Cornered Islamic Society: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Islamophobic Memes

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Abstract

In the era before the internet, memes could take the form of posters containing messages, invitations, and even propaganda. Propagandists manipulated those discourses and presented them at public events such as theatres and festivals. It has evolved into computational propaganda using media and popular memes in the modern era. Muslims are effortless targets for offensive memes, which have been going on for the last decade. This prejudice has become a familiar issue for internet users and vandalizes the image of Muslims and links Muslims to all social problems that transpire in society. This study examined Islamophobic theme memes transmitted on international memetic sites. Popular Islamophobic memes were analyzed using critical discourse analysis to break down the phenomenon based on visual, textual, and social motives. The findings demonstrated that the meme creators utilized the hottest issue to induce the ill idea of demonizing Muslim society and tend to alter the information in their favour. Memes with Islamophobia discourse often included provocative sentences that satirize the teachings of Islam accompanied by words that collocate with aspects of terror, terrorism, radical, extremism, violence, and abuse. That discourse influenced opinions and damaged the image of the target meme, and this method was remarkably efficacious, as evidenced by a large amount of support obtained on anonymous sites. In addition, this meme was distributed in anonymous forums, where this forum ensured the privacy of the meme's sender without worrying that his insults in cyberspace would affect the real world.

Keywords: *Critical discourse analysis; meme; cyber-islamophobia; prejudice; memetic society*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of digitalization, memes have become daily consumption for people. Memes have become a basic need for social media users. People access the mimetic site to find entertainment or certain information. Nevertheless, for stakeholders and propagandists, memes are powerful in influencing people's mindsets and demeaning political opponents. Memes cannot be seen as just entertainment, but memes are a medium to develop ideas. People adore memes because they are straightforward to comprehend, access, and create without much effort (Diresta, 2018). Dawkins (1976) described how an idea is born, develops, and spreads in the form of a meme. Memes spread and reproduce creatively, and memes transmit that message from one individual to another like a virus.

Figure 1. World War II Propaganda demonizing certain war parties. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

In the era before the internet, memes could take the form of posters containing messages, invitations, and even propaganda. Propagandists manipulated those discourses and presented them at public events such as theatres and festivals. In the modern era, it has evolved into systemic computational propaganda using media and popular memes (Wooley & Howard, 2018; Martino et al., 2020; Dimitrov et al., 2021). Those media contain unique illustrations that are rich in meaning. Unconsciously they send messages to the human subconscious, and humans, as the host of ideas, will transmit this information to other humans. Memes are undeniably a powerful medium for transmitting unique information.

In addition, there are numerous social media platforms. Most of its users unconsciously become contributors and creators of memes. These people have different interests; some want to find popularity, some want to trade, and some want to control people's opinions and mindsets about something. In the metaverse or cyberspace, people are prone to cyberbullying. Someone will feel secure with anonymity in cyberspace because

they assume they are untraceable, which induces more cyberbullying behaviour. This anonymity also contains a role in determining the moral network in the cyberspace community. Those internet users feel *physically isolated*, thus diminishing moral concerns in social interactions (Garrigan et al. 2022, Mendlow, 2020). This anonymity provides protection and a sense of security for people who like the fuss in cyberspace. With fake accounts, they can talk and share propaganda as they please without having to worry about the risks that will occur.

Figure 2. Modern propaganda using a meme. (taken from *9gag.com*)

In addition, social media is a cradle for people who like to denigrate other people, no matter other people's cultural, religious, and educational backgrounds. This phenomenon also occurs on mimetic sites where contributors actively disseminate memes criticizing and mocking certain groups. Muslims are effortless targets for offensive memes, which have been going on for the last ten years (Horsti, 2017). This prejudice has become a familiar racial issue for internet users. This socio-psychological phenomenon vandalizes the image of Muslims and links all social problems that transpire in society to them (Saeed, 2019). The international community often associates conflict and terrorism with Muslims. It is very intriguing how the western media characterizes Muslims as barbarians. Khan (2017) digresses that the image of Muslims is deliberately shaped like it is now after the 911 incident. Thus, people assume that the Islamic religion's teachings cause calamities and violence in the history of human civilization. It is counter-productive that Europeans have dominated the history of human genocide since the 17th century in the name of sacred religious duties. The United States media also tends to portray Muslims as carriers of terror. This is evidenced by the massive number of western media headlines associating Muslims with labels of violence, religious radicalism, and Islamic extremist militants (Samaie & Malmir, 2017). The relationship between the above problems with memes can be seen when many memes are used to ridicule or describe Muslims as a stringent religion. The researcher continually encounters memes published in mainstream mimetic media and gets many pro and con retorts. Those memes generalize Muslims as a whole on a problem.

