

The Veil and The Issue of Radicalism: A Study of The Phenomenon of Veil Wearing in Islamic Higher Education

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| Keywords | Abstract |
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| Wearing the Veil; The Issue of Radicalism; Islamic Higher Education. | This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of wearing the veil (<i>Niqab</i>) and its relationship to the issue of radicalism at UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq (KHAS) Jember. The study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, while data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis went through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, while data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results showed that <i>Niqab</i> wearing was influenced by factors of self-identity, <i>hijrah</i> symbols, religious clothing trends, social media, and the desire to protect oneself from a religious perspective. Wearing the veil also creates barriers to nonverbal communication and negative stereotypes that associate it with radicalism. The issue of radicalism was influenced by a weak understanding of religious moderation, exposure to extreme ideologies through digital media, the social environment, and psychological and economic factors of students. Countermeasures were carried out through strengthening religious moderation, positive student activities, early detection, cooperation with authorities, and inclusive dialogue. Thus, the phenomenon of wearing the veil shows that religious symbols cannot be directly linked to radicalism. |
| Kata Kunci Pemakaian Cadar; Isu Radikalisme; Perguruan Tinggi Islam. | Abstrak Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena pemakaian cadar (<i>Niqab</i>) dan kaitannya dengan isu radikalisme di UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq (KHAS) Jember. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi, sedangkan pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, sementara validitas data diuji melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemakaian cadar dipengaruhi oleh faktor identitas diri, simbol <i>hijrah</i> , tren busana religius, media sosial, serta keinginan menjaga diri dalam perspektif agama. Penggunaan cadar juga menimbulkan hambatan komunikasi nonverbal dan stereotip negatif yang mengaitkannya dengan radikalisme. Adapun isu radikalisme dipengaruhi oleh lemahnya pemahaman moderasi beragama, paparan ideologi ekstrem melalui media digital, lingkungan sosial, serta faktor psikologis dan ekonomi mahasiswa. Upaya penanggulangan dilakukan melalui penguatan moderasi beragama, kegiatan positif mahasiswa, deteksi dini, kerja sama dengan pihak berwenang, dan dialog inklusif. Dengan demikian, fenomena pemakaian cadar menunjukkan bahwa simbol keagamaan tidak dapat secara langsung dikaitkan dengan radikalisme. |

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of wearing the veil among female students at Islamic higher education has shown significant growth in recent years. As a form of religious expression, the *Niqab* is not only understood as a personal practice of practicing Islamic teachings, but also as a symbol of religious identity and a representation of piety in the public sphere. In the context of Islamic higher education, the campus becomes a social space that brings together various religious understandings, so that the use of the veil presents its own dynamics in academic life (Azra, 2002b). This phenomenon has become increasingly visible since the increasing religious awakening of the young generation of Muslims in Indonesia after 2010, which was marked by the rise of *hijrah* communities, digital Islamic studies, and sharia fashion

trends on social media. The 2020 Alvara Research Center survey showed that more than 60% of the young urban Muslim generation actively participates in religious studies through digital media, which has an impact on changes in lifestyle and religious dress (Asrori, 2023). In addition, the report from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia also noted the increasing activity of campus da'wah communities and the use of symbolic religious attributes in Islamic higher education environments (Halim, 2020). Research conducted by Hasan explains that the transformation of the contemporary Islamic movement in Indonesia has also influenced the clothing styles of Muslim students, including the increasing use of the *Niqab* as a symbol of religious identity. Noorhaidi Hasan (2012) also found that some female students who wear the veil interpret it as a form of religious obedience, self-protection, and an effort to maintain morality in modern life. This phenomenon indicates that the use of the veil on campus is no longer an individual matter, but has become part of the socio-religious dynamics developing among the younger generation of Indonesian Muslims.

The issue of radicalism in Indonesia has become a serious concern since the rise in cases of religious extremism involving certain groups. In several studies, certain religious symbols, including the *Niqab*, are often simplistically associated with radical ideology, although conceptually, there is not always a direct connection (Hasan, 2012). This creates a social stigma against *Niqab* wearers, particularly in academic settings, which should be spaces for open and inclusive dialogue. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between personal religious expression and the political and exclusive ideology of radicalism (Wahid, 2026).

