The Myth of Choice in Maryam Lee's *Unveiling Choice*

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia has witnessed Islamic revivalism since the 1980s and its Islamisation is exemplified in the normalisation of *hijab*. Although the adoption of *hijab* is often cited as a choice in Malaysia, Maryam Lee's controversial book *Unveiling Choice* presents an alternative portrait of choice in a society where *hijab* is a predominant practice. Using Wodak's (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018) Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), this paper explores the argumentation strategies used against women, particularly Maryam in challenging and delegitimising her de-*hijabbing* decision. The findings revealed how hijab is not only indoctrinated from childhood but the choice of removing it is delegitimised using linguistic means of *topoi*; more specifically *topos* of authority, threat and consequence. This paper concludes by highlighting the implication of these *topoi* to women's agency pertaining to *hijab* in a society where the pressure to wear it is indoctrinated and forceful, resulting in *hijab* becoming a tool of hegemonic gendered practice that works toward sustaining the patriarchal status quo in Malaysia.

Keywords: de-*hijabbing*; choice; Discourse Historical Approach; argumentation; *topoi*

INTRODUCTION

On 16th April 2019, Maryam Lee, the author of *Unveiling Choice;* a semi-biographical novel that narrates the author's de-*hijabbing* journey was investigated by the Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) following a raid by JAIS officials during Maryam's book launch event (Malaysiakini, 2019). Maryam was investigated by JAIS under the Shariah Offences Enactment 1995, Section 10(a) in reference to allegedly committing offences relating to the sanctity of Islam for which, if found guilty can face a fine up to RM5,000, a jail term of not more than three years, or both. JAIS' stern action against Maryam sparked a public debate where some argued the investigation was a violation of freedom of expression while others warranted JAIS' action claiming the book was a threat to Islam and hence requires severe punishment (Mohd Amin, 2019; Norhaspida, 2019). This incident demonstrates another layer of the issue surrounding *hijab* of which, in a society where *hijab* has become a normative identity marker for Muslim women, the act of de-*hijabbing* or 'taking off the *hijab* or not wearing it anymore' (Lee, 2019, p.vi) is often subjected to

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condemnation and resistance (Fan, 2021; Izharuddin, 2018). Apart from the legal resistance demonstrated by JAIS, Fan (2021) also reported that women who have de-*hijabbed* in Malaysia are vulnerable to public shaming, particularly on social media. The public shaming of Muslim women who have removed their *hijab* is more apparent when they are public figures or celebrities. Natrah and Hamid (2021) explored this issue by analysing the rhetorical strategies employed in the comments of a post shared by a Malaysian celebrity, Emma Maembong after she announced her de-*hijabbing* decision. The results of the analysis show how Emma was systematically represented negatively to justify her public shaming. However, in this study, the concern relies not only on the resistance that Muslim women in Malaysia have experienced for their de-*hijabbing* decision, but it believes that the resistance may also indicate a much deeper and more complex issue which might be underpinned by patriarchal ideologies.

Additionally, this research is also important due to the phenomenon of de-*hijabbing* being overwhelmingly under-researched. Unlike the abundance of research on *hijab* that focuses on women's agency and informed choice, the intense pressures at family, societal and institutional levels experienced by Muslim women living in a predominantly *hijab* society remains unexplored. To fill in this gap, this paper focuses on Maryam's de-*hijabbing* experience as a Muslim woman living in Malaysia where *hijab* is a normalised practice. Using Wodak's (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018), Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), this paper aims to provide answers to the following questions: What are the argumentation strategies used to delegitimise the choice of women who decide to de-*hijab* in Malaysia*?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Arabic, the word *hijab* means curtain, drape, barrier, partition, or screen (Al-Hassoun, 2019; Rahman et al., 2016). In Islamic scholarship, *hijab* has come to represent modesty in terms of behaviour and dressing for both men and women which was deliberated in Surah An-Nur; *"… And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty"*. Based on this verse, the wearing of *hijab* is agreed by most Muslim scholars as an obligatory form of worship. However, some scholars believe that the commendation of *hijab* in this verse is arguable as the concept was enforced to reduce unwanted attention or harassment which were common in pre-Islamic society (Ahmed, 1993;(Abu-Lughod, 2001). Apart from the diverging opinion about its enforcement, the practice of *hijab* is also predisposed to different social-cultural contexts (Stowasser, 1997). Marwan Al-Absi (2018) points out that the reason for these variations is due to a lack of consensus among Muslim jurists about which parts of the body to cover. Hence, the ways *hijab* is worn vary according to the local cultures, preferences and personal needs.

The increased visibility and awareness of *hijab* in Malaysia can be traced back to the resurgence of Islam in the country as early as the 1930s. Characterised by three major events, the developments of Islamic revivalist movements in Malaysia were influenced by the domestic and international political scenes. The first phase of Islamisation in Malaysia began among Malay students studying at Al-Azhar University, Egypt who were exposed to the growing anti-colonial movements in Egypt. Having returned to Malaysia, the former Al-Azhar students formed the earliest Islamic group in Malaya; *Hizbul Muslimin.* The group which was largely influenced by the ideas of Egyptian reformists and scholars such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida aspired to revive the Islamic way of life while deterring the influence of British lifestyle and domination.

