

Promotion of Women's Rights in Gus Muhammad Iqdam's Lecture Content at the Sabilu Taubah Islamic Forum on Social Media

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Abstract

This paper aims to find out, explain and analyze the promotion of women's rights for the general public by Gus Muhammad Iqdam as a religious figure who is intellectually not affiliated with the feminist Islamic scholar network. Previous studies state that the promotion of women's rights has been widely carried out by feminist ulama by using reinterpretations of established religious texts, while non-feminist ulama tend to narrate women with gender-biased discourse so that women's rights are not fully understood by the public. This study uses a qualitative approach of the netnography type. Data is taken from the contents of Gus Iqdam's lectures on social media Tiktok, Instagram and Facebook. The results of the study show that through lectures at the Sabilu Taubah public religious study, Gus Iqdam has promoted several women's rights, including the right to enjoy equal status with her husband, the right to

be treated well by her husband and the right to have her livelihood fulfilled, the right to be treated equally with male congregants in the religious study group, the right to lead the group and the right to use an identity according to their respective religions, where the promotion of these rights uses established classical terms; morals, blessings, *birrul walidain* (devotion to parents), and *mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf* (respecting the need and the willingness of the wife) which are not reinterpreted as new narratives formulated by feminist scholars, but are explained according to the context of the society that underlies their congregation.

Keywords: Women-friendly Religious Study, Non-feminist Scholars

A. Introduction

Religion has long been mapped as one of the roots of problems that contribute to gender inequality in society. Religion in this context refers to religious knowledge compiled, developed and disseminated by religious scholars. Gross, as quoted by Kadarusman, stated that there is a difference between religion at the normative level and religion at the implementation level, where normatively in Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, teaching substances are found that support the existence of women, but the implementation marginalizes women (Kadarusman, 2005). The patriarchal culture which is deeply rooted in society almost all over the world is so far the most frequently cited factor that reduces the existence of women (Hasyim, 2010). Therefore, critical studies of religion and gender differentiate between religion which is holy and heavenly and religious knowledge which is human and worldly (Hasyim, 2010).

Many people have responded to the issue of religion and gender inequality as explained above in the last three decades by presenting a religious discourse that is more just and equal,

including by *ulama* (Islamic scholars). Not only women, many men also contributed to this issue, including KH Masdar Farid Mas'udi who promoted women's reproductive rights (Mas'udi, 1997), Husein Muhammad who promotes women's rights in the field of worship and marriage, Quraish Shihab and Nasarudin Umar who promoted equality between women and men through the perspective of the Qur'an, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir who promoted equality between husband and wife by formulating *Qiroah Mubadalah* and Imam Nakheh who promoted women's rights with writings on anti-trafficking *fiqh* (jurisprudence).

The promotion of women's rights by *ulama* became increasingly prominent with the holding of the First Indonesian Women's Ulama Congress (KUPI) in 2017 in Cirebon. The term female *ulama* in this context includes all Islamic scholars, both male and female, who are biased towards women. Because it starts from awareness of the importance of recognizing women's *ulama* attribute and voicing ideas of gender equality and justice, KUPI is called a resistance movement for ulama against the dominance of patriarchal culture in religious discourse. (Chabibi, 021) KUPI itself is a network consisting of Islamic boarding scholars, universities, non-governmental organizations and individuals who are committed to liberating women from discriminatory practices. Therefore, these *ulama* are Islamic feminists as well as Muslim feminists, those are the people who want to realize gender justice through re-reading religious interpretations (Fathonah, 2020). Re-reading in this context means interpreting existing religious texts with new interpretations that further liberate women from the shackles of patriarchy, resulting in the emergence of new terms such as emancipatory *fiqh*, *qiroah mubadalah* (method of interpreting the Qur'an that emphasizes the aspect of mutuality, and places women and men as equal subjects), theory of women's essential justice, religion of justice, and progressive women's *fiqh*.