UIN Sunan Kalijaga once implemented a policy restricting the use of Arabic-style clothing, including the *Niqab* (veil), on campus as part of an effort to preserve local Indonesian cultural values and prevent the emergence of religious understandings considered exclusive. This policy was based on the view that the essence of Islamic dress lies in the obligation to cover the genitals modestly and appropriately, not in the use of specific cultural symbols synonymous with Middle Eastern traditions. The university emphasized that wearing Arabic-style clothing is not the primary measure of one's piety, as Indonesians' Islamic identity is characterized by moderation and the ability to adapt to Nusantara culture. Furthermore, the use of the *Niqab* is seen as part of a difference in religious interpretation that cannot be forced on all Muslim women. Therefore, students are expected to prioritize values of modesty, academic ethics, and respect for local culture in their attire within the higher education environment. This policy has also elicited a variety of responses in the community, both those who support it as a form of strengthening moderate Islam and those who view it as a restriction on individual religious expression (P. A. Rudiana, 2017).

Following the uproar surrounding the ban on female students wearing the *Niqab* at Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University (UIN) Yogyakarta, news emerged from another Islamic university that a lecturer at IAIN Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, had been suspended for wearing a *Niqab*. The suspended lecturer, identified as HS, had been suspended from campus since early February 2022. Hayati explained, "The reason I was suspended from campus was because I decided to wear a *Niqab*." UIN Bukittinggi had issued a circular banning the wearing of *Niqabs* on campus since February 20, 2021. Following demands from Islamic community organizations to revoke the ban, the university decided on March 20, 2021, to replace the word "*Niqab*" in the circular with "face covering." The argument, which appears to be non-politicized, is that the ban on covering the face is justified in the learning process because face-to-face communication and eye contact are necessary (Faruqi, 2018).

Covering one's private parts is an obligation for all Muslims, both men and women. Men and women differ in the limits of the private parts that must be covered according to Islamic law. There are two views regarding the limits of men's private parts. The first opinion, put forward by Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Abu Hanifah, states that a man's private parts are the area between the navel and the knees. In this view, the thighs are included among the private parts that must be covered (Kusmidi, 2016). This opinion is based on several hadiths of the Prophet SAW which explain the importance of maintaining and covering these body parts in daily life and during worship.

The concept of a woman's aurat in Islam has different views among Islamic jurists. The majority of scholars from the Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought believe that a woman's aurat is the entire body except for the face and palms. This opinion is explained by Imam Nawawi in *Al-Majmu'* that "a woman's aurat is the entire body except for the face and palms." The concept of a woman's aurat in Islam has different views among Islamic jurists. The majority of scholars from the Shafi'i and Maliki schools of thought believe that a woman's aurat is the entire body except for the face and palms. This opinion is explained by Imam Nawawi in *Al-Majmu'* that "a woman's aurat is the entire body except for the face and palms." (Dionnafandi et al., 2025). In line with that, Asy-Syarbini in *Al-Iqna'* states that women are obliged to cover their entire body except their face and palms (Syarbini, 2010). Meanwhile, Imam Abu Hanifah gave some leniency by including the feet as a part that is not aurat. Meanwhile, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, in one narration, is of the opinion that a woman's entire body, including her face, is aurat that must be covered (Purkon, 2023). These differences in views show the diversity of *ijtihad* among scholars in understanding the evidence regarding women's genitals and clothing in Islam.

Clothing in Islam not only serves to cover the private parts but also has aesthetic, moral, and spiritual value. The Quran explains that Allah sent down clothing to cover the private parts and to adorn humans, as mentioned in Surah Al-A'raf, verse 26. Besides protecting honor, clothing also reflects a person's identity and ethics in social life. Islam encourages its followers to wear good, clean, and modest clothing, especially when performing religious duties, such as praying in the mosque (Qardhawi (al), 1995). Thus, the concept of clothing in Islam is not only related to legal aspects, but also concerns the values of modesty, beauty, and piety in everyday life.

Indonesia, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population, is known to predominantly follow the Shafi'i school of thought. However, the use of the hijab and *Niqab* has evolved within the social and cultural context of the Indonesian archipelago. In local traditions, the use of the *Niqab* has not yet become commonplace, leading some to view it as an adoption of Arab or Middle Eastern culture (Van Bruinessen, 2002). As a result, women who wear the *Niqab* often face social stereotypes and are even associated with radicalism or terrorism due to media influences and global political dynamics. However, wearing the *Niqab* is fundamentally a form of religious expression that is understood differently by each Muslim group. Therefore, a more objective, moderate, and inclusive understanding is needed to prevent religious symbols from becoming the basis for social discrimination in Indonesia's multicultural society (Azra, 2002c).

