, Muslim, chose Ms Marvel as an Islamic-themed film in the survey. Five students became informants in the second stage

The reception analysis method which consists of encoding and decoding processes is used to make valid conclusions drawn from the context which aims to provide knowledge, new views, as well as representation of facts or practical guidance for action (Krippendorff, 1980). At the encoding stage, the research team watched the film and then categorized all the scenes, especially scenes related to Islam or explicitly related to Islam. Furthermore, a process of reflection and analysis is carried out on all categorized scenes to get a comprehensive picture of the depiction of Islam in Ms Marvel's film. All the results of reflection and analysis of the scenes in the film will be compared and aligned with the results of the FGD.

Meanwhile, the decoding stage, namely the FGD stage, is carried out by gathering groups of people to discuss a topic with interesting goals based on complex personal experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants using moderated interactions (Nyumba, 2018). Although, in general, qualitative content analysis does not require the use of FGDs as a data collection technique, FGDs can be used to complete data that cannot be obtained through content analysis. The use of content analysis techniques and FGDs simultaneously is expected to produce data sets that complement one another, so that a more holistic picture of the observed phenomenon emerges. The content analysis data will be aligned with the FGD data to get a better and more holistic presentation. FGD data is needed as a way for researchers to understand the audience's perspective regarding the depiction of Islam in the Ms Marvel film, where this perspective is interesting to know, considering that the film was made in a non-Islamic country. So there is a possibility that the depiction of Islam in the film is not in accordance with the real Islam. The opinions of the audience in the FGD were collected by researchers and then compared and elaborated with content analysis data. It is hoped that this will bring up a good picture and explanation of the interpretation of Islam in the film.

There were two films, namely the Ms Marvel and Ali series, resulted from the survey of 84 respondents. Based on the researcher's considerations, Ali's film was not used because this film was made before the 9/11 incident where this event was a momentum for the development of Islamophobia in Western countries, especially the USA. Hence, the researchers decided to examine only Ms Marvel film in this study.

Based on qualitative content analysis conducted on the Ms Marvel film series related to Islam, the results have revealed that there are several messages related to Islam in this film, among others:

1. The views of the younger generation of Islam are more radical
2. There are many variations of Muslim clothing.
3. Islamic culture is identical to Arabic culture
4. The freedom of Muslims to express Islamic values
5. Strict rules of dress in Islam
6. Strict rules of interaction in Islam
7. Appreciation of western nations towards Islamic identity.

Furthermore, the FGD was conducted, the participants were respondents who mentioned Ms. Marvel as a film related to Islam. Five students joined the FGD participants. The FGD focused on six messages that emerged from the content analysis that had been carried out. There are three positions used by the researcher to categorize the position of the informans: *Dominant Hegemonic Position*, namely they fully accept and agree with the message conveyed by the film; *Negotiated Position*, namely they respond by not fully agreeing or not completely rejecting; *Oppositional Position*, namely they completely reject the message given by the film.

The following table describes the position of informan's acceptance of messages that appear in Ms Marvel's films:

**Table 1.** 'The Audiences' Reception towards Ms Marvel Film'

| No | Content | Dominant Hegemonic Position | Negotiated Position | Oppositional Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The views of the younger generation of Islam are more radical | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 2. | There are many variations of Muslim clothing. | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. | Islamic culture is identical to Arabic culture | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| 4. | The freedom of Muslims to express Islamic values | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 5. | Strict rules of dress in Islam | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | Strict rules of interaction in Islam | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | Appreciation of western nations towards Islamic identity. | 0 | 4 | 1 |

The five informants varied in their position of receiving the messages presented in this Ms Marvel film. This explanation will be sorted according to the type of message received, namely Dominant Hegemonic Position, Negotiated Position, and Oppositional Position. There are two message points which are fully accepted by all informants (*Dominant Hegemonic Position*). The first point is regarding the strict dress code. This point is shown in the scene where Ammi, the mother character of Kamala who is the main character, wears a red dress wherein the scene Ammi says "You can't dress like girls in skimpy clothes." The setting for this scene is Ammi standing facing Kamala.

**Figure 1.** Depiction of Ammi as Mother of Kamala



The next message about variations in how to dress Muslims is also conveyed in this film, namely in the scene when Kamala is walking with her male and female friends at school where the female friends wear headscarves. This film shows that Islam is a religion that has various ways of dressing. The scene explains that Kamala is a Muslim but does not wear hijab, while her Muslim friend wears hijab.

