



Muslims Acceptance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article aims to explore netizen criticism of the existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Indonesia. LGBT activists have utilised social media to convey messages of equality, leading to pros and cons in Indonesian society. The urgency of this research is to understand how Muslims accept LGBT issues in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method with a media analysis approach. The data collected by the author were 10,000 Twitter tweets of netizens regarding LGBT issues in Indonesia, and then this data was re-analysed by drawing actor networks on Gephi software. The results show that the Qur'an gives a description of the people of Prophet Luth who committed homosexual acts and were labelled as people who behaved stupidly. Then, in another verse, LGBT can damage conventional marriage bonds to harm social morals. Then, MUI firmly rejects LGBT through Fatwa No. 57 Year 2014, which generally aims to maintain moral values prevailing in society. Through analysis using Netlytic, there are several dominant actors—the focus of actor discussions is political and social discussions. LGBT is still not recognised by society and the state because this kind of deviant behaviour is not a freedom that can be openly accepted.

Keywords: Media, Hate Sociality, Netizen Criticism, LGBT



Introduction

Sexual perversion in Indonesia has begun to enter a critical period. This argument is strengthened by data from ITB Ahmad Dahlan, which states that in 2012 the number of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders (LGBT) in Indonesia was more than one million people (Itb-ad.ac.id, 2022). This number is allegedly growing and starting to show its existence. LGBT activists started several campaigns and movements to legalise this sexual deviant activity. The argument put forward by LGBT activists is that they have the right to choose their sexual attraction. Therefore, this argument is called equal rights and freedom in determining sexual orientation (Hrw.org, 2023).

Moreover, psychologists have cumulatively argued that LGBT behaviour is not a mental disorder (Mukhid, 2018). At the very least, these arguments strengthen the desire of LGBT activists to fight for their rights. This campaign has become more prominent with the development of communication technology (Indainanto et al., 2023). LGBT activists often issue massive messages so that this deviant sexual orientation can sit side by side in the social strata. However, in the Indonesian context, LGBT people have never been accepted as part of society and the state. Indonesia is a religious and cultured country. From a religious and cultural perspective, LGBT behaviour is naturally rejected as it contradicts prevailing values (Sørensen, 2018).

Internationally, over the past three decades, the movement against LGBT behaviour has made significant progress. On the other hand, millions of LGBT people continue to live in fear in countries where homosexuality is still considered illegal. The International LGBT Rights Movement thoroughly introduces the movement's history, highlighting key figures, controversies, and organisations, including Amnesty International and the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission (Belmonte, 2019).

The existence of LGBT people in Indonesia remains challenging due to factors such as conservative social norms, solid religious influences, and discomfort with what is perceived as not conforming to traditional culture. These norms create an environment that is often unfavourable to the recognition of LGBT rights and can even lead to stigma, discrimination and human rights violations. Opposition to LGBT rights can also stem from conservative religious views and political and legal changes that limit the space for LGBT rights and freedom of expression (Christopher et al., 2024).

The existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Indonesia has been met with condemnation and hatred from some citizens. Culture and religion play a big role in shaping people's views on LGBT in Indonesia. Widely held values in Indonesia, often rooted in the traditions and beliefs of the majority religions (such as Islam and Christianity), reject and condemn LGBT as being against moral teachings or traditional values. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, the rights of sexual and gender minorities in Indonesia came under unprecedented attack in 2016. Biased and untrue statements by officials about LGBT people became a pretext for officials to justify discrimination and violence against them (Hrw.org, 2016). The Diplomat reports that Indonesia has seen a dramatic increase in discrimination and hate speech against LGBT people, the severity of which has surprised many. The sudden increase in hate speech against LGBT people in Indonesia has reportedly prompted communities to set up hotlines and safe houses (McCaffrie, 2016). Overall, the problem of social hatred and netizen criticism of the existence of LGBT people in Indonesia has led to discrimination, violence, and other problems for the LGBT community. One example is the call to change school curricula that teach hatred towards LGBT people (Hrw.org, 2018).



Through these phenomena, the research objectives in this study are: 1) What is the existence of LGBT in Indonesia in the era of social media? 2) How do Twitter netizens criticise LGBT behaviour in Indonesia? For simplicity, the author limits the media study by analysing netizens on Twitter. New media use the internet based on online technology, have flexible characters, have interactive potential, and can function privately or publicly (Ginting et al., 2021). The explanation above shows that new media has characteristics that must be connected to the internet, two-way communication, and multi-function (Nasution et al., 2023a).