A *Niqab* is a veil that covers a woman's face, and is also called a *Niqab* in Arabic. It is commonly worn by Muslim women as part of a particular interpretation of the hijab or headscarf. According to Sheikh Imam Ibn Hajar Al-Asqolani, the *Niqab* is a cloth or cloak that covers the nose and below the corners of the eyes, and covers the entire face except the eyes to help them navigate when going somewhere (Sarwat, 2007). Regarding the obligation to cover the genitals, there are differing interpretations among scholars, particularly regarding the evidence supporting the obligation. Some argue that wearing a hijab, a cloth that covers the intimate area and is worn by women over the *kimar*, is sufficient. Others believe that simply covering the intimate area is sufficient. This is accompanied by the *Niqab*. The *Niqab* is a face covering worn by Muslim women. It is a cloth used to cover the face, which is part of the intimate area. Ali Juma said that some Muslim women wear a *Niqab* that covers the entire body, including the entire face, but others do not cover the eyes (Faizin, 2013).

The *Niqab* is commonly worn by some Muslim women and has even become a cultural norm in Muslim-majority countries, particularly in Arab countries and the surrounding region. This practice of covering the face has been practiced by some women since the time of ignorance and even until the arrival of Islam. The *Niqab* became problematic when it began to be worn by Muslim women outside of the region. This occurred alongside the increase in the Muslim population in several countries, particularly in Western countries. As reported, the Muslim population in Europe has increased from 2% in 1950 to 6% by 2021 (Kettani, 2010). Westerners consider wearing the *Niqab* a strange custom. Furthermore, in the Western world, the September 11 attacks in New York and various terrorist demonstrations around the world, closely linked to Islamic extremist demonstrations, have fueled the spread of hatred against Islam.

As a result, local governments have become highly reactive and increasingly suspicious of the presence of Muslims in their countries. This is why this often happens. The more Islamic a person appears, the more violent they are and the more suspicious they are viewed by many (Mustarom, 2017; Qodir, 2018).

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority country, the majority of whom are said to adhere to the Shafi'i school of thought. However, in reality, the traditional use of the hijab is not a significant part of the nation's culture. The use of the *Niqab* (veil) is inconsistent with Indonesian culture and is therefore seen as an anomaly. Some Indonesians believe that the *Niqab* is an imitation of Arab culture and was not mandated by the Prophet. Society also tends to stigmatize women who wear the *Niqab* as part of a terrorist identity and view them as a threat (Ardiansyah, 2014).

The phenomenon of the use of the *Niqab* (veil) in Islamic higher education settings has attracted the attention of various previous studies. Research of Hakim (2020) more emphasis on the conceptual review of radicalism according to Yusuf Qardhawi More emphasis on the conceptual review of radicalism according to Yusuf Qardhawi, while the Ummah (2021) examining the religiosity of millennial women who wear the veil amidst the stigma of terrorism. Abidin (2021) focuses on the policy aspects and ideological contestation in the ban on the veil, while Sudirman et al. (2020) and Saleh et al. (2022) focuses more on the discourse of Islamic moderation in the use of the *Niqab* in certain universities. Based on several previous studies, a research gap can be identified. Most studies discuss the *Niqab* from the perspective of religious identity, social construction, radicalism, and campus policy. However, there is still little research that specifically examines how the academic community perceives the use of the *Niqab* in the context of freedom of expression, religious moderation, and academic culture in Islamic universities. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the academic community's perception of the use of the *Niqab* in Islamic universities and examine its implications for the social life and academic culture of the campus. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of building an objective, moderate, and inclusive understanding of the diversity of religious expression in higher education environments to prevent stereotypes, discrimination, or negative generalizations against female students who wear the *Niqab*.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-critical research type to understand in depth the phenomenon of the use of the *Niqab* on campus, particularly related to the perceptions, experiences, and social views of the academic community towards female students who wear the *Niqab*. The study was conducted at UIN KHAS Jember because the campus has a phenomenon of *Niqab* use among female students and the emergence of various views regarding the use of the *Niqab* in academic life. In its implementation, researchers went directly to the field to observe student activities on campus, such as the lecture process, social interactions between students, and organizational and religious activities. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Interviews were conducted directly with female students who wear the *Niqab*, students who do not wear the *Niqab*, lecturers, and campus administrators to obtain information regarding motivations for wearing the *Niqab*, views on the *Niqab*, and perceptions of the issue of radicalism on campus. The selection of informants was done purposively, namely based on their involvement and understanding of the phenomenon being studied so that the data obtained are more focused and in-depth.