However, the growing fear of communist groups in Malaya resulted in the dissolution of *Hizbul Muslimin* in 1948. In the early 1970s, a renewed interest in Islamic movements was evident as a result of the defeat of Arab forces in the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 and the first oil price shock in 1973. These two major events marked the second phase of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia where the interest to return to Islam was particularly rife among Muslim Malays educated in the West who have grown to reject the Western-oriented lifestyle and hegemony in Malaysia. By the end of the 1970s, the revivalist groups enjoyed political significance which culminates in the second phase of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia. This phase was legitimised with the rise of Muslim clerics in the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, PAS) to leadership roles and the enrolment of Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM) charismatic founder, Anwar Ibrahim into the government. The permeation of influential and charismatic Islamic clerics and leaders into the local political scene alongside the victory of Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 left a long-lasting impact on the growth of political Islam in Malaysia. With Islamisation becoming one of the government's agendas, Malaysia saw a boost in Islamisation projects within its public institutions including the introduction of Islamic banking and Islamic higher institution. One of the noticeable effects of Islamisation is the increased visibility of Islamic clothing in public especially the wearing of *hijab*. It did not take long for *hijab* to dominate other identities as described by Aihwa Ong (1990, p.270) *'it was as though women were used to rebuilding a Malay-Muslim identity'*. In contrast to many countries in the Middle East such as Egypt in which the growing number of *hijab* wearers is often described as a *'reveiling movement'*(Ahmed, 2011; Guindi, 2003), *hijab* was a limited and a foreign practice that gained visibility in Malaysia in the late of 1970s. However, in the early phase of Islamisation in Malaysia, *hijab* was only common among Malay women who were involved in the *da'wah* movement.

Da'wah which refers to the call for Islam came in tandem with the resurgence of Islam in Malaysia. Members of HELWA; the women's wing group of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia-ABIM), were often seen covered in *hijab* known as *'mini telekung'* which they paired with socks, gloves and sometimes face-veils that are locally known as *'purdah'* (Aihwa Ong, 1990). The sight of students in *hijab* and *purdah* did not fare well with the Malaysian government and it was often cited as a phenomenon that would drive away foreign investors (Olivier, 2019). For this reason, the wearing of *hijab* was perceived by women in the HELWA group as an act of dissent (M. Mohamad, 2004). This is in addition to their belief that *hijab,* with no exception, is compulsory for all Muslim women. The adherence to *hijab* was also more evident among university students partly due to the influence of HELWA members. Campus ground was central to HELWA's *hijab* campaigns and female students who were dressed in Western clothing were reported to be chastised and intimidated (Aihwa Ong, 1990). The confrontational approach employed by HELWA members was proven effective as Aihwa Ong (1990) suggests, students that were confronted by the *da'wah* members would be seen to have eventually adopted *hijab.* Although by the early 1990s, *hijab* has become more common in Malaysia, the practice had a more macro level of expression in Malaysia after the 9/11 attack which commenced the third phase of Islamic resurgence in the country.

The hostility and Islamophobic treatment against Muslims in the West post-9/11 attack resulted in the increased visibility of *hijab* in the mainstream media. Many researchers have credited online or new media such as Facebook, Instagram, vlogs (video blogs) and Twitter for the boost of Malay women's *hijab* awareness (Hassim, 2014; S. M. Mohamad & Hassim, 2019) but a review of literature for this study found that the normalization of *hijab* in Malaysia was a result of the growing display of *hijab* in the mainstream media. Although the sight of Malay women in *hijab*

had increased by the early 1990s, *hijab* was an uncommon sight in the local mainstream news sites, magazine spreads or television programmes. Reasons for this paucity might be due to the expectations for women in *hijab* to be modest not only in their choice of clothing but also in their presence in public spaces. The entertainment industry and mainstream news sites used to be framed as liberal sites that do not conform to the standard of modesty expected of Muslim women and are contrary to an Islamic way of life. This notion can be exemplified in the policies introduced by PAS-led governments in Kelantan and Terengganu that prohibit Muslim women from participating in the cultural performance and entertainment-based programmes (Makhzan, 2002). As such, in the year 2000, when a popular Malaysian celebrity, Wardina Safiyyah donned *hijab* on local television*,* her *hijab* appearance was deemed revolutionary and caused a nationwide discussion. Wardina's decision to appear in *hijab* on national television proved to resonate with many local celebrities who had been associating *hijab* with the end of their careers. Her *hijab* appearance was not only considered revolutionary but she was rewarded with branding opportunities. She was chosen as the first *hijab* model for the British haircare brand Sunsilk and as her popularity grew, her name was then capitalized by local *hijab* retailers that were selling *hijab* using her namesake and styled the way it was worn by the actress. In the year since Wardina's first *hijab* appearance, the visibility of *hijab* in the mainstream media grew at an unprecedented level with more celebrities appearing in *hijab*. Alongside its growing visibility, *hijab* continued to be capitalized for commerce. Different types, styles, and colours of *hijab* emerged in the local market, giving *hijab* a place in the fashion industry. The launch of eBay Malaysia in 2004, and subsequently Lelong.com.my in 2007 further accelerated the commercialisation and commodification of *hijab* as it becomes not only accessible both on the online and offline market, but the choices in terms of its types, styles and colours are endless and able to cater to the fashion aesthetic of young Malay women. This ultimately contributes to the normalisation of *hijab* practice in Malaysia, particularly among young Malay women and eventually adopted as an identification symbol that marks Malaysian Muslim women; as mentioned by Fan (2021:1186), *"since hijab is a strongly marked symbol of basic similarities among all Malaysian Muslim women, it can be seen as a mandatory social requirement"; wearing the hijab has gradually been transformed into a social norm and any transgressions against hijab are deemed as going against adat, the established Malay social rules and would culminate in strong social disapproval."*