Although some researchers are aggressively discussing new media, the author suggests that new media theory itself is still in the determination stage. The reason is that the most recent and relevant theory should be used when analysing new media theory. Theories related to new media have always been adopted from traditional media theories. Therefore, the author argues that society needs to catch up with technological developments. This lag has led to some unruly behaviours due to the need for further education regarding the use of new media (Dalimunthe et al., 2023).

From an applied psychology perspective, the behaviours that arise from new media are shared culture, selfies, and cyberbullying (Mulawarman & Nurfitri, 2017). The existence of new media also causes people (the majority of teenagers) to tend to be more hyperactive (Putri et al., 2016). This behaviour dramatically affects cyberspace in the LGBT context as hyperactive teenagers lead to bullying of LGBT people, especially in Indonesia. The results showed that LGBT people in Indonesia often face rejection, peer group violence, and termination of employment due to their sexual orientation, leading to mental health challenges (Moagi et al., 2021).

In this study, new media plays a vital role in fighting for the existence of LGBT people worldwide. For some activists, media containing specific messages can solve global problems. Media can unite all individuals with the same goal and bring courage and strength so that LGBT people can live their daily lives with pride (Chauhan & Shukla, 2016). On the other hand, LGBT people have a reasonably free space to argue in society. This space is used to conduct incidental advocacy to defend themselves from bullying and gender discrimination against LGBT people (Blackwell et al., 2016).

Ironically, the argumentation space for LGBT people is still a place where bullying occurs. One of the behaviours that emerge from this bullying is hateful sociality that contains hate crimes and is harmful. In Toyosi (2023), bullying of LGBT people will lead to media syndic disorder (MSD), which is a symptom of anxiety, so that they close themselves off from all kinds of information. In one article, there is evidence that LGBT people experience fear due to large-scale discrimination and public hatred (Bristowe et al., 2022). An international response is needed to eradicate LGBT bullying on social media (Pickles, 2021).

The difference between this article and some of the studies above is that LGBT people in this study are secondary objects. In contrast, the primary object is netizens who criticise the existence of LGBT. This study analyses social phenomena related to the existence of LGBT and Indonesian netizens' criticism of gender deviance. In previous studies, most articles discussed the role of the media in improving the social system so that bullying does not occur. Meanwhile, this research relies on conceptual studies related to netizens' tweets against the existence of LGBT. Cumulatively, this study and the previous studies confirm the existence of bullying in new media, although in different study contexts.

Method



This article uses a qualitative method with a content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis involves condensing raw data into categories or themes based on valid inferences and interpretations (Mayring, 2015). The content analysis in the media in this study used Netlytic software, which was then processed using Gephi software to construct the ego network. This article relies on two types of data, namely primary and secondary. Primary data was collected through interviews and observations. As for secondary data, the author uses a literature review. The primary data collected by the author is netizen tweets that intersect with LGBT. The number of tweets the author takes is 10,000 posts, which the author then analyses using Netlytic. Once collected, the author will conduct an ego network analysis using Gephi software. Meanwhile, secondary data is analysed using a literature study. Literature studies build a description of the approach with conceptual studies through literature reviews (Creswell, 2014). The analysis was carried out by looking at several communication science studies to form a specific perspective to see literature oriented towards a deductive-interpretative perspective. Data collection techniques by processing the raw data that has been collected, with a content analysis method that explains how to optimise procedures to make a valid conclusion (Moleong, 2010). Furthermore, content analysis techniques are used to conclude by trying to find the characteristics of the message and are carried out objectively and systematically (Weber, 2017). Then, the author uses the tafsir Maudhu'i method to analyse the Qur'anic perspective on LGBT (Al-Farmâwî, 1997; Nawawi, 2016).

Results

Qur'anic Literature on LGBT

The Qur'anic perspective on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) is a controversial and complex topic. Islamic scholars' views on this matter vary, including in interpreting Qur'anic verses. Below are some verses and views often associated with LGBT in the context of the Qur'ân:

1. Verses About Prophet Lot

The story of the people of Prophet Lot who rejected moral norms and engaged in homosexual behaviour is condemned in the Qur'an (Surah Al-A'raf, verses 80-84; Surah Al-Hijr, verses 67-73; Surah An-Naml, verses 54-58). This story is often interpreted as a rejection of homosexual behaviour. In Q.S. al-Naml verse 55, Allah says the following:

"Why do you go to men to fulfil your lusts and not to women? Indeed, you are a people who do not know (the consequences of your actions)."