At this point, the researcher wants to dissect how meme patterns are associated with Islamic teaching. The researcher wants to examine whether it is true that most of the contents are verbal vitriols. In addition, the researcher wants to examine semiotically the images,

templates, and catchphrases used in making memes so that researcher can find out the functions, motives, and ideals behind those memes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Mimetic Culture & Islamophobia

Dawkins first introduced the meme concept in his book *The Selfish Gene*. This book explains that ideas can be spread like organisms from one individual to another as a medium to survive and be accepted in certain social groups (Dawkins, 1976). These days, memes have become so popular that almost everyone knows and enjoys memes as entertainment sources. The forms and means of memes are increasingly diverse. At the beginning of its appearance, memes were often presented with images added with semiotic catchphrases following the ideas retained in the catchphrase. Brunello (2012) asserts that memes tend to use a combination of images and text that function as a response to content that is currently a hot topic in society.

Nevertheless, now there are more diverse forms of memes; some are presented in the form of GIFs or what is known as animated Graphics Interchange Format (Miltner & Highfield, 2017). GIFs were popular in the memetic community because they can uniquely be utilized as a communication medium. With the development of internet technology, it is more effortless to transmit data with extensive capacities. Meme contributors were gradually employing video formats in the memetic sites. Tedium encouraged creators to use videos that are more attractive to edit (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015) and more accessible to transmit context (spreadable) than just manipulating images (Shifman, 2013). The memetic community did not immediately tolerate videos because they assumed video content did not fit in the current platform and should be posted on other platforms. However, this opinion is fading along with social mobilization and technology, and the usage of videos as memes has become knowledgeable.

In contrast to works of art which tend to be tied to copyright, memes are derivative, where anyone can use published memes as templates for new creations and ideas. Thus, a successful meme is a meme that is constantly evolving and utilized by many people. Like the terminology, meme or *mimema* means imitation based on the transmission model (Zubaidah, 2018). The practice of mimesis is not just a genuine imitation. Still, a creative process alters an existing idea template with a new model, so this process is considered substantive creative (Wadipalapa, 2015).

The memetic society has developed and marshaled in line with the development of technology, the internet, and the metaverse (Putra & Triyono, 2018). This internet culture becomes a social artifact describing how culture and social interactions are merged (Chandler, 2012). This interaction can be in the form of commentaries related to issues contained by memes or comments related to meme layouts. The segmentation of meme aficionados is divided into many groups. Initially, memes are too normative, and conservative critics criticize the format, font, resolution, and relevance of memes to context. However, gradually the number of these gatekeepers decreases. For that reason, slowly, the regulations of memes also continue to evolve based on the demographics of their audience.

In addition, the rise of memes that insult Muslims on mimetic sites is not without reason. This possibly happens because there is an immense appreciation and demographics. A meme that is too abusive or has no informative value and humour will be taken down by users. On the other hand, memes based on the collective awareness of mimetic site users according to substance and format will persist and continue to expand. In Indonesia, Islam is the religion with the most prominent adherents and is considered the majority, and there are often controversies involving this group. Many parties bring the issue of radicalism as the root of the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

However, it can be seen that there is a political component circulating behind this phenomenon, especially considering that Islam has a significant and robust influence in current society. Many political memes associated with Islam can be ascertained using Islamophobic discourse to usher public sentiment about Muslims. It causes Muslims to be limited in carrying out their religious teachings. On the other hand, the lack of understanding and misconceptions from a small part of Muslims causes specific actions that do not follow morals. Thus, several violations involving the Islamic community made the society decide to take the case as the global representative of the Islamic community.