However, the normalisation of *hijab* creates intense pressure and scrutiny for Muslim women to cover. As mentioned in Izharuddin's (2018) and portrayed in *Unveiling Choice*, *hijab* is consolidated in the life of Muslim women in Malaysia at a young age in the form of school uniforms. School uniform for girls in public schools which are expected to be paired with the *hijab* becomes the gateway to conditioning *hijab* into the girls' adult identity (Izharuddin, 2018). Click or tap here to enter text.Although the Malaysian Education Ministry has implemented a no-coercion policy for *hijab* since 1992, the social pressure enforced by some school authorities and the pressure inflicted by teachers, peers and parents as well as family members has made it a norm in Malaysian schools today. Apart from the '*institutional regime of the school'* (Izharuddin, 2018; Thomas, 2021). Besides the integration of *hijab* in school uniforms, a societal belief that holds parents responsible for raising good Muslims is another factor that contributes to the legitimization of religious programming for young children, which includes the adoption of the *hijab* (Stewart et al., 2000). In Malaysia, the practice of *hijab* amongst pre-pubescent girls is common and the practice is considered a positive religious training. This is evident in Manaf and Wok's study (2019) which describes the phenomenon as a positive influence. The promotion of *hijab* indoctrination among young girls is problematic not only because of the girls' lack of agency in

giving consent or in making a choice (Mahmood, 2005), but its acceptance in Malaysian society encourages male dominance over women even when it leads to abuse. This is exemplified in a viral video shared by a Malaysian celebrity, Alif Syukri that showed him canning his 9-year-old daughter. Although the video initially prompted backlash from social media users, the reactions shifted toward positivity and the abuse became more acceptable when the celebrity explained his action was an attempt to '*teach the meaning of a girl's dignity*' as his daughter had taken off her *hijab* (Joe, 2019). This was similar to Maryam's experience who recalled being punished whenever she failed to wear the *hijab* (Lee, 2019, p.3).

The pressure to wear the *hijab* also occurs at a psychological level as women who decide to wear the *hijab* are highly applauded while those who do not are considered incomplete and marked by their non-conformity (Izharuddin, 2018). Women who have adopted the *hijab* are also expected to always be seen wearing it and when they decided to remove their *hijab,* their decision comes in the form of legal and individual resistance (Fan, 2021). Natrah and Hamid (2021) who study the response of Malaysian netizens to a local celebrity, Emma Maembong's de-hijabbing decision found a consistent polarising strategy embedded in the users' language which aims toward demonising and ostracising Emma. The verbal harassment and insults experienced by Muslim women in Malaysia like Emma and Maryam who voluntarily decided to de-*hijab* are telling evidence of how in countries where *hijab* is not only a predominant practice but a requirement of social identity, the idea of choice becomes problematic and difficult to map out. In order to understand the complexity of choice for Muslim women in Malaysia like Maryam¸, this study intends to investigate the argumentation strategies used against Maryam in challenging and delegitimising her de-*hijabbing* decision, as detailed in her book, *Unveiling Choice*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section offers an overview of the theoretical framework that fits into the overall study which includes a brief description of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), and an overview of the Discourse Historical Approach proposed by Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018)**.**

CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

CDS is a theory that takes a critical approach to analyse discourse which involves an in-depth and systematic investigation of the ways power, dominance, inequality, bias, or resistance in society are mediated through the linguistic system. CDS views discourse not only as a carrier of ideology but also as a social practice which means that language is determined by social structure and social conditions (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018). From the perspective of CDS, language is not powerful on its own; rather a means used by powerful people to establish, exercise and maintain power. Hence, CDS is interested to reveal the language used by those in power to establish and maintain unequal power relations. This explains why CDS often chooses the perspectives of the oppressed or the non-dominant with the main aim of resisting social inequality and bringing social changes to society (van Dijk, 2001b:96). This study finds the key concepts mentioned above are relevant in the investigation of Maryam's de-*hijabbing* experience. From the perspective of CDA, the pressure and resistance experienced by Maryam after removing her *hijab* are reflections of the existence of unequal power relations surrounding *hijab* in Malaysia.

DISCOURSE HISTORICAL APPROACH

The discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is one of the major approaches to CDS proposed by Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018). DHA takes an interdisciplinary approach by combining linguistic study alongside historical and social aspects. From the DHA perspective, discourse is *'(...) always historical (...) connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time, or which have happened before'* (Wodak & Ludwig, 2006, p. 12). The integration of historical and social aspects is particularly important in this study as *hijab* and the meaning attached to its practice have been through diachronic changes in Malaysia. Although *hijab* is a common practice in Malaysia, it was an alien concept thirty to forty years ago.