Some scholars argue that this sodomite behaviour is foolish. They have just demonstrated it in front of people. Thus, it is clear that their public opinion has been corrupted as the disease has become widespread. Foolishly, they knew no shame (Al-Qarni, 2008; Hamka, 1983). Traditional Understanding: Many traditional Islamic scholars and religious leaders interpret the verses about the people of Prophet Lot as a rejection of homosexual behaviour and consider it a violation of moral norms and religious law.

2. Social and Moral Context

Some ulama and scholars also emphasise that the understanding of these verses must be seen in the social and moral context of the time. They argue that the story of Prophet Lot illustrates broader issues of morality and denial of religious norms, not just sexual orientation. Allah says in Q.S. al-Syu'ara verses 165-166 as follows:



"Why do you go after the kinds of men among men and leave the wives whom your Lord has made for you while you are transgressors."

This verse hints at the dangers of homosexuality, a filthy act that is disgusting and dehumanising. This filthy habit, if widespread, will destroy the common bond of marriage, which is the Sunnatullah to preserve and develop offspring and prosper the earth (Shihab, 2004). There are also some Muslims who argue that the Qur'an can be reinterpreted in different social and cultural contexts, including on LGBT issues. Some try to formulate a more inclusive view and understand the need to respect human rights without passing judgment on a person's sexual orientation (Rahmi & Siregar, 2020). It is important to remember that understandings of the Qur'an can vary, and views on LGBT in Islam are not monolithic. Some groups and individuals may hold more conservative views, while others may be more open to more inclusive interpretations. It is essential to look at this issue of the diversity of views within the Muslim community (Nasution et al., 2023b).

Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) on the Rejection of LGBT

In the face of LGBT, MUI firmly rejected through Fatwa No. 57/2014 on Lesbian, Gay, Sodomy and Molestation. Some of the demands listed in this fatwa are (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2022)

- a MUI asks the House of Representatives or DPR and the government to immediately draft legislation that does not legalise the existence of homosexual communities, both lesbian and gay, as well as other communities that have deviant sexual orientations.
- b MUI, in the fatwa, also recommends that the government compulsorily prevent the spread of deviant sexual orientation in society by providing rehabilitation services for the perpetrators.
- c The MUI asks the government to explicitly not recognise same-sex marriages.
- d Finally, in the fourth point, the government and society are asked not to allow the existence of homosexual activities and deviant sexual orientations to live and develop in society.

In addition to the official fatwa, MUI also often issues statements that emphasise the rejection of LGBT. These statements are generally based on Islamic religious views and social norms prevailing in Indonesia. MUI's views generally reject legalisation or legal recognition of LGBT and emphasise the need to maintain moral and ethical norms based on Islamic teachings. Western travellers with an LGBT orientation may encounter difficulties in Indonesia due to prevailing social and religious conventions.

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has issued fatwas and declarations against the legalisation and acceptance of LGBT, citing Islamic religious beliefs and Indonesian social standards. Although homosexuality is not illegal in most parts of Indonesia, much of Indonesian culture is still against the LGBT population. In addition, Indonesia's recent criminal law reform includes a ban on extramarital sex, which will impact both foreign visitors and Indonesian citizens. This, coupled with general public attitudes, can make life difficult for LGBT travellers from Western countries in Indonesia (Payton, 2015; Npr.org, 2022).

Indonesian Argumentation Data on Twitter

In this study, the author analysed 10,950 tweets with 5,776 links related to LGBT discussions. The author analysed the tweets of Twitter users with the keywords LGBT, Homosexual, Bisexual, Lesbian, and Transgender. After being analysed using netlytic.org software, the dominant actors

in this discussion are Convomf, Tanyarl, and Anwaribrahim. Here is the network that the author got.