In the analysis process, the researcher first grouped the interview results, observation notes, and documentation according to the research theme, such as factors influencing the use of the *Niqab*, forms of social stigma, and views on radicalism. The collected data was then reduced by selecting relevant information and presented in descriptive form to clearly understand the relationships between the data. The final stage was carried out by drawing conclusions based on the patterns found during the research. To maintain data validity, the researcher compared the interview results with observations and documentation in the field, and reconfirmed with several informants to ensure the information obtained corresponded to the actual conditions. Through this technique, the research is expected to provide an

objective and in-depth picture of the phenomenon of *Niqab* use and its relationship to the issue of radicalism in Islamic higher education environments.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Phenomenon of Wearing the Veil at UIN KHAS Jember

The phenomenon of wearing the *Niqab* at UIN KHAS Jember demonstrates the increasingly diverse religious dynamics among female students. The use of the *Niqab* is not only interpreted as a religious practice but also as a form of expression of religious identity that develops along with the increasing spiritual awareness of students. In this context, the *Niqab* becomes a symbol of individual piety influenced by the process of internalizing religious values and social interactions on campus. Furthermore, the development of access to religious information through digital media has strengthened this trend, where female students can easily access various references that encourage more conservative religious practices.

Interviews with several informants at UIN KHAS Jember indicate that wearing the *Niqab* is understood as part of a process of self-improvement and enhancing religious qualities. An informant with the initials "ZM" stated that the decision to wear the *Niqab* emerged after participating in Islamic studies and accessing Islamic preaching content on social media, and was considered to help protect oneself and one's daily behavior. However, the informant admitted to having experienced negative stereotypes that associated *Niqab* wearers with certain groups. Meanwhile, informant "NA," a non-*Niqab* student, considered wearing the *Niqab* a personal right, despite the persistence of social prejudice due to media influence and issues of radicalism. Informant "FR," a lecturer, emphasized that religious symbols cannot be used as a basis for judging someone as radical, while informant "AS" from the university explained that the university continues to develop religious moderation and inclusive dialogue to prevent discrimination against *Niqab*-wearing female students.

Meanwhile, interviews with several lecturers at UIN KHAS Jember revealed a moderate perspective on the use of the *Niqab* on campus. An informant with the initials "A" stated that wearing the *Niqab* is a student's personal right as long as it does not disrupt the academic process and social interactions on campus. Informant "H" explained that stereotypes about female students wearing the *Niqab* often arise due to a lack of public understanding and the influence of media coverage that associates religious symbols with radicalism. Meanwhile, informant "F" assessed that campuses need to strengthen religious moderation through dialogue activities, student development, and educational approaches to prevent the emergence of exclusive attitudes or discrimination in the academic environment. Furthermore, informant "S" from the campus management emphasized that differences in religious expression need to be respected as part of the diversity in Islamic higher education, so that campuses must be able to create an inclusive, tolerant, and open academic space for all students.

Based on observations, researchers found that female students wearing the *Niqab* remain active in academic activities and campus organizations, although in some situations there appears to be social distancing between them and other students. Researchers also observed that the use of the *Niqab* on campus has increased, especially among female students who are active in Islamic study communities. Furthermore, documentation in the form of campus policies, photos of student activities, and social media posts indicate that the phenomenon of the *Niqab* on campus cannot be separated from the development of digital media and the religiosity trends of the younger generation of Muslims. The research data were then analyzed and formulated in the following discussion findings table to facilitate mapping the research focus, sub-findings, theoretical perspectives, and implications of the phenomenon of *Niqab* use on campus.

Table 1. Results of the analysis related to the phenomenon of wearing the veil at UIN KHAS Jember

| No | Focus of Findings | Sub Findings | Description of Findings | Implications |
|----|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Phenomenon of Wearing the Veil | Religious Dynamics | The use of the <i>Niqab</i> demonstrates increased religious awareness and | The emergence of diverse religious |