DHA is also useful in this study due to its particular interest in the discursive construction of 'us' and 'them' which is relevant to the research's attempt in understanding how language is used in the *othering* of women who have voluntarily removed their *hijab*. According to Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018), the process of *othering* includes various elements of degradation where the *other* is portrayed as of less value, inferior and negatively different from the dominant group. The analysis of these elements can be investigated using the five discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and intensification or mitigation. This study attempts to analyse the argumentation strategies employed in *Unveiling Choice* to delegitimize the 'choice' of Muslim women like Maryam from removing their *hijab* which consequently denies the autonomy of Muslim women in making a comfortable choice pertaining to *hijab*.

TOPOI AS ARGUMENTATIVE DEVICES

In analyzing the argumentation schemes, Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018) examine the use of *topoi* embedded in discourse. Wodak describes *topoi* as *'the formal or content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules' which connect the argument with the conclusion or claim'* (Wodak, 2008, p.102). The fundamental aim of DHA's argumentation framework is to identify, analyse and more importantly evaluate the *topoi* utilised in the construction of the Self and Other. Although Wodak provides a list of common *topoi* in her work (Wodak,2006: p74), she did not make a distinction between formal and content-related *topoi*. This has caused confusion particularly because other available works that employed the DHA argumentation strategy such as Krzyzanowski's (2009) have also added specific content-related *topoi* which differ from the *topoi* listed in Wodak's. To distinguish formal *topoi* from content-related *topoi*, this study will utilize the view of *topoi* from Slomkowski's (1997).

Based on Aristotle's definition of *topos,* Slomkowski describes *topos* as an element *"under which many enthymemes fall"* (Slomkowski, 1997, p. 44-67). With this, he develops two related terms: *topos* and enthymeme. Enthymeme refers to *"instances of topoi ...which are warranted by the principle expressed in the topos"* (Slomkowski, 1997, p. 44). Using Slomkowski's classification of arguments into *topos* and enthymeme, this study aims to deconstruct the concept of 'choice' in wearing *hijab* in Malaysia as presented in Maryam Lee's book by firstly exploring the *topoi* or the arguments employed to delegitimise the de*hijabbing* decision of Maryam and other women included in the book, and secondly, the enthymemes stemming from these arguments.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study obtained its data from a controversial book written by Maryam Lee entitled *Unveiling Choice* which recounts the author's journey with *hijab* from the age of 9 until she decided to de-*hijab*. Published in 2019, the book is written as a semi-academic autobiography that essentially relives Maryam's experience that also includes her views on *hijab* and her personal struggles in navigating the coercion and pressures from her family and society where *hijab* has become a normative identity marker of Muslim women like herself.

CORPUS JUSTIFICATION

The book is chosen firstly due to the nationwide coverage surrounding its launch event which was raided by the Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) in Malaysia on the 16th of April 2019 (Malaysiakini, 2019). This is in line with Mautner's suggestion to consider news values in selecting data for print media research (as cited in (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008). The controversy and public attention surrounding the book provided not only news values but also an important site of analysis where the experience of women who have de-*hijabbed* in Malaysia are documented.

    Unveiling Choice is also chosen due to the scarcity of publications on Muslim women's de-*hijabbing* experience. Although *hijab* has become a common topic in academia and fictional and nonfictional books (see Good Reads, 2022), the stories of women who do not conform to this practice including women who have stopped wearing it, are rarely if ever discussed and explored (Fadil, 2011). This paucity is alarming considering public resistance to the act of de-*hijabbing*.

PROCEDURES

The book contains 69 pages excluding the appendix and is divided into three chapters; *(i) Chapter 1; Be Off with It, (ii) Chapter 2, Different Stages of De-Hijabbing,* and *(iii) Chapter 3, The False Narrative of Choice*. Following the DHA research programme, the first step of the analysis involved a recollection of context knowledge that underpins the discursive event. Although research on de-*hijabbing* is scarce, the existing literature is fortunately sufficient for this research.

    The qualitative examination of the data starts with a sentence-by-sentence analysis of the 69-pages book. Every sentence in the book was numbered before it was analysed. The analysis focused on the application of *topoi* in the arguments against Maryam's decision to de-*hijab*. *Topoi* or *topos* in its singular form refers to the head or principle of the argument, while the arguments which these *topoi* are derived from or corresponded are called enthymemes (Slomkowski, 1997). As mentioned above, the notion of *topos* is largely contested among scholars, hence in this study, the analysis is made on two levels; (i) the topos level which adheres to the formal topoi, and (ii) the enthymeme level; which refers to the culture-specific arguments that correspond with the topos. The topoi and enthymeme identified in the text were then analysed and more importantly evaluated particularly in terms of how it constructs Maryam as the *other* that consequently delegitimises her choice in removing her *hijab*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents and elaborates on the argumentation strategy evidenced in the arguments against Maryam and the women who decided to de-*hijab*. Using Wodak's (Reisigl & Wodak, 2005, 2017; Wodak, 2001, 2018) discursive argumentation strategy, this section will first provide a brief overview of enthymemes found in the book which will then be classified into their respective *topoi*. The list of *topoi* and enthymemes found in the book is illustrated in Figure 1.
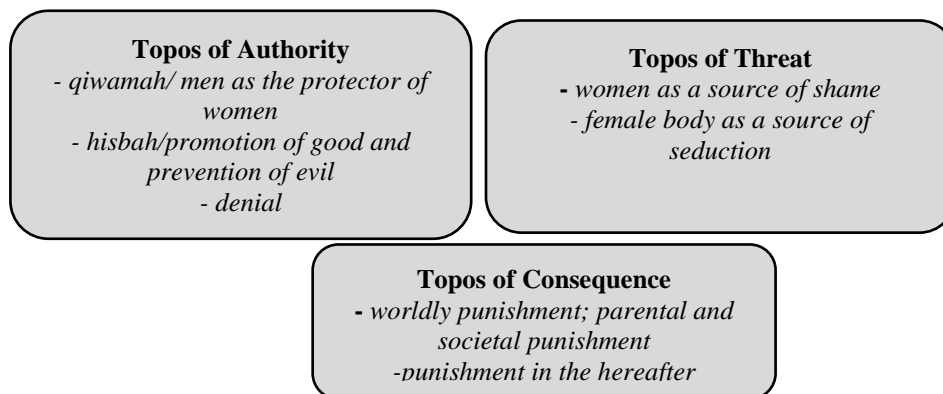