Apart from writing, the female Islamic scholars above also disseminate women-friendly religious thoughts through lectures, seminars, conferences and training so that the born young cadres having women-friendly thoughts and attitudes. Considering that the dissemination channels used are relatively elitist, women-friendly transformation of religious knowledge has so far been more often found in religious universities, religious-based student organizations, mass organizations of religious women(Yuliantri et al., 2023)and religious-based non-governmental organizations. Within the scope of Islamic religious universities, this dissemination is carried out by feminist academics and the Gender and Children/Women's Study Center network, among student organizations, including through the PMII Women's Islamic School and Gender Corps, among NGOs there is a regeneration of female Islamic scholars by Rahima. From this process, religious discourse about women began to change to become more women-friendly

However, this is not the same case with religious dissemination spaces for the general public. Research by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society, UIN Jakarta, states that the preaching space on television, which is segmented by the general public, is dominated by men, both in terms of the number of speakers and the religious perspectives conveyed, where discussions about women are still colored by unfair understandings(Garadian, 2021). Apart from television, religious knowledge that contains injustice for women is also found in public spaces that are easily accessible to the general public, including public religious study(Rolando, 2020),wedding lecture(Muafiah, 2010)and Friday sermons (Halim, 2018). Religious lectures by Islamic figures with high popularity in Indonesia, including Ustad Abdul Somad, Ustad Das'at Latif and Abdullah Gymnastiar, were also identified as using gender-biased narratives. Researchers still identified Mamah Dedeh's lectures as a female ulama as preserving traditional values that are

unfair to women in the form of female domestication(Izamarifah, 2024).This gender-biased narrative cannot be separated from the strong internalization of classical religious texts which are understood as they are without a re-reading process.

Different from the trend mentioned earlier, since the beginning of 2023, the Mambaul Hikam Karanggayam Srengat Blitar Islamic Boarding School has been holding religious studyfor the general public that are relatively female-friendly by a young Islamic scholar as a permanent preacher, namely Muhammad Iqdam Kholid, popularly known as Gus Iqdam. Video clips from Gus Iqdam's women-friendly lecture are widely circulating on social media and are often quoted by netizens by re-uploading them and sparking appreciative comments from female netizens. This phenomenon is interesting because of the existence of Gus Iqdam, who as far as digital searches go, does not have a history of education and organizations affiliated with feminist ulama, including not joining the KUPI network, not being an ulama who has undergone female ulama cadre regeneration and not being an academic who has written work containing feminism. This gives rise to allegations that he has his own way of promoting women's rights outside of the re-reading method that has been used by many feminist ulama. Starting from this background, this article aims to find out and describe what women's rights are promoted by Gus Iqdam as a non-feminist ulama and how to promote them.

This research is netnographic research which is a qualitative research method that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study culture and communities that occur in computer-mediated communications(Waruwu & Vera, 2020)which is also known as social media research(Sulianta, 2022). Data was collected from content on social media such as Tiktok, Facebook and YouTube which included Gus Iqdam's lecture in the Sabilu Taubah Islamic study. The lecture contents studied consisted of Gus Iqdam's lecture content in 2023-2024 which were uploaded

by Gus Iqdam's official account; Gus Iqdam Official on Youtube, Sabilu Taubah Official on Tiktok and accounts belonging to the Sabilu Taubah congregation. Searches for this content were carried out between 25 September and 10 December 2024. Apart from social media content, data was also collected from written documents about Sabilu Taubah, women's rights and female ulama. Verification of the validity of the data is carried out by means of time triangulation, those are comparing video recordings with different recording times and different sources.

B. Discussion

Gus Iqdam's full name is Muhammad Iqdam Chalid, born in Blitar on September 27, 1994 (Mubarakah & Alif Albia; Andhita Risko Faristian, 2023). He is the son of KH Kholid and Nyai Lam'atul Waridah and the grandson of KH Zubaidi Abdul Ghofur; the caretaker of Mamba'ul Hikam I Islamic boarding school, Manten, Udanawu, Blitar (Harbani, 2023). The education he has received includes 1 Mojo High School and Al Falah Islamic boarding school Ploso Mojo Kediri (Musthofa, 2023). He started the religious study with several people in 2018 and named it Sabilu Taubah (ST).