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|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | diversity of religious practices among female students. | expressions on campus |
| | | The Influence of Digital Media | Access to digital media reinforces the <i>Niqab</i> trend through religious content and the hijrah community. | Students are easily exposed to global religious discourse |
| | | Differences in Perception | There are pros and cons among the academic community regarding the use of the <i>Niqab</i> . | Potential for perceptual conflict and social stigma |
| 2 | Veil as a Fashion Trend | Religious Lifestyle | The <i>Niqab</i> has become part of the lifestyle and fashion trends of modern Muslim women. | Shifting meaning from normative to aesthetic |
| | | Social Media Influence | Influencers and social media popularize the <i>Niqab</i> as fashion. | Formation of a religious visual identity |
| | | Driving Factors | Identity, fashion, social media, empowerment, and community. | The veil as a social and cultural symbol |
| 3 | Negative Stereotypes | Social Labeling | The <i>Niqab</i> is associated with radicalism, exclusivity, and a closed attitude. | Emergence of stigma and discrimination |
| | | Social Discrimination | Nicki-wearing female students experience limitations in social and academic interactions. | Less inclusive campus environment |
| | | Psychological Impact | Feelings of isolation, social pressure, and low self-esteem emerge. | Decreased social comfort |
| 4 | The Veil as Self-Identity | Religious Identity | The <i>Niqab</i> is a symbol of spiritual commitment and individual piety. | Strengthening religious identity |
| | | The Process of Self-Discovery | Female students use the <i>Niqab</i> as part of their identity exploration. | Formation of religious character |
| | | Expression of Freedom | The <i>Niqab</i> is a form of autonomy and women's empowerment. | Strengthening self-identity and empowerment |
| | | Social Construction | The meaning of the <i>Niqab</i> is shaped by social and cultural interactions. | Need for stigma deconstruction |
| 5 | The Role of Campus | Religious Moderation | Campuses play a role in maintaining a balance between freedom and national values. | Educational and dialogical approaches |
| | | Inclusive Space | The need for open dialogue and tolerance. | Creating a harmonious environment |

Table 1 shows that the phenomenon of *Niqab* wearing at UIN KHAS Jember is complex and multidimensional. It is understood not only as a form of religious obedience but also as part of the growing religious dynamics among female students. This is influenced by increasing spiritual awareness,

the internalization of religious values, and support from digital media access that broadens students' religious references. Furthermore, this phenomenon has given rise to diverse perceptions among the academic community, ranging from acceptance as an individual right to concerns about potential exclusivity and its association with radicalism.

This phenomenon has also elicited a variety of responses within the academic community, ranging from acceptance to concerns about its potential links to radicalism. These differing perceptions demonstrate that the use of the *Niqab* cannot be understood in isolation but must be viewed within a broader social, cultural, and academic context (Berger, 1990). Some view the *Niqab* as an individual right to practice religion, while others associate it with potential exclusivity in social interactions. Therefore, a wise and proportionate approach is needed to address this phenomenon to avoid stigma or discrimination against female students who wear the *Niqab*.

a. Wearing a veil is a fashion trend

The phenomenon of wearing the *Niqab* among female students, including those at UIN KHAS Jember, is not only influenced by theological aspects but also indicates a tendency to become part of a fashion trend. In the development of Islamic popular culture, sharia clothing has transformed from a mere normative obligation to a lifestyle, that possesses aesthetic value and social identity. The *Niqab*, in this context, is often chosen as a symbol of piety and a representation of a style of dress considered more Islamic and modern (Hasan, 2012). The role of social media is also very significant in shaping this trend, where public figures, Muslim influencers, and the *hijrah* community have helped popularize the use of the veil as part of self-expression (Azra, 2002a). The phenomenon of wearing the *Niqab* or veil as part of a formal attire has become an increasingly visible trend in various circles, including on campuses and in youth communities. The veil, which covers the face except for the eyes, is often associated with expressions of religious or cultural identity, particularly among Muslim women. However, in recent years, wearing the veil has also evolved into a fashion or lifestyle trend influenced by various factors, such as expressions of identity and religion, fashion and aesthetics, and the influence of social media (Shirazi, 2001).

From a sociological perspective, the trend of religious clothing can be understood as the result of the interaction between religious values, popular culture, and the dynamics of globalization (Featherstone, 2007). This causes the veil to be seen not only as a symbol of piety, but also as part of a dynamic and contextual identity construction (Berger, 1990). In addition, the use of the veil is also understood as a form of expression of freedom and empowerment for some Muslim women in expressing their beliefs and identity in public spaces (Shirazi, 2001). However, it's important to understand that making the *Niqab* a trend doesn't always translate into a deeper understanding of one's religion. Therefore, an educational approach is needed to ensure that this phenomenon is not merely an external symbol, but is also accompanied by a moderate and inclusive understanding of religion, as emphasized by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs in its concept (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019).

b. Wearing the veil gets negative stereotypes

Women who wear the *Niqab* often face significant challenges due to negative stereotypes that have developed in society. *Niqab* wearers are often viewed with suspicion, considered unprofessional, exclusive, and even associated with radicalism without any solid basis (Scott, 2009). These stereotypes are formed through social construction influenced by the media, public opinion, and global narratives about extremism that often associate certain religious symbols with violence (Azra, 2002a). From a sociological perspective, this kind of labeling can create social stigma which has implications for the marginalization of certain individuals or groups (Goffman, 2009). As a result, female students who wear the veil on campus, including at UIN KHAS Jember, often face discrimination in social interactions and academic spaces, and experience limited social acceptance in more secular or open environments (Wahid, 2020).