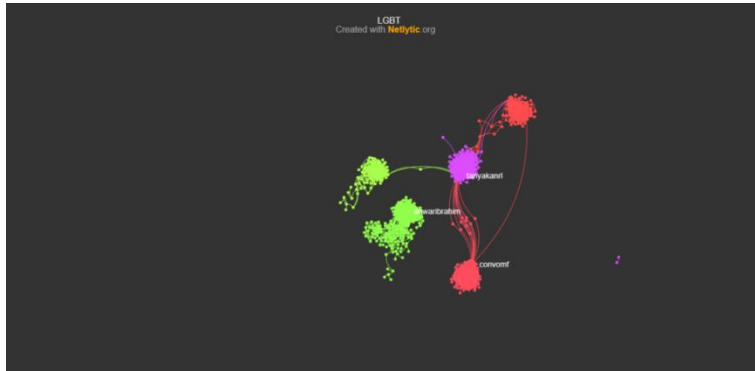


Figure 1. Network of actors associated with LGBT discussions

The picture above indicates tens of thousands of tweets by netizens collaborating with several clusters of actors regarding the discussion of LGBT. As for the accumulated tweets, discussions related to LGBT refer to several discussions, as shown in the following graphic:

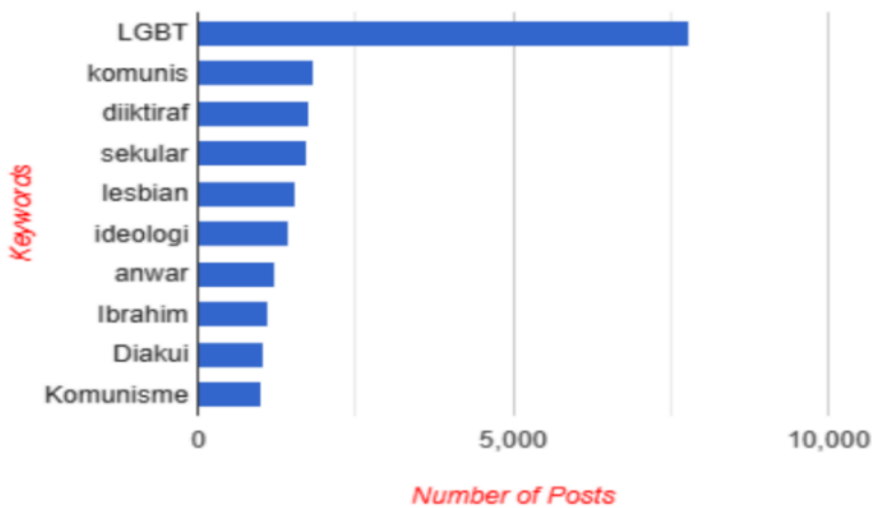


Figure 2. Discussion focusing on LGBT in Indonesia

The image above visualises data on Twitter netizen discussions about the existence of LGBT in Indonesia. Discussions about LGBT behaviour have become an organic issue because it opens up space for public argumentation. As the picture above shows, LGBT behaviour is always associated with communism, ideology, and confession. In addition, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia (Anwar Ibrahim) was also mentioned in this discussion. In the following, the author further analyses using Gephi software to continue the analysis of netlytic.org software.

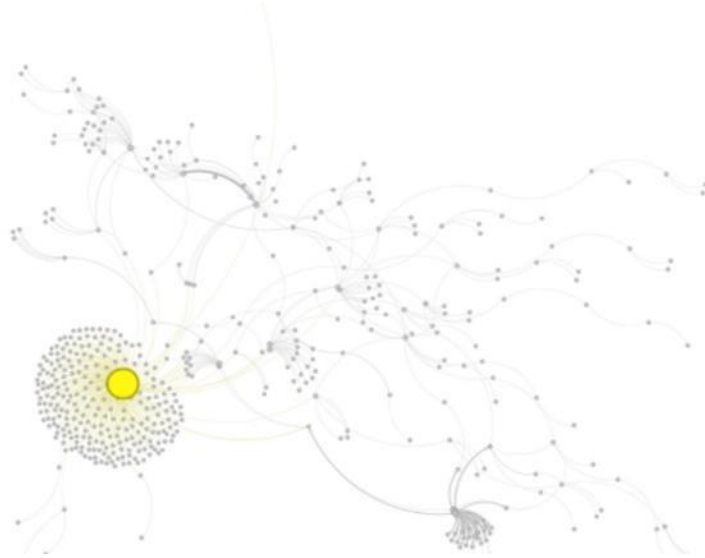


Figure 3. Anwar Ibrahim network

The network image above shows that tweets about Anwar Ibrahim have their own space in the LGBT discussion. From the analysis of Gephi software, the author found that Anwar Ibrahim does not have a network associated with several other actors. This indicates that netizens who discuss LGBT by collaborating with Anwar Ibrahim as an actor mainly discuss political matters related to recognition and ideology. On the other hand, some netizens collaborate with Convomf, Tanyarl, and Javasyudha. The network graph is as follows:



Figure 4. Network Analysis Convomf (red), tanyakanrl (green) and javasyudha (blue)

The figure above shows that convomf is the most significant factor in discussing LGBT in Indonesia. The reciprocal ties between convomf and Tanyarl and convomf and Javasyudha characterise this. On the other hand, the actors Tanyarl and Javasyudha have no network with each other. The discussion involving the three actors above is more directed towards public unrest regarding the existence, initiatives, pros and cons. Interestingly, the author found that CNN's media network is quite significant in discussing LGBT. The network is as follows:



Figure 5. CNN Actor Network in LGBT discussion

Discussion

Pros and Cons of LGBT Existence in Indonesia

The study of gender issues is closely related to communication. It should be underlined that gender and sex have apparent differences. Gender is a specific characteristic that is shaped by social and environmental interactions. Therefore, gender order does not reflect sexual attraction (Darwin, 2021). In this article, gender and media have a genuine connection, so the discussion of gender is always juxtaposed with the media. In this article, the author collects tweet data from Twitter as the object of analysis. Interestingly, LGBT is an organic issue that continues to generate pros and cons in Indonesia.

Some tweets on Twitter with the keyword LGBT are concentrated on the word "*Diktiraf*". This discussion shows that the existence of LGBT in Indonesia continues to be rejected because it violates the regulations and noble values in Indonesia. Kolehmainen (2022) argues in his writing that this issue must be handled with therapy for transformation to occur. The meaning of transformation here is to prevent continued sexual deviance because the condemnation of LGBT in some parts of the world has gone too far.

A tweet from @Opini_Vaath stated that the Diversity recognised in Indonesia is religion, ethnicity, race, culture, thought, and politics. Sexual orientation is something that LGBT people are forced to accept in Indonesia, a country of faith. Unity in Diversity does not condone perversion. On the other hand, despite various rejections from the LGBT community, activists continue to actively spread the message of equality as part of the campaign. According to them, human rights should not be limited, so LGBT is a necessity that must be accepted by society. Data from the United States supports LGBT activists' argument that in their country, LGBT people receive institutionalised support as a reinforcement of gender equality (Nanney & Brunσμα, 2017; Pezaro et al., 2023). However, this policy creates social segregation that makes LGBT people homeless (Robinson, 2020).

In Indonesia, LGBT has always raised pros and cons between human rights, Pancasila, and Islam (Manik et al., 2021). Attempts to realise and accept LGBT people in Indonesia have only led to ambiguity. Ironically, hatred and bullying in Indonesian society is increasing in Indonesia (Saidah & Annajih, 2022). This situation can be seen through the fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema



Council through MUI Fatwa No.14 of 2014, which explicitly explains the position of society, especially Muslims, in addressing the LGBT phenomenon. Despite the high social resentment, LGBT activists in Indonesia are trying to take the constitutional path as done by Vietnam so that LGBT people can live in peace and minimise discrimination (Phuong, 2022). From the analysis that the author found, there are several factors of acceptance and rejection of LGBT in Indonesia. The factors of rejection include the aspects elaborated on below.

A Religious Values

The majority of people believe that no religion teaches sexual perversion. Even since the time of our ancestors, the Indonesian nation has been known as a religious nation. Homosexual perversion can damage the essence and existence of the nation's character. On the other hand, LGBT people have a stigma that they are ostracised by religious communities (Roni et al., 2022). One of them can be seen through several verses of the Qur'an that have been explained previously, firmly rejecting the existence of LGBT. As stated in Q.S. al-Naml verse 55 and Q.S. al-Syu'ara verses 165-166.

B Culture

Besides being religious, Indonesia is known as a cultured nation. Historically, the ancestors of the Indonesian people internalised social values through Culture. Therefore, the prevailing normative values are usually adopted from the hereditary Culture of the ancestors.