Sabilu Taubah religious study is held regularly every Monday and Thursday evening in the Mambaul Hikam Blitar Islamic boarding school environment with several stages; the recitation of the Maulid Simtudduror prayers accompanied by Sabilu Taubah's own Hadrah (tambourines) Group, material lectures by Gus Iqdam, dialogue between the preacher and several participants and closed with prayer (Observasi, September 2024). Gus Iqdam's lectures usually refer to certain classical books with a variety of material, including the worshipping fiqh, the virtues of certain worship such as tahajud prayer, *sunnah* (suggested) fasting, morals in interacting with fellow humans, Sufism and the life stories of prophets, friends and the messengers. The

presentation of the material was carried out by combining reading of the text of the book, explanations in Javanese and Indonesian interspersed with humor and stories of personal experiences. In each forums there is also a dialogue with the congregation which is held in the middle and at the end of the event before closing with prayer.

In dialogue sessions, Gus Iqdam usually asks about the congregation's name, origin, religion, job, marital status, number of children, motivation for attending the religious study forum and valuable life experiences. From these dialogues it can be seen that the origins of the ST congregation are very diverse, starting from Blitar, East Java province, Java Island, outside Java to overseas such as Turkey, Australia, Scotland, Malaysia, Singapore and Finland. Based on observations, this dialogue with the congregation did not function to discuss the material that had been presented, but rather to express the congregation's feelings for Gus Iqdam as a figure they idolized. The dialogue almost always ends with Gus Iqdam giving gifts in the form of money, goods or facilities which are enthusiastically welcomed by the congregation.

Apart from ST headquarters, Gus Iqdam also often delivers his lecture in other places at the invitation of the public or officials to celebrate certain moments, such as *Maulid Nabi* (the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday), *Isra Mi'raj* commemoration, agency anniversary , weddings, *haul* (memorial anniversary) and so on. These lectures are often broadcast live so that netizens can immediately listen, and some of the recordings are uploaded to social media in the form of short video clips. From the uploaded lectures, it can be identified that Gus Iqdam often promotes women's rights, including women's rights as wives and women's rights as individuals in society. The mention of women's rights is not specifically the topic of the lecture, but is part of the lecture material on other topics, for example the main practices in the month of Muharram, how to form a *sakinah* (peaceful) family

or morals. Sometimes this topic is even raised spontaneously in dialogue. Researchers found several promotions of women's rights, including:

1. The Right to Enjoy Equal Status With her Husband

On several occasions, Gus Iqdam often discusses husband and wife relations, either specifically or at glance because they relate to other issues being discussed. The following is one of the findings obtained by researchers:

Why do newlyweds break up easily? They don't want to give up bad habits. I'm like this, you have to accept me as I am. It can't. Like in the past, when I was still single, completely free, whatever I wanted, I came home from the religious study and I wanted to stay wherever I liked, I wanted to go to Gus Jalal's house, that's okay, I'll come home tomorrow, whatever I like. Now one must ask permission, I'm dropping at Gus Jalal's house... Oh, that means the husband is afraid of the wife. Oh no... this is called respect(Berkat, 2023).

Based on the lecture excerpt above, Gus Iqdam provoked the husbands, especially newly married ones, to appreciate their wives. After getting married, husbands should not behave as they please as when they were single, but should always remember their wife so that when they want to do something it is important to communicate with, including when they want to leave the house or come home late must saying permission to their wife. He also rejected the opinion of some people that saying goodbye to his wife was a form of fear of his wife, but rather a form of respect for his wife.

Husband afraid of wife is a term often used to ridicule men who are considered to be under the control of their wives and therefore unable to make their own decisions (Nasikhatul Ummah dan Catur Suratnoaji, 2023). In the researchers' opinion, Gus Iqdam's rejection of the husband's teasing about being afraid of his wife promotes the wife's right to be respected by her husband, where this appreciation has not been recognized so far. In the dominant religious narrative in society, the emphasis on saying goodbye or asking permission to leave the house is only applied in one direction, which is the wife to the husband (Fahimah & Aditya, 2019). As for husbands, they are more often narrated as the party who has the authority to give permission, not ask for permission (Nuryani, 2021). Most people understand this authority to be very high, even when deciding on polygamy, many preachers say there is no need to ask the wife's permission (Afifah, 2021). As a result, the husband's restrictions and restraints on his wife are considered normal and legitimate, while the wife's restrictions on her husband are understood as deviations that have a negative connotation so that husbands who ask for their wives' permission often become the object of ridicule.