**Figure 2.** The Depiction of a Muslimah Character in Ms Marvel Film'



One of the informants, Javalino Borneolita, gave his opinion regarding the clothes worn by Muslims in this film:

"Kalau saya setuju sih Pak, punya variasi. Kayak tadi Kamala sama temannya tadi ada yang muslim berhijab ada yang nggak terus

kayaknya juga disampaikan sama Ibu nya Kamala kalau dia mau pakai custom Ms. Marvel. Custom pertama kan gak di acc Pak, jadi Kamala mendekor lagi bajunya yang lebih tertutup sesuai dengan syariat tapi dengan caranya sendiri dengan identitasnya karena dia gak mau berhijab jadi ya disesuaikan saja. Kayaknya islam di Ms. Marvel ini lebih ke islam Palestina jadi cara berhijabnya juga beda lalu pakaian-pakaiannya juga beda sama dengan yang di indonesia termasuk dengan pernak pernik manik-manik, caranya memperlihatkan juga berbeda-beda."("I agree, sir, with these variations. Like the scene before, Kamala and her friends, some of whom are Muslims wearing hijabs and some of them are not, then it seems like Kamala's mother also told her that she wanted to wear Ms. Custom. Marvel. The first custom wasn't approved, sir, so Kamala redecorated her clothes, which were more closed, according to the Shari'a but in her own way with her identity because she didn't want to wear a hijab, so she just adjusted it. It seems like the representation of Islam in Ms. "Marvel tends to be Palestinian Muslims, so the way they wear the hijab is also different (to Indonesian Muslims), then the clothes are also different, including beaded knick-knacks, and the way they show it off is also different").

Meanwhile, another informant, M. Labib Fairuz Ibad, argued: "Bervariasi memang Pak. tetapi salah satu poin yang ada di pikiran saya ini dari cara berpakaian seseorang kita bisa menilai dia islam atau nggak gitu. Jadi bervariasi tetapi tetap merepresentasikan islam begitu, kalau dari apa yang ditampilkan hollywood itu ya, mereka tau cara merepresentasikan islam dan saya lihat itu sangat akurat lah ya." ("It varies, sir, but one of the points that comes to my mind is that from the way a person dresses, we can judge whether he is a Muslim or not. "So it varies but still represents Islam. From what Hollywood shows, yes, they know how to represent Islam and I see that it's very accurate").

*Dominant Hegemonic Position* is also seen in the point of strict dress code in Islam. This was conveyed by Farhan Habibi,
"Saya juga ingin menambahkan yang tadi Pak Irawan bilang kalau misalnya perdebatan yang terjadi tentang busananya Islam dimana kita pakai jeans, pakai polo, pakai pakaian islam itu orang-orang

kayak "loh kok pakaian ini kan gak boleh" gitu kan, itu sih yang berusaha ditampilkan sama Ms. Marvel kemarin ya karena dia berusaha untuk menggabungkan islam, misalnya islam juga boleh pakai jeans, pakai baju-baju yang dibuat oleh orang Eropa pada umumnya, asalkan disana gak ada unsur pembuka aurat gitu jadi tetap mengikuti syariat islam, tidak begitu ketat dan aurat tidak terbuka seperti itu." ("I also want to add to what Mr. Irawan said earlier, if for example there is a debate about Islamic clothing where we wear jeans, wear polo, wear Islamic clothing, people are like "how come these clothes aren't allowed" like that, right? That's what trying to be shown by Ms. Marvel yesterday, yes, because he was trying to combine Islam, for example Muslims can also wear jeans, wear clothes made by Europeans in general, as long as there are no elements that reveal the private parts, so they still follow Islamic law, not too tight and the private parts are not exposed like that").

From the two points of the message that this film displays about the way Muslims dress, it can be seen that the filmmakers were able to present a message that was in accordance with the understanding of all informants about how Muslims dress. There are variations in how Muslims dress. As an example, the use of hijab in Indonesia shows its characteristics or identity as an Indonesian Muslim. This identity is influenced by various contexts and is the result of fluid social construction (Meilinawati, 2016). Ms Marvel's film series tries to show variations in the way Muslims dress so that it can be assumed that Hollywood films have succeeded in depicting the phenomenon that occurs. They know about the strict rules of dress in Islam but this does not limit the creativity of Muslims in implementing these rules. Many Muslims often ignore the strict rules on dress, although these strict rules also have variations.

In the *Oppositional Position*, namely the message that was rejected by most of the informants, as many as four informants rejected the points of difference in the views of the younger and older generations of Muslims. The younger generation of Muslims is considered to be more radical. In addition, the informant refused on the point of freedom for Muslims to express their identity in western society.

Regarding the views of the younger Muslim generation who are more radical, which are trying to be represented in the film, one of the informants, Sari Nastiti Girianto, refuted the views,

> "Kalau dari saya sebenarnya kurang sependapat Pak, kalau generasi muda itu lebih radikal daripada generasi tua ya Pak. Karena apa ya? di zaman teknologi sekarang kan informasi lebih terbuka lebih banyak masukan dari dunia luar begitukan, engga serta merta mengambil satu nilai saja." ("Actually I disagree, sir, that the younger generation is more radical than the older generation, sir. Because of what? "In this technological era, information is more open, there is more input from anywhere in the world, so you don't have to immediately take one value").