Negative stereotypes about *Niqab* wearers can also impact an individual's psychological well-being, such as feelings of alienation, low self-esteem, and social pressure on campus. However, not

all *Niqab* wearers are affiliated with a particular ideology, but rather are driven by personal and spiritual motivations (Rusuli, 2020). A lack of understanding of the cultural and religious background underlying the use of the *Niqab* has led some people to hold narrow views of those who wear it. Therefore, overgeneralizations can actually reinforce prejudice and hinder the creation of an inclusive academic environment. In the context of religious moderation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes the importance of fostering mutual respect and avoiding prejudice in religious life (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). Thus, an educational and dialogical approach is needed to build a more objective and balanced understanding of the phenomenon of wearing the veil in the campus environment (Irdayanti, 2025).

c. Wearing a veil as a form of self-identity

Wearing a veil can be seen as a form of self-identity, especially in the context of religion, culture and personal choice (Jamal, 2021). The use of the *Niqab* among female students, including those at UIN KHAS Jember, cannot be separated from the process of forming an individual's religious identity. For some female students, the *Niqab* is not merely a religious symbol, but rather a representation of spiritual commitment and an effort to draw closer to the Islamic values they believe in. From a sociological perspective, religious identity is a social construct influenced by personal experiences, environment, and social interactions (Berger, 1990). Therefore, wearing the veil can be understood as a form of expression of identity that is both personal and symbolic in showing piety and the principles of life that are believed in (Aisyah, 2025). From a developmental psychology perspective, the use of the veil is also related to the process of searching for identity at student age, where individuals tend to explore values and beliefs to find an identity that suits themselves (Widyaningsih, 2019). The veil then becomes a medium of self-expression that provides a sense of security, control, and clarity of identity in social life.

For many Muslim women, wearing the *Niqab* (veil) is a form of adherence to Islamic teachings regarding modesty, respect, honor, and moral integrity. It also serves as a means of identifying as a Muslim woman and visually expressing religious beliefs. Institutionally, universities have a strategic role in addressing this phenomenon wisely and proportionately. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through its concept of religious moderation, emphasizes the importance of balancing religious freedom and commitment to national values (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). Therefore, the approach taken should not be repressive, but rather educational and dialogical, to create an inclusive discussion space. This phenomenon also demonstrates the tension between religious identity and social construction in academic circles. In social construction theory, the reality of the *Niqab* and radicalism is shaped through social interactions, language, and the power of discourse that develops in society (Berger, 1990). Therefore, it is crucial to deconstruct the stigma surrounding *Niqab* wearers by presenting a more objective narrative based on empirical data.

This way, campuses can become spaces that not only value diversity but also foster a moderate, inclusive, and civilized understanding of religion. By wearing the *Niqab*, women express their freedom to choose how they want to be seen without having to conform to beauty norms that often objectify women's bodies.

3.2. The Issue of Radicalism at UIN KHAS Jember

The issue of radicalism within UIN KHAS Jember is part of the evolving dynamics within Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly in maintaining the balance between freedom of religious expression and strengthening religious moderation. In this context, radicalism is not only defined as extreme actions, but also encompasses exclusive, intolerant mindsets and a rejection of differences. Before presenting the research findings in a table, the researchers first present interview data, which indicate that some female students who wear the *Niqab* still experience negative stereotypes from the academic community and the community around campus.

An informant with the initials "ZM" stated that the use of the *Niqab* is often associated with radical groups and closed attitudes due to the influence of social media and terrorism news featuring certain

religious symbols. Meanwhile, informant "NA" believes that prejudice against female students wearing the *Niqab* arises from a lack of public understanding of differences in religious expression. Informant "FR," a lecturer, emphasized that the use of the *Niqab* cannot be used as an indicator of someone holding radical views, as each individual has a different background and purpose in wearing the *Niqab*. Furthermore, observations indicate that female students wearing the *Niqab* continue to participate in academic activities, organizations, and normal social interactions on campus, so the phenomenon of *Niqab* use reflects more of an expression of religious identity than an indication of radicalism.