Topos of Authority	Topos of Threat
- *qiwamah/ men as the protector of women* - *hisbah/promotion of good and prevention of evil* - *denial*	**-** *women as a source of shame* - *female body as a source of seduction*

Topos of Consequence
- *worldly punishment; parental and societal punishment*
-*punishment in the hereafter*

FIGURE 1. The set of topoi and enthymemes in *'Unveiling Choice'*

Maryam's journey with and without *hijab* as detailed in the book has revealed common *topoi* that were employed to justify and legitimise the negative responses towards the act of de-*hijabbing* in Malaysia. The *topoi* employed which constantly derogated Maryam for removing her *hijab* exposed the ways in which the choice of women like Maryam concerning *hijab* is delegitimised in Malaysia using content-related enthymemes that reveal the embedded ideologies surrounding *hijab* in Malaysia. As shown in Figure 1, the act of de-*hijabbing* was delegitimised using three major *topos*; *authority, threat and consequence*.

TOPOS OF AUTHORITY

As highlighted in Figure 1, *topos* of authority is one of the key *topoi* found in the arguments against Maryam's decision to de-*hijab*. *Topos* of authority is a specific legitimisation or delegitimization form of argument where the validity of a claim is established using authoritative sources or figures. The *topos* of authority is placed in the following syllogism: *X is right/ wrong, or X has to be done/ cannot be done because A (an authority) says that it is right/wrong or has to be/ cannot be done.* The evidence that underpinned this authorisation is mostly supported using religious-specific enthymemes: *qiwamah* and *hisbah.* These religious concepts are believed to be ordained by God in the Quran hence, their validity is indisputable and unchallenged. In this sense, both the enthymemes of *qiwamah and hisbah* are used to construct *hijab* as an obligation prescribed by God, therefore *hijab* has to be worn and cannot be removed.

ENTHYMEME OF *QIWAMAH*

The concept of *qiwamah* derived from the word *qawammun* which is mentioned in a verse from a larger chapter in the Quran; *al-Nisa* or *The Women (4:34)*. The verse is commonly cited to establish

the concept of *qiwamah* or gender roles in Islam where men are identified as protectors and maintainers of women. However, the verse has also notably been used to advance and justify the notion of male dominance over women. The application of the concept *qiwamah* is also evident in *Unveiling Choice.* For example, when Maryam questioned the legitimacy of men's authority to force their wives or female siblings to wear *hijab,* she received responses that endorsed and justified men's authority over women using the concept of male authoritative right over women as their protectors; ***'they have the right…they wish to protect women and want the best for women'*** (Lee, p.45)*.* This concept is prevalent among Muslims and it has been used as a guiding principle for many gender-related rulings (Osmani et al., 2020).

According to Abou-Bakr (2015, p.88), the concept of *qiwamah* was first introduced by Al-Tabari; a classical Islamic exegesis. Al Tabari used the phrase *'watching over or being in charge of their women'* to establish men's collective authority. However, the authority as detailed in Al-Tabari's interpretation of *qiwamah* was referring specifically to the role of men in providing finances for women and the family. Unfortunately, Al-Tabari's conception has disproportionately been reinterpreted to secure men's authority as rulers of women. Critics of *qiwamah's* misinterpretation have also added that although men are given the authoritative role as the head of the family, any family decisions should be carried out with *shura* or mutual consultation (Abou-Bakr, 2015; Osmani et al., 2020). They also reaffirmed the equal rights of men and women are detailed in Chapter 2 of the Quran in verse 228; *'The rights of the wives (with regard to their husbands) are equal to the (husbands') rights with regard to them, although men have a degree (of precedence) over them (in this respect). And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise*' (2:228). Despite the inconclusive interpretations of *qiwamah*, its rigid and literal interpretation has often taken precedence among Muslims, for example, Muslims in Malaysia; to legitimise men's authority and women's subordination.