However, in promoting a wife's right to have her existence respected, Gus Iqdam does not use new interpretations resulting from re-readings by feminist scholars, for example the concept of '*an taradhin*' conceptualized by Faqihudin Abdul Kodir in Qiroah Mubindah which means giving each other a sense of comfort with reciprocal willingness (Kodir, 2019). Permission is a symbol of willingness, so a husband asking his wife's permission is nothing more than an effort to ensure the wife's willingness. Instead of using a new interpretation regarding licensing authority which

no longer belongs absolutely to the husband, Gus Iqdam only interprets the husband's request for permission or notification to his wife as a form of respect where this attitude will provide comfort so that their household will be safe. To sharpen this message, Gus Iqdam quoted a hadith about leadership and verse 6 of Surah Al Tahrim and explained that as a household leader, the husband has the responsibility to ensure the safety of his family from hellfire, and in order to be safe from hellfire, his household must first be safe from all the problems that commit husbands and wives sin. Treating each other well, including respecting each other, is an example of an attitude that will keep both of them away from sin and hell. Judging from positive law, the right to be respected on an equal footing with a husband is contained in Article 33 of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage which reads: Husband and wife are obliged to love each other, respect each other, be loyal and provide physical and spiritual assistance to one another. (Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan, 1974).

2. The Right to be Treated Well

Gus Iqdam's lecture material, which is also often delivered to the husbands, is advice on being kind to their wife. These materials are:

If you are married, you have to sacrifice something, including your attitude, your style of speaking, including your morals when you were a single and a virgin that was not quite right. Your morals must be better, the way you speak must be better. It's not permissible for a man to drink coffee and gamble all the times. When asked by his wife, only shouting, it's not permissible to do that.

In the lecture excerpt, Gus Iqdam recommends to married men and women to make behavioral adjustments using three examples of ways, those are reducing the habit of going to coffee shops, not doing online gambling, and not shouting at your wife. In reality, going to a coffee shop in communities in Blitar, Tulungagung and surrounding areas is a very common thing for men and is usually done with peer friends for a relatively long time, up to hours (Muspita, 2021). On Tiktok itself, quite a lot of content has been created to voice complaints from wives regarding the habits of these husbands who still like to have fun drinking coffee with their friends rather than participating in household matters and raising children.

The advice not to gamble, from a woman's perspective, is advice that is very gender responsive because the facts prove that gambling has a bad impact on family finances. There are many cases of divorce and domestic conflict, even murder by wives because husbands like to gamble online. As for not shouting at your wife in the lecture material, you can practice it by speaking politely, gently and pleasantly.

In promoting the right to be treated well, Gus Iqdam uses terminology that has been known for a long time, namely morals. In simple terms, good husband and wife morals are exemplified by calling husband and wife with affectionate nicknames such as "Mas and Dik", "Mami and Papi", "Mama and Papa" or "My darling" and getting used to chatting and deliberation. (AuthenticD, 2024). Not only through lectures, Gus Iqdam also often gives examples of how he treats his wife well, for example when calling his wife on stage he uses the words "Ning" or "Ummah". Ning is a term that contains respect for the kyai's daughter, while ummah is a derivation of the word ummi which comes from Arabic

and means mother. Apart from that, on various occasions, Gus Iqdam also showed romantic attitudes towards his wife in front of the ST congregation, including hugging her, feeding her food and kissing her forehead (Rizqi, 2023). Gus Iqdam also often spontaneously rejects jokes that lead to harassment of his wife, for example when a member of the congregation prayed for him to change wives, he was very quick to give a negative reaction and said that the congregation was insane (Mencari, 2023). All of these attitudes received positive appreciation from netizens in the comments column in the form of praise for being a good and loyal husband.