Interviews with several lecturers and campus officials at UIN KHAS Jember revealed differing views regarding the relationship between the *Niqab* and the issue of radicalism. An informant with the initials "E" stated that the use of the *Niqab* is an individual right and part of religious freedom that must be respected as long as it does not interfere with academic activities. Meanwhile, informant "R" assessed that concerns among some members of the academic community stemmed more from the potential emergence of exclusive and closed attitudes due to the influence of certain religious groups, rather than the *Niqab* itself. Informant "S" from the campus also explained that the potential spread of intolerant ideologies could emerge through closed communities on campus, necessitating preventative measures such as strengthening religious moderation, inter-student dialogue, and inclusive academic development. Thus, the interview results indicated that the *Niqab* is not directly related to radicalism but is rather influenced by the perspectives, patterns of social interaction, and religious understanding of individuals on campus.

Based on observations, researchers found that social interactions between female students wearing the *Niqab* and other students were quite good in academic activities and campus organizations. However, in some situations, social distance was observed, influenced by stereotypes and certain perceptions about *Niqab* wearers. Furthermore, documentation of campus policies, religious moderation seminars, and student organization archives demonstrates that the campus actively strives to build an inclusive and tolerant academic environment. This documentation also shows that the issue of radicalism on campus is more understood as a matter of understanding and patterns of social interaction rather than solely related to religious symbols like the *Niqab*. The research data were then analyzed to understand the relationship between the use of the veil, perceptions of radicalism, and social dynamics in Islamic campus environments.

Table 2. Radicalism Issues at UIN KHAS Jember

| No | Focus of Findings | Sub Findings | Description of Findings | Implications |
|----|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | The Issue of Radicalism on Campus | Definition of Radicalism | Radicalism is not only violent acts, but also an intolerant and exclusive mindset. | A comprehensive understanding of radicalism is needed |
| | | Non-Structural Indicators | Group exclusivity, rejection of local traditions, claims of a single truth. | Early detection without stigma |
| | | Addressing Approaches | Education, dialogue, and strengthening tolerance. | A persuasive approach is more effective |
| 2 | Lack of Awareness | Lack of Radicalism Literacy | Students do not yet understand the dangers and processes of radicalization. | Vulnerable to the influence of extreme ideologies |
| | | Limited Religious Understanding | Narrow and non-contextual interpretations of religion. | Intolerant attitudes emerge |
| | | Influence of Social Media | Unverified content spreads radical propaganda. | Digital literacy is needed |
| | | Lack of Dialogue | Minimal space for open and critical discussion. | Students' critical thinking is weak |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3 | Exposed to Radical Thought | Gradual Process | Exposure through stages: introduction, internalization, belief. | Radicalization occurs slowly |
| | | Digital Media | Online platforms as the primary means of spreading radical ideology. | Unfiltered access to information |
| | | Social Environment | Exclusive and homogeneous groups reinforce ideology. | Intolerant attitudes are formed |
| | | Identity Crisis | Students are vulnerable due to their identity-searching phase. | Easily influenced by ideologies |
| | | Indoctrination | Instilling a single understanding within a particular group. | Closing space for dialogue |

Table 2 shows that the issue of radicalism within UIN KHAS Jember is influenced by several key factors, namely limited understanding of radicalism, low student awareness, and gradual exposure to radical ideology. Radicalism is not only defined as acts of violence, but also as an intolerant and exclusive mindset, often developed through closed groups and digital media. The lack of moderate religious literacy, the limited space for critical dialogue, and the influence of a homogenous social environment make students more vulnerable to accepting radical narratives without adequate filtering. Therefore, this phenomenon demands preventive measures through increasing critical literacy, inclusive religious understanding, and strengthening awareness of the dangers of radicalism to create a safe and harmonious campus environment.

In practice, the issue of radicalism often emerges through various non-structural indicators, such as the exclusivity of religious study groups, the rejection of local traditions, and the tendency to claim a single truth in religion. Several studies have shown that radicalism among students is not always explicitly apparent, but rather develops through a gradual process of internalizing ideology through social networks and digital media. (Hasan, 2012). This requires educational institutions to be vigilant in detecting issues early without creating stigma or discrimination against certain groups. From the perspective of religious moderation advocated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the appropriate approach to addressing the issue of radicalism is through education, dialogue, and strengthening the values of tolerance (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). Thus, campuses need to prioritize a persuasive approach rather than a repressive one.

a. Lack of awareness of the dangers of radicalism

Lack of awareness of the dangers of radicalism is one of the major challenges in efforts to combat the spread of extremist ideology (Khosrokhavar, 2017). Many individuals, especially the younger generation, lack an adequate understanding of the process of radicalization and its impact on social life. On campus, including at UIN KHAS Jember, some students still narrowly understand radicalism as merely violent acts, even though radicalism also encompasses intolerant, exclusive, and disregarding mindsets. The lack of moderate religious literacy and a lack of understanding of national values leave students vulnerable to simplistic and extreme religious narratives (Nora et al., 2026). This condition is exacerbated by the proliferation of unverified information on social media which often contains ideological propaganda wrapped in religious arguments (Muthohirin, 2015). Without a deep, holistic, and inclusive understanding of religion, individuals can easily be influenced by extremist groups who exploit ignorance and misunderstanding of religious teachings.