ENTHYMEME OF *HISBAH*

Hisbah or the promotion of good and prevention of evil is a customary practice in Islam. The term *hisbah* derives from the word *'hasaba'* which means *'problem', 'sum'* or *'reward'*. Its noun form '*ihtasaba'* refers to the act of inviting others to do good and forbidding others from the evil which will be rewarded in the hereafter (Bashar & Dutsin, 2018). Although the concept of *hisbah* was only mentioned once in the Quran, in Chapter 3, verse 110, *hisbah* appears in many hadiths; or as the second source of reference for Muslims. According to Pieri et al. (2014), *hisbah* is a classical Islamic practice dating back to the time of the Islamic caliphates. The concept of *hisbah* also appeared in the works of all three renowned Islamic scholars; Ibn Tamiyyah (750-1258), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). Ibn Tamiyyah described *hisbah* as the most important concept in Islam equivalent to the act of *jihad* or the *holy war.* Ibnu Khaldun on the other hand defined *hisbah* as a duty of the leaders. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali considered *hisbah* from a holistic point of view; which means *hisbah* is also applied to the self. In many contemporary Muslim societies such as Malaysia, *hisbah* is viewed as an obligatory duty of every Muslim. However, apart from the reward, Muslims specifically in Malaysia believe that the failure to promote good and prevent evil would place them liable for punishment in the hereafter. The concept of *hisbah* is evident in *Unveiling Choice* Lee (2019, p 48) when Maryam's critics justified their harsh remarks towards Maryam as their religious obligation ***'who want to save you from yourself', 'I am praying for you not attacking you', 'take the prayer with an open heart'***.

The issue with *hisbah* as mentioned by Talabaki (2019) is the lack of interest and effort in setting the limit, conditions and authority within which *hisbah* can and should take place. Referring

to *hisbah's* implementation in Iran, Talabaki (2019) calls for a more coherent understanding of what is considered a call to commanding good and a call to forbidding evil. Iran for example uses the concept of *hisbah* in its governance. The importance of *hisbah* in Iran is exemplified in the creation of Khomeini's paramilitary morality force known as *Basij* in 1980. *Basij* was created to enforce *hisbah* on its citizens. Often prioritising issues such as dress code, alcohol consumption and gender mixing (Pieri et al., 2014), *Basij* has been alleged of using its authority to harass, intimidate and punish Iranian women for not wearing *hijab* properly. Promoting and enforcing *hijab* has been a priority for the *Basij* force specifically in 2009 when a campaign known as *Tarh-e efaf va hijab* was launched to punish women for improper wearing of *hijab.* The campaign resulted in the arrest of over 113,000 women in Iran (Golkar, 2011).

In *Unveiling Choice,* the application of *hisbah* was also used by Maryam's parents in their attempt to enforce *hijab* on Maryam at a young age. Similar to the application of *hisbah* by the *Basij* authority, Maryam's parents imposed their authority to command good by enforcing *hijab* and to forbid evil by punishing Maryam when she decided to remove it, as she recalled; ***'all I knew was that my parents would be very angry if I didn't, and I would suffer physical punishment for not obeying'*** (Lee, 2019, p.2). Evidently, the enthymeme of *hisbah* is employed to establish and legitimise the authority of one Muslim over another Muslim even when it is done so in ways that harm or offend the recipient. Despite a well-known hadith by Ibn Taymiyyah which explains the importance of knowledge, politeness, perseverance, leniency and patience in performing *hisbah,* the concept of *hisbah* is often used to exert authority and control over people with less autonomy such as women and young children.

ENTHYMEME OF DENIAL

The *topos* of authority is also expressed via the enthymeme of denial. Unlike the concepts of *hisbah* and *qiwamah, the* enthymeme of denial sets out to omit the authority of women like Maryam to share their experiences and views. This is achieved by systematically denying Maryam's testimony about her struggles with *hijab.* According to Maryam, one of the trials during her de-*hijabbing* journey was the constant denial of her experience and struggles by both the *hijabis* and non-*hijabis*. The credibility of her struggles was often denied and downplayed with remarks such as ***'I have never been oppressed like you said you were', 'you are just making this up'*** and **'my** ***choice to wear hijab was easy to make'*** (Maryam, 2019, p.44). As seen in the examples, the denial occurs by placing doubt in Maryam's testimony under the warrant that *it never happened to me, therefore it never happened to you*; for example, ***'I have never been oppressed like you said you were'*** and **'my** ***choice to wear hijab was easy to make'.*** Maryam's authority over her narrative was also omitted through defamation of Maryam's character as a trustworthy individual; ***'you are just making this (it) up'****.* From these examples, it is evident that the enthymeme of denial is used not only to deny Maryam's authority over her testimony but also to deny Maryam's credibility as a trustworthy individual. As a result of such denials, the legitimacy of Maryam's de*hijabbing* experience as well as her credibility as a trustworthy narrator is tainted; leaving her voice and her struggles unheard.

TOPOS OF THREAT

According to Wodak (2018, p.15), *topos* of threat or danger uses a syllogism of *'if there is a specific danger or threat, one should do something to counter it.'* In *Unveiling Choice,* the enthymemes of women as a source of shame and the female body as a source of *fitna* or seduction are used to justify the *topos* of threat or danger.