Meanwhile regarding the point of freedom for Muslims in expressing their identity in Western society was conveyed by M. Farhan Habibi,

> "Saya mau nambah sih, Pak. kalau dia (kebebasan) itu terbatas dalam lingkungannya sendiri gitu jadi kalau bagaimana cara orang islam mengekspresikan dirinya ke dalam lingkungan orang eropa itu menurut saya masih hati-hati banget karena orang eropa itu kan cenderung sensitif dengan radikalisme karena (radikalisme) lebih cenderung ke Islam gitu. Nah, secara umum mereka belum terlalu paham dengan apa yang biasaya Islam lakukan karena penggiringan media ini dimana dulu kayak ISIS dan sebagainya dulu kan membuat citra Islam jelek jadi kalau misalnya kita itu mengekspresikan secara luas, bebas, lepas ke luar itu takutnya menimbulkan persepsi yang berbeda di orang-orang eropa kayak misalnya baru gini itu logika udah baik sudah sesuai di Islam tapi menurut mereka itu radikal gitu akhirnya di jauhin. Jadi lebih lepas di lingkungannya sendiri karena lawannya orang-orang Islam juga gitu." ("I want to add more, sir. If that (freedom) is limited within its own environment, so in terms of how Muslims express themselves within the European environment, I think they are still very careful because Europeans tend to be sensitive to radicalism because (radicalism) is more inclined towards Islam. . Well, in general they don't really understand what Muslims usually do because the media's promotion of things like ISIS and so on used to make the image of Islam bad, so if for example we express it

widely, freely, freely, we're afraid it will give rise to a different perception. among Europeans.

Like, for example, just like this, the logic is already good, it is in accordance with Islam, but according to them it is radical, so in the end they are shunned. So they are more independent in their own environment because their opponents are also Muslims").

This illustrates that the filmmakers of the Ms Marvel film series have an understanding that western countries are very open to Islam. This contradicts the notion that Muslims in various places in the world, especially in the USA, still receive a bad stigma. According to several informants, this bad stigma can be seen from the news in the western media which tend to corner Islam and Muslims and how they treat Muslims. The impact of this bad stigma includes the many cases of racism experienced by Muslims. It is undeniable that this film series tries to show the freedom of Muslims in expressing their identity, but this freedom itself is still limited to an environment dominated by Muslim society.

*Negotiated Positions* in this film are often found in messages linking Islamic and Arabic culture. This is probably due to the cultural limitations and perspectives in viewing it that are so broad and varied, that audiences tend to vary in their understanding. Apart from that, the development of Islam which is closely related to Arabic culture also greatly determines the acceptance of the informants towards this film. This has more or less influenced Ms Marvel's filmmakers, especially the views of orientalist figures forming a global structure (eurocentric) who provide views regarding Islam (Hafez, 2018). This global structure is in the form of a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority on a line built from the construction and reconstruction that has been going on for hundreds of years from capitalist or patriarchal institutions centered in the West or modern Christianity, and the global colonial system (Grosfoguel, 2012). The views they present through film have been accepted and responded to by the global community, including Muslims. This happens because films reflect the society that creates them (Biagi, 2010)

## Conclusion

The Muslim audience in this study tends to fully accept Hollywood's depiction of how Muslims dress in this film, namely *Dominant Hegemonic Position*. There are many styles of dress in Muslim society, especially non-Arab Muslims. It can be said that Ms Marvel's serial films are in harmony in depicting variations in Muslim dress with the opinions of Muslim audiences. The Muslim audience fully accepts the highly varied depiction of Muslim dress styles despite the very strict Muslim dress code. It is possible that this is because some Muslims often overreach in dress, plus the rules regarding how to dress in Islam also vary widely. Whereas in the opposite acceptance position, namely the *Oppositional Position* where most of the informants rejected the message points about how the views of the young and old generations in Muslim society and the freedom of Muslims in expressing their identity in Western society. It can be seen that the filmmakers want to show that Western culture has been very open to other cultures, including Islam. This depiction was apparently still rejected by the Muslim audience in this study. Informants think that Muslims in various regions, especially in the USA, often face negative stigma and are marginalized. They concluded this understanding after seeing Western media coverage and how the American people treated Muslims. Then there is also a Muslim audience who are still unsure of their position, namely the *Negotiated Position*. This position can be seen in the message points that link Islamic and Arabic culture. This can happen because cultural boundaries and perspectives in viewing it are so broad and varied, that audiences tend to vary in their understanding. Apart from that, the development of the Islamic religion, which was heavily influenced by Arabic culture, also greatly determined the acceptance of the informants towards this film

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