Furthermore, the lack of open dialogue among students also contributes to low critical awareness in addressing the issue of radicalism. Students who are not accustomed to inclusive discussions tend to accept information textually without conducting in-depth analysis of the context. Social media and the internet play a significant role in the spread of radical ideology because many individuals, especially teenagers, are easily exposed to narratives that marginalize certain groups,

thus losing critical perspective. From an educational perspective, this situation demonstrates the importance of strengthening character education and religious moderation as part of the curriculum and student activities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that raising awareness of the dangers of radicalism needs to be done through an educational, dialogical, and tolerance-based approach (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). Thus, increasing moderate religious literacy is a strategic step to build a safe, inclusive, and harmonious campus environment.

b. Exposed to radical thinking

Exposure to radical thinking refers to the process when individuals begin to accept and adopt extreme ideologies that encourage acts of intolerance or violence against certain groups (Khosrokhavar, 2017). This exposure can occur directly or indirectly through various social, psychological, and ideological factors. Among students, including at UIN KHAS Jember, the radicalization process generally occurs gradually, through the introduction of ideas, internalization of values, and the formation of specific ideological beliefs. Digital and social media have become primary channels for the spread of radicalism due to the easy access of provocative and exclusive religious content. A lack of digital literacy makes it difficult for some students to distinguish moderate Islamic teachings from narratives that lead to radicalism (Fanindy & Mupida, 2021). This condition is reinforced by the phase of searching for identity at the student age which makes them more open to new influences (Sugiarti & Roqib, 2021; Swandana, 2025). Extremist groups also utilize websites, forums, videos, and the power of visuals to stir emotions and manipulate individual views, as groups like ISIS do in attracting young people through social media.

In addition to digital media, social environments that are physically and intellectually isolated also increase a person's vulnerability to radicalization. Lack of interaction with diverse communities makes individuals more likely to accept a single viewpoint or ideology exclusively. In these circumstances, extremist groups often offer a sense of community, purpose, and identity to individuals who feel marginalized or experiencing an identity crisis. This process is often accompanied by indoctrination that instills a single perspective and views differences as deviations to be rejected, thus fostering intolerance and reducing openness to healthy academic dialogue (Baidhaw, 2005). Therefore, the role of educational institutions is crucial in carrying out preventive efforts by strengthening critical literacy, religious moderation, and fostering an inclusive academic environment. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that preventing radicalism must be carried out through an educational and dialogical approach that fosters tolerance and respect for diversity (R. Rudiana et al., 2026).

4. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of *Niqab* wearing at UIN KHAS Jember demonstrates that the *Niqab* is not only interpreted as a religious practice, but also as part of a fashion trend, a form of self-identity, and a symbol of female students' migration towards a more religious life. Furthermore, *Niqab* wearing is also associated with various social challenges, such as the emergence of negative stereotypes linking it to exclusivity and even radicalism, as well as potential barriers to communication, particularly non-verbal communication. This demonstrates that *Niqab* wearing is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, influenced by religious, social, cultural, and psychological factors among students.

The issue of radicalism on campus is influenced by several factors, including weaknesses in the education system, low awareness of the dangers of radicalism, exposure to extreme ideologies through digital media and social environments, and students' personal circumstances such as economic hardship and psychological issues. Therefore, UIN KHAS Jember has undertaken various preventive and strategic efforts, such as collaborating with authorities, providing moderate religious understanding, strengthening positive student activities, conducting early detection, and creating spaces for inclusive dialogue. This effort is expected to create a safe, tolerant academic environment free from the influence of radicalism, while still respecting individual freedom to express their religious beliefs.

This research is limited in that it was conducted at a single Islamic university, making the results unable to be widely generalized. Furthermore, the number of informants in this study was limited, thus not fully representing all perspectives of the academic community regarding the use of the *Niqab* and the issue of radicalism. This study also focused more on social aspects and the perceptions of the academic community, thus failing to thoroughly examine the influence of campus policies, student organizations, or digital media on the development of this phenomenon. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the research location to various universities, employ a quantitative or mixed methods approach, and more deeply examine the role of social media, student religious organizations, and religious moderation policies in shaping perceptions of the use of the *Niqab* on campus.

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