Apart from using the term morals, to promote the wife's rights, Gus Iqdam often quotes excerpts from verses from the Holy Qoran which contain messages for husbands and wives to behave well with each other, those are "*Hunna libaasun lakum wa antum libaasun lahunna*" from Surah Al- Baqarah verse 187, and "*Wa'asyiruhunnabil ma'ruf*" from Surah An-Nisa verse 19 as reference (STsuroboy, 2023), Gus Iqdam mentioned in the Tafsir Ibnu Katsir book that what is meant by good intercourse is not just good in sexual relations, but good in terms of daily morals. In his explanation, Gus Iqdam said that husband and wife are like clothes for each other, of where the function of clothes is to cover shortcomings. So, husbands are advised to cover up their wives' shortcomings, and vice-versa. Covering deficiencies here, according to Gus Iqdam, is very useful for creating a happy household because it can avoid conflict due to other people's opinions. On the other hand, if a husband and wife like to reveal their partner's shortcomings, it will easily invite the presence of other parties, both parties who provoke them so that they do not accept

these shortcomings, resulting in conflict and parties who take advantage of the opportunity to be unfaithful.

Promotion of the right to be treated well by husbands, according to researchers, can contribute to the formation of equal and gender-just relations between husband and wife because on social media, wives often complain about their husbands' behavior not being good towards them. Many of these complaints point to the behavior of husbands who spend a lot of time outside the home without caring that their wives want to be with their husbands. Many wives respond to complaints like this by writing the same story in the comments column and expressing feelings of annoyance, disappointment, anger and even loss of the sense of benefit from marriage. In a different video, Gus Iqdam advises husbands not to get angry if their wives often contact them to ask how they are doing, for example when their wives ask via text message, telephone or video call. According to Gus Iqdam, the wife's frequent contact with her husband is an expression of deep love by stating the argument in Arabic "*Man ahaba syaian aktsara min dzikrihi*" which means whoever loves someone will mention that person a lot (Tujuh, 2023).

The material for this lecture is in line with women's rights contained in Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence, Article 6 letter b, which prohibits everyone, including husbands, from committing acts of psychological violence against members of their family. Psychological violence is an act that results in fear, loss of self-confidence, loss of ability to commit action, a feeling of helplessness, and/or severe psychological suffering in a person. Based on Sutantri's research, Roslan and Yusuf's, repeated shouting and harsh words can cause severe psychological suffering

in their victims, including fear, anxiety and loss of self-confidence(Sutantri et al., 2022).

An explanation using terms in classical books shows that Gus Iqdam is promoting women's rights based on classic religious discourse because he does not mention the terms usually used by feminist Islamic scholars. KH Husein Muhammad, in explaining *mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf* uses three terms as standards of good behavior; justice, equality and balance which apply in three domains of husband and wife relations, those are economic, sexual and humanitarian(Muhammad, 2001).(Safika, 2024) Another feminist Islamic scholar; Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, explains the concept of *mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf* by using the term coercion(Kodir, 2019)and Nur Rofi'ah with domestic violence(An Noor et al., 2024).

3. The Right to be Fulfilled

One of Gus Iqdam's lecture materials that was widely shared by netizens on Tiktok was advice on glorifying women. The following is an excerpt from his lecture:

"If you want your fortune to run smoothly, I'll tell you, this is serious, I was often advised by senior preacher and I will continue to practice it. If you want your life to be noble, for married people, if you want your fortune to run smoothly, queen your woman. Women are like queens, respect women, if your work is still difficult, come to my house, I will pay you. That's right"(Zcky.frdn, 2023).

The lecture material is aimed at the husbands. In this video, Gus Iqdam does not explain what the terms glorifying mean. Just in another lecture on a different

occasion, when he said the term glorifying his wife, Gus Iqdam gave an example of the prayer of a husband who feels he has blessed his wife;

"If I were rich, I would be loyal to my wife, I would honor her according to Gus Iqdam's instructions, Oh Lord..., I will buy her a house, gold, an Apple Watch, I will buy Alphard car. Glorifying my wife is remembering Gus Iqdam's recommendation, I must believe it...." (Bregas, 2023).

Based on this example, glorifying and queening in Gus Iqdam's perspective is giving wealth to meet his needs, giving pleasant gifts and making her life easier. In the opinion of researchers, this advice on glorifying and queening one's wife, although not technically detailed, has the content of promoting women's rights, especially the right to provide for one's livelihood, both material and immaterial. The right to obtain material support is regulated in Article 34 of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage, which states: The husband is obliged to protect his wife and provide all the necessities of household life according to his ability (Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 1974 Tentang Perkawinan, 1974). On the one hand, this article burdens the husband with the obligation to provide a living, on the other hand it gives the wife the right to receive a living from her husband.