ENTHYMEME OF WOMEN AS A SOURCE OF SHAME

In *Unveiling Choice*, when Maryam recalled her memory of when she was still wearing *hijab,* she specifically recounted an incident when Maryam; age 9 at the time, confided her friend for not wearing *hijab.* Recalling her innocent idea that believed *hijab* was a symbol of girls' honour and dignity, she recalled saying; **'have you no shame'** (Lee, 2019, p.3). This incident is important for Maryam and for readers to understand the workings of the indoctrinated concept of shame in young children. Maryam's experience provides pertinent insights into how women in Malaysia are taught to view their honour and dignity through the lens of shame at a young age. The concept of shame is repeated in *Unveiling Choice* in a number of ways. First was when Maryam was told that she had caused great shame to her family for removing her *hijab* and will be **'condemned to a sinful life, dragging … fathers and husbands along …to hell'** (Lee, 2019, p.4). The second example was when Maryam received praise from netizens when she posted her picture with *hijab* but would be accused of dishonouring and bringing **'disgrace upon her family and community'** to her pictures without *hijab* (Lee, 2019, p.59).

The enthymeme of women as a source of shame can be traced back to the idea of women being responsible for the maintenance of family honour, and to a large extent, the honour of Muslim communities. In Islamic societies, women are taught about the concept of shame as is typically in the case of Maryam; from an early age. The conception of honour and shame placed upon women is common in traditional patriarchal societies. However, as women are burdened to protect the honour of their family, they are also expected to fulfil appropriate feminine behaviours and norms assigned to them while at the same time, refraining from behaviours that might bring shame to their family. Wearing *hijab* is one of the feminine behaviours expected from Muslim women in Malaysia. For this reason, women who choose to de-*hijab* are not only viewed unfavourably but their non-conformity to the feminine behaviour expected of them is seen as a source of shame to their families. The failure to fulfilling this gendered expectation is also perceived as a violation of respect for the male members of the family who are deemed as their protectors. In that sense, the loss of a family's honour is equivalent to the loss of male honour.

ENTHYMEME OF FEMALE BODY AS A SOURCE OF *FITNA*

The discursive construction of the *topos* of threat is also legitimised through the enthymeme of the female body as a source of *fitna* or seduction. This notion can be traced back to the concept of *awrah* or nakedness or private parts of the body. According to Al-Qaradawi; one of the most influential contemporary Islamic scholars, a woman's *awrah* includes *'her entire body except her face and hands'* (Al-Qaradawi, 2001, p.155). However, other Muslim scholars, for example, Shaykh Abdul Aziz ibn Bas; a former Grand Head of the Council of Islamic Jurists of Saudi Arabia and an influential Islamic clergy, have described *awrah* for women beyond physical. From his perspective, women's *awrah* is a source of *fitna* or seduction and based on this interpretation, he believed that the presence and participation of women in public spaces should be restricted in order

to avoid women from exposing their *awrah* to men (as cited in Jackson, 2011). He further argues that women's *awrah* should not only be covered but secluded from public spaces to avoid arousing men's sexual instincts that can cause the downfall of not only men but even nations. Although the concept of *awrah* is debatable among Muslim scholars, Muslim scholars have unanimously believed that women are obligated to cover their hair in public to avoid *fitna*. In *Unveiling Choice*, this enthymeme is exemplified through the passive-aggressive behaviour of Maryam's critics who would send a beauty-filtered and distorted picture of Maryam with her hair photoshopped into a *hijab* in an attempt to persuade her to wear *hijab*. According to Maryam, a strategy of adding *hijab* to pictures of women without *hijab* is common and this can also be found in the pictures of historical female figures whose bodies and hair were photoshopped with a piece of long cloth (Lee, 2019, p.23 -24).

The orthodox view of women's bodies as a source of *fitna* has become a ready-made argument to rationalise the enforcement of *hijab*. Under the pretext of *fitna*, *hijab* has become a multifaceted tool of protection that functions to protect men from getting aroused and to protect women from getting harassed by men. This belief is undeniably problematic because it places blame and responsibility to manage men's sexual desire on women while men are not required to practice self-control and take accountability for their actions. This enthymeme reveals the ideological influence of patriarchal ideas surrounding discourses on *hijab* in Malaysia.

TOPOS OF CONSEQUENCE

Closely related to the *topos* of threat is the *topos* of consequence. Propagated through the enthymeme of fear of punishment, Maryam's de-*hijabbing* decision was delegitimised with a set of consequences that were allegedly supported by sacred texts. In general, the *topos* of consequence follows the following principle; *if X has bad consequences, then X should be prohibited/blamed*.

ENTHYMEME OF PUNISHMENT

The enthymeme of punishment is constructed in two folds; fear of parental and societal punishment and fear of punishment in the afterlife. For example, Maryam recalled having to remove her *hijab* discreetly for fear of parental punishment. Having to live a double life, Maryam was often in a state of alertness for fear of getting caught by her family*; 'what my parents might do to me after finding out I don't wear a hijab outside of the house'.* Her fear of parental punishment had also made her feel unsafe; *'I remember feeling I would never be safe'*. This fear stemmed from the constant hypervigilance of her surrounding; *'always having to look over my shoulder because you never know who might be there to catch me without a hijab'.* The same psychological reaction was also experienced by other women like Maryam for example, a woman who worked as a teacher in a school that required her to wear *hijab* described her constant fear of *'being spotted by fellow teachers or students who might report her to the management'.* Hypervigilance is a key feature of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often developed after experiencing traumatic events or other traumatic manifestations. It is a common behavioural response among victims of domestic and parental abuse (Pediatrics et al., 2008). The root cause of this fear can be traced back to the *topos* of threat. As mentioned earlier, the *topos* of threat are reinforced by the idea of women as a source of shame. The notion of shame is manifested in the life of Muslim women in Malaysia through the ingrained practice of women's chastity in maintaining the family's honour. The act of *dehijabbing* as testified by Maryam's experience; is perceived as an act of honour violation that