C Low Critical Thinking Skills

Low thinking skills make people tend to be easily influenced and less able to overcome differences with an objective point of view. Low thinking skills are an essential reason for the influx of Western Culture in Indonesia. In general, problems in Indonesia are triggered by the subjectivity of differences. In Taufani (2018), Gusdur argues that many differences give rise to many perspectives, so Culture is prone to sensitivity.

The arguments that LGBT is acceptable in Indonesia are:

- 1 Fulfilment of human rights (Semenova et al., 2015).
- 2 No normative violations.
- 3 The rights of every individual must be protected.
- 4 The rights of every individual must be fulfilled.

Queer Theory: An Overview of the Antithesis of Homophobia in Society

Queer linguistically means strange, abnormal, and disordered ("Oxford Dict. English," 2010). Queer is often misunderstood as another term for LGBT. Queer does not mean LGBT, but it can help understand LGBT (Jensen & Craig, 2016). Historically, queer theory emerged in the 20th century as AIDS spread. All the blame was placed on homosexuals for the spread of AIDS at that time. Therefore, queer emerged as a unifier of LGBT people to minimise sexual inequality and gender harassment. Queer is used to criticise, dismantle and question the norms of traditional society.

Over time, queer has become a constructive theory in social science. Moreover, in addition to discussing gender, queer has begun to penetrate the political, social, security and economic scales. Queer activists consider that gender is an essential part of identity. At first, queer analysed descriptively about LGBT people. However, the theory evolved to investigate identity, life, history, etc. Queer theory strengthens the position of LGBT people as an entity that must be accepted by society. For queer theorists, gender identity is dynamic and adaptive (Brady et al., 2022). Queers



accept sexual identities, both homosexual and heterosexual. This support for acceptance is considered capable of realising social stability without discrimination. Unfortunately, this theory has not accommodated all interests, so experts are still studying this theory.

Experts have always supported queer people to realise social harmony and eliminate homophobia. Some Western countries have implemented harmonisation from the campus level with the concept of brotherhood (Rahman & Futch, 2022). Even the movement to eliminate homophobia starts from basic terms such as the re-identification of homo-phobia (anti-same-sex) to homo-sex-phobia (anti-same-sex-lovers) (KJ & Amalaveenus, 2022). In the Indonesian context, queer theory cannot generate ideas about the existence of LGBT people. Indonesian society assumes that gender is predetermined. Groen (2016) argues that human identity is absolute and unchangeable. Gender neutrality is naive because queer only supports LGBT sexual pleasure, not activity. Queer is only for sexual pleasure, not activity.

This is in line with the discussions of Twitter netizens who often reject the existence of LGBT. Explanations against LGBT are not substantive and only create new social problems. Such as Use of Abusive Language and Insults, Spread of Stereotypes and Prejudice, Hate Campaigns and Online Violence, Denial of Rights Recognition and Protection, Social Polarisation and Conflict. The existence of LGBT in Europe and America is still a polemic to be discussed, so bringing queer views into Indonesia will only cause rejection. As an antithesis, queer is not the best response in condoning LGBT because in terms of politics, security, history, society, and culture, this behaviour is considered destructive to prevailing norms.

Conclusion

Through this research, it can be concluded that the existence of LGBT in Indonesia is still rejected by society based on cultural values, religion, and social norms that consider non-heteronormative sexual orientation as something that goes against traditional values. This can be seen from thousands of tweets from Twitter users stating that LGBT is not a freedom that can be openly accepted. On the other hand, many traditional Islamic scholars and religious leaders interpret the verses about the people of Prophet Luth as a rejection of homosexual behaviour and consider it a violation of moral norms and religious law. These verses include Q.S. Al-Naml verse 55, and Q.S. Al-Syu'ara verses 165-166. Indonesian scholars set out their interpretation of these verses through four fatwas that form the basis of the interpretation process while emphasising the rejection of LGBT people.

It is important to remember that understanding of the Qur'an can vary, and views on LGBT in Islam are not monolithic. Some groups and individuals have more conservative views, which are generally based on Islamic religious views and prevailing social norms in Indonesia. The strength of this research is that it explores Muslims' acceptance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues in Indonesia through social media. In addition, the analysis used through the method of Tafsir Maudhu'i in the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith on LGBT Law. The weakness of this research is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Future research is important to look at the LGBT phenomenon and the acceptance of Muslims through survey research.

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