Even though providing support is a very basic obligation for a husband, in reality many wives do not have this right. Divorce cases in many religious courts are often caused by economic factors, where the husband is considered irresponsible in providing for his wife and/or children (Manna et al., 2021). Therefore, advising husbands to provide for and make things easier for their wives is a form of promoting rights.

In promoting the right to earn a living, Gus Iqdam uses a Sufism approach, those the concept of rizki and blessings, where a husband who provides a living for his wife will receive blessings and will be increasingly prosperous by Allah. Gus Iqdam does not use the normative approach regarding the husband's obligation to provide for his wife which is often formulated by classical Islamic scholars, nor does he use the *mubadalah*(exchange)approach formulated by feminist Islamic scholars. In classical fiqh, living is a husband's obligation which, once carried out, gives the husband the right to be obeyed by the wife(Zainuddin, 2014). The power that arises from providing support is enormous, including the right to be served sexually and to have all the rules and orders followed. On the other hand, a wife whose husband does not support her has the right to sue for divorce(Mughniyah, 2004).

In this concept, a wife who disobeys her husband loses her right to support because she is classified as *nusyuz*(disobedient). In Indonesia, the preachers' explanations about obedience to their husbands even extend to the wife's obligation to do all the domestic work which is not always mentioned in classical books. In the rereading, the living offered by *mubadalah*(exchange) is the husband's obligation which can be collaborated with the wife or even transferred to the wife's responsibility if the husband is unable. This transfer of responsibility is possible through a deliberation process and based on the *taradhin min huma*(willingness of both parties)(Kodir, 2019).

Gus Iqdam does not equate living with obedience as two things that are transacted between husband and wife as is the discourse in classical fiqh, instead reminding husbands who have provided a living to still respect their wives, they should not act arbitrarily because they feel

strong, let alone hurt their wives by practicing polygamy. Advice on respecting the wife even though providing for her can be found in the following lecture excerpt:

"If you underestimate your family, underestimate your wife, then you will lose in terms of *rizki* (sustenance/fortune). Sometimes you feel like you can earn money, while your wife only takes care of the children at home. Then you just get a little richer and wants to get married again, you will be impotent. Don't feel super, for example telling your wife you can be rich because you are my wife, you can have a nice house because of me, you can drive a car because you are my wife, don't ever say that when you are married. Let's not feel super, because in our fortune, there is the blessing of our wife's patience. Wife brings fortune, children bring fortune"

4. The Right to be Treated Equally With Male Congregation Members in the Religious Recitation Arena

Apart from women's rights as wives, in his lectures, Gus Iqdam also promotes women's rights as individuals and members of society, including the right to have access to religious knowledge, the right to speak in public, the right to lead, and the right to wear clothes according to their respective identities.

The Sabilu Taubah recitation venue is divided into several areas, they are the main stage, where Gus Iqdam sits to deliver his lecture. On this stage, Gus Iqdam usually sits with several special guests, including officials, close friends or people who are about to convert to Islam, as well as the Hadroh Team (Observasi, 2023). Near the main stage, there is a boarding school yard which can also be occupied by the congregation. Other

places that can also be used are several hundred meters of the Karanggayam-Srengat highway, the yards of residents around the boarding school, yards with lots of sengon/silk trees, areas with galvalum roofs and sugar cane fields.

Based on the video analyzed, Sabilu Taubah provides equal access for men and women to sit in every part of the religious recitation area. On the main stage, for example, not only men, several congregants have also been seen occupying that place, including Anggia Ermarini; member of the DPRRI, the wife of the Trenggalek regent Novita Hardini, Soimah Pancawati the artist, Inul Daratista the artist, and several women who are about to convert to Islam(Kapanlagi.com, 2024)(ObsevasiGus Iqdam Official, 2023-2024). Likewise, in other areas, male and female congregants were seen(Radar, 2023).