comes with serious consequences. One of the consequences is in the form of punishment in the afterlife. For example, Maryam was told that by removing her *hijab,* she is not only doomed to hell; '***Women who show their hair will be condemned in hell for millions of years'***, but her action will also condemn her menfolk; her father and husband to hell ***'dragging (your) fathers and husbands along on (your) one-way ticket to hell'*** (Lee, 2019, p.4). The origin of this punishment is believed to originate from a fabricated *hadith* narrated in the book *The Major* Sins (Imam Shams ad-Din adh-Dhahabi, 2012; Lee, 2019, p.34; Suryakusuma, 2020). Grounded on the *topos* of consequences, the fabricated hadith is used to legitimise both parental and God's punishment, and at the same time, delegitimise the act of de-*hijabbing*.

The enthymeme of punishment is also manifested through the fear of societal punishment. Societal punishment has been discussed widely in research on social identity (Castano et al., 2002; Fousiani et al., 2019; Marques et al., 1992; Simon et al., 1990). Enforcement of social norms and cooperation is crucial to maintain group identities. As *hijab* has become a normative identity marker for Muslim women in Malaysia, removing *the* hijab after adopting it is seen as an act of an in-group transgression. Much research has also conceded that the act of transgression from in-group members is punished more harshly. In *Unveiling Choice*, the fear of societal backlash and stigmatisation is exemplified by one of the women who Maryam interviewed. Having adopted *hijab* voluntarily before deciding to remove it, the woman exhibits her fear of losing respect from her family members and colleagues; ***'her parents, husband, children and clients at work, treated her differently when she started wearing hijab'*** (Lee, 2019, 29). Likewise, another woman who confessed her fear of backlash from her family, relatives and neighbours from her hometown had led to her living a double life where she would only don the *hijab* when she return to her hometown.

From the examples above, it is evident that the *topos* of consequence constructed using the enthymeme of punishment sometimes overlap or feed into the *topos* of threat. The enthymemes employed to reinforce both *topoi*; threat and consequence; shed light on the embedded patriarchal concept that validates male dominance over women within the discourse of *hijab*. These topoi have been interchangeably used to delegitimise women's choices and legitimise the patriarchal status quo in relation to gender. In that sense, as long as women's non-conformity towards *hijab* is stigmatised as shameful and dishonourable to the patriarch of the family such as the women's fathers or husbands, men will continue to be placed in a dominant position at the expense of women. As evident in the examples, it was under the *topos* of consequence that men are allowed to exert control over the choice of female members of their family in removing their *hijab*.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the (de)legitimatory *topoi* and their respective enthymemes in Maryam's book *Unveiling Choice*. The results show that *topoi* of *authority, threat and consequence* alongside the enthymemes of *qiwamah*, *hisbah, denial, women as a source of shame, women's body as a source of fitna or seduction and punishment* were utilised to delegitimise the choice made by Maryam and other women included in the book to remove their *hijab.* These *topoi* and enthymemes are ideologically driven as they were used to perpetuate the patriarchal gendered expectations that champion male dominance over women at the expense of women's autonomy to make their own choice. These *topoi* and enthymemes are also evidently religious in substance where specific Quranic verses and *Hadiths* were deliberately selected to secure religious credibility that validates men's dominance and women's subordination as Godly ordained. It is also important to note that these enthymemes are highly controversial and debatable and none of the arguments has garnered

a consensus from Muslim scholars (see Ahmed, 2011; Aihwa Ong, 1990; Anwar, 2018; Byng, 2010; Hamzeh, 2011; Mernissi, 1991; Mir-Hosseini, 2011).

Additionally, as long as *hijab* is used to mark Muslim women's worth and dignity, women who have refused or abandoned their *hijab* will continue to be ostracised and constructed as *'the other'*. Portrayed as either a problem or a threat who needed to be punished, women who have de-*hijjabed* in Malaysia continue to struggle to exercise their autonomy relating to *hijab*. The propagated notion about *hijab* as either a choice or a force is not only insufficient to explain the phenomenon of *hijab* in Malaysia, but the binary narrative is nothing more than a myth. This is because, in a society where *hijab* has become a normative gendered identity, the choice of not wearing or removing it comes with heavy resistance. As in Maryam's experience, the resistance comes not only in the form of parental disapproval and societal backlash, but her decision has also led to legal resistance as exemplified during her book launch where the event was raided by JAIS and a legal investigation was imposed against it.

All in all, this study reiterates that the discourses surrounding *hijab* as either a force or a choice, are limited and a myth specifically referring to the experience of Muslim women living in the context of Islamisation such as Malaysia. For Muslim women in Malaysia, the choice to remove their *hijab* can lead to unfavourable outcomes. Therefore, this study suggests that future research on *hijab* must consider and include the experiences of Muslim women who have voluntarily removed their *hijab* or de-*hijab*. As long as the experience of these women remains invisible, the limited narrative grounded on the notion *that* hijab is either a force or a choice will continue to influence the religious policies involving Muslim women in an increasingly conservative society such as Malaysia.

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