Apart from being accepted and sitting equally with men, female congregants are also given the same opportunity to have their voices heard in public through dialogue. During each recitation, Gus Iqdam called several of the attending congregation to speak directly to him. Sometimes this calling is planned, meaning that there are congregation members who have been planned to be given the opportunity to speak, and sometimes it is also carried out randomly. A planned summons is usually carried out if before the recitation begins, Gus Iqdam already knows that there is a special guest, for example from a distant area, has special needs, or is a certain figure. A woman from Lombok named Jauharoh was once given the opportunity to speak because the afternoon before the event started, Gus Iqdam had met her in the courtyard of the Islamic boarding school and promised to call her during the recitation. Likewise, Syamsidar, a congregation member in Surabaya, who is the wife

of a TNI/army member, was given the opportunity to speak because she had visited Gus Iqdam's house first. In addition, she has coordinated with military agencies at the district level.

Of all the videos that were successfully searched, almost all of the congregation who were asked answered that their motivation for attending the recitation was because of their admiration and love for Gus Iqdam who was able to touch their hearts with his lectures. Sometimes, this question and answer session is used to express feelings of love by the female congregation emotionally, for example with hysterical screams, crying, singing which adds to the warmth of the recitation atmosphere (Observasi live Gus Iqdam Official, 2023). Regarding these expressions of feeling, Gus Iqdam expressed his appreciation with words and gifts that were appropriate for women, for example a headscarf, skincare products, or mukena in addition to money. As for male congregants who are given the opportunity to speak, the usual gifts given are sarongs and money. These gifts are donations from other congregants who voluntarily want to give alms.

In the opinion of researchers, providing equal opportunities to speak to male and female congregations contains the content of promoting women's rights to have their existence fully recognized. Many literature states that in public spaces, women are often marginalized where their voices cannot be heard, their bodies must be hidden because these two are intimate parts which are prone to giving rise to temptation or slander (Mhd Ade Putra Ritonga, 2022). This is based on an understanding of the historical hadith text which means "Women are *aurat*. If she comes out, Satan will beautify her in the eyes of men." (Nisa & Wasik, 2021). As a result, in Islamic

teaching practices, there is a lot of segregation between men and women and the wearing of the hijab or barrier that makes women invisible (Hafidzi et al., 2023).

When given this opportunity, Gus Iqdam almost never mentioned the special narratives of the re-reading of classic religious texts as a basis of argumentation for the same treatment of male and female congregations, but immediately applied it in his recitation. In the contemporary literature of feminist Islamic scholars, there are quite a lot of re-readings that are in line with this equivalent treatment, among others a re-study of the hadith that mentions women as a source of slander by Abdul Kodir (Kodir, 2021), a review of the female voice as *aurat* (private parts) by Zahroh Zahwa and Fatihunnada (Zahroh Zahwa & Fatihunnada, 2023).

5. The Right to Lead the Forum

Women leading forums in where the participants consist of men and women in traditional religious learning practices for the general public are events that are not too common or not mainstream yet, especially in Islamic boarding school environments. However, Gus Iqdam in the ST recitation held on September 27, 2023 asked his mother, Nyai Lin, to lead the prayer. Gus Iqdam made this request shortly after finishing his recitation when Nyai Lin brought tumpeng rice to celebrate his son's birthday. After the top of the tumpeng was cut off by his mother and fed to Gus Iqdam, Gus Iqdam continued to feed the tumpeng to his wife in front of the ST congregation, his mother was invited to lead the prayer. Gus Iqdam, his wife and all the attending congregations follow by saying *aamiin* into the prayer (Kreatif, 2023). In inviting his mother, Gus Iqdam mentioned the words *barokah* and *pangestu*

which mean blessings or willingness. Theologically, blessing is a term that is synonymous with granting, and a mother's blessing is believed to be a factor that really determines the happiness and well-being of her children. In various videos on different occasions, Gus Iqdam often delivers material about the importance of honoring parents and calls this the key to success (W. Pusat, 2024). In the Qur'an this concept is called *birrul walidain* (devotion to parents) which in Surat Al Baqarah is referred to as a characteristic of virtue.

According to researchers, the sight of a woman leading prayers in a forum attended by thousands of male and female congregants is an implementation of the promotion of women's rights which breaks the tradition that has been rooted in society that in open events, prayer reading is only appropriate to be led by men. Not only in the lower classes of society, even at official state ceremonies held by officials who lead prayers are almost always men. By having women lead prayers in front of large congregations, both online and offline, Gus Iqdam has provided a real reference to society that women can lead prayers, and that is something normal.

6. The Right to Wear Clothes According to One's Identity

As mentioned above, the Sabilu Taubah recitation participants have diverse religious, character and occupational backgrounds. Related to this diversity of backgrounds, Gus Iqdam does not set certain standards in terms of clothing for female congregants who attend ST recitations. He also has no problem with female congregants who come without wearing a headscarf or covering their *aurat* according to general recitation habits. This can be seen from Gus Iqdam's response when he

found female congregants who came wearing ordinary clothes including Marta Agustina, a Protestant Christian female congregant who was wearing a hoodie, which is a jacket equipped with a head covering but did not fit tightly (Papandu, 2023).

On different occasions, several female Buddhist congregants were also seen attending without head coverings. They are students from the Buddhist High School who are doing social service (KKN) near the recitation location. When interviewing them (I. W. Pusat, 2023), Gus Iqdam did not talk about their appearance, but instead appreciated their presence as he appreciated other congregations. The same attitude was shown to Alfi and Sonya (Catholic) (Harry, 2023), Vide (Hindu) (Santri, 2023), and others. This attitude of acceptance was recognized by the non-Islamic female congregation as something they admired so they were encouraged to attend again or listen to ST lectures online.

Accepting the presence of each congregation with cloth matching to their religious identity and social background is an attitude that respects the right to enjoy freedom of expression. According to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual has the right to freedom of expression. According to Singh, fashion, including clothing, is a tool to express one's self which can represent a certain identity, such as religion, ethnicity, class. (Singh, 2023). In this case, when non-Muslim congregation members attend ST recitations without wearing a headscarf, it can be said that they are expressing their religious beliefs which do not require the headscarf. Likewise, when Gus Iqdam does not question their clothing, it means that he is promoting an attitude of tolerance, which is respecting the differences of his congregation. This is an important attitude to appreciate

considering that someone from a minority group is vulnerable to having their rights violated.

In the context of the hijab, it is common for non-Muslim women to be forced to wear the hijab when they are in a Muslim-majority society. This kind of rights violation has occurred, among other things, in state schools of West Sumatra (Meilani & Fatmawati, 2022). Human rights activists, especially women's rights, are quite aggressive in raising this issue as a resistance to practices that violate rights, while local figures reject this accusation because the obligation for non-Muslim female students to wear the hijab is a form of local community wisdom. In the content circulating, Gus Iqdam was not found promoting the rights of non-Muslim women who attended his lectures using the terminology of re-reading religious texts such as women's body sovereignty and women's autonomy or arguments about the hijab as a local community culture as espoused by several feminist Islamic scholars such as Kiai Husein Muhammad and Nasaruddin Umar. He preferred the word "unique" to describe the female congregation he found not wearing the hijab so he was called for dialogue or did not comment at all on their appearance, but instead focused on dialogue.

C. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that through his Sabilu Taubah recitation lecture, Gus Iqdam succeeded in promoting women's rights which have not been recognized in society, both in the domestic and public scope. The rights in the domestic scope that are promoted are the right to enjoy equal status with her husband, the right to be treated well and the right to receive a living. The rights in the public scope that are

promoted, both through recitation materials and through actions, are the right to be treated the same as male congregation members, the right to appear to lead religious forums and the right to enjoy freedom of expression according to one's religious identity.

In promoting these rights, Gus Iqdam uses arguments that have long been known in religious texts, including morals, blessings, *birrul walidain*, and *mu'asyarah bil' ma'ruf* which are explained based on nowadays realities widely known by public. It can be said, as a preacher who has no intellectual affiliation with the feminist ulama network, Gus Iqdam is able to promote women's rights in a contextual way according to the background of the congregation which is a cross-regional, cross-ethnic, cross-religious and cross-national community. This conclusion contributes to the development of religious and feminist discourse in terms of ways to promote women's rights which, apart from being able to be done with a deconstructive approach or re-reading of religious texts, can also be done with reference to established texts. It is proven that the second approach is generally accepted by the public because so far there has been no controversy over the content of Gus Iqdam's lectures about women. The researcher recommends to the wider community to make the Sabilu Taubah recitation a reference in religion, especially in realizing gender equality and justice from a religious knowledge perspective.

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