Therefore, specific attributes such as *Muslim clothing*, beards, *niqab*, and *hijab* are the target of accusations by people contaminated with Islamophobia. These traits are often associated with terrorists who may intentionally use them to discredit the image of Muslims. Moreover, the rise of religious organizations using religion for the benefit of the group, thereby reducing public trust and judgment of Muslims. This is further exacerbated by the intervention of political parties that tend to denounce and intrude on the application of Islamic law in certain areas, which only applies to adherents and does not injure public interests (Irpan, 2021). Those political parties tend to exaggerate the issue to demonize the Muslim community.

In addition, due to the increasingly massive flow of information that is easily accessible via the internet, it is easier for adherents of Islam to understand his teachings better. It worries some parties about Islamic hegemony in Indonesian society (Setianingsih, 2016). In addition, contemporary media often display the ideology of liberalism and secularism. When compared with religious teachings, these two notions are like two different poles. Liberalism provides more excellent space for each individual. Philosophically, in liberalism, human has the right to act following what is desired, especially in freedom of thought (Kalingga, 2020). In addition, according to Masa (2020), secularism is an understanding that wants to reduce or even eliminate the influence of religion in human life because religion is considered an impediment to civilization and human logic. Secularism continues to be packaged in the form of modernization and globalization. Both ideologies are not on the same path as religion. The party that supports this concept will try mock believers as closed-minded people.

In addition, there is a connection between memes, social behaviour, and discourse in emerging social problems. Discourse has a relationship with social habits that circulate in society. The habit is fused and reconstructed in the linguistic aspect (Andriani, 2019). A meme is a social practice that distributes on social media, so memes are considered a form of discourse. Foucault (1972) asserts that discourse is not limited to a lexical context preserved in written form, but discourse can be seen more than as a view of life and the ideology a

group believes. Haryatmoko (2016) confirms that the elements that are the object of discourse study are not limited to only linguistic elements but can also go through elements outside of language. Therefore, critical discourse analysis is very reasonable to be used to examine the phenomenon of the use of memes that contain elements of Islamophobia because the discourse that corners certain groups is based on certain ideologies and beliefs. In addition, Fairclough formulates an analytical framework for critical discourse studies in several stages:

1. The macro-structure analysis examines a text's general meaning based on the topic.
2. Mesostructure analysis examines how the production and consumption phases of the discourse are distributed.
3. Microstructure analysis which observes the sentence level and its function.

By using this analytical model, it can be seen the discourse game used by contributors or meme makers in spreading the issue of Islamophobia.

3. RESEARCH METHODS
3.1 Research Settings
In this study, the researcher analyzed memes as the primary data dispatched by contributors to famous memetic websites. The website chosen was *9gag* because it was easier to access, and many active contributors send memes from diverse countries. The researcher chose memes on the site's homepage because they indicated that numerous people had accessed the meme. The researcher analyzed memes criticizing Islamic groups for witnessing the intention and meaning behind the meme.

3.2 Procedures
After curating several memes that possess elements of criticism and mockery against Muslims, the researcher organized these memes based on their function and visual elements. The analysis process initiates by analyzing the semiotic elements in the visual image of the meme to specify the relationship between the visual aspect and the ideological assumptions retained in the meme. In addition, researchers dissected the textual elements contained in memes to provide further explanations of how ideological concepts are represented by the language used in memes.

3.3 Analysis
The researcher believes Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model is appropriate for meme analysis. The researcher believes critical discourse analysis can explore meme content's explicit and implicit elements. Fairclough (2003) asserts that memes can be a medium to identify the application of discourse practices to explore meanings that circulate in social, cultural, and political environments. In addition, researchers apply several stages in the process of critical discourse analysis:

1. The researcher examined the visual aspects of the memes to describe the context.

2. The researcher examined the cohesion and coherence of the text or catchphrase contained in the meme. Then the researcher examines how this meme can be distributed on certain sites and how the audience responds.
3. The researcher examined how these memes are related to the issue of Islamophobia and social inequality.

4. RESULTS

In this section, the researcher demonstrated the results of the analysis of 5 meme formats that are often circulated and modified on *9gag*. The researcher described these memes in 3 phases of critical discourse analysis so that readers can identify discoveries from visual, structural, and social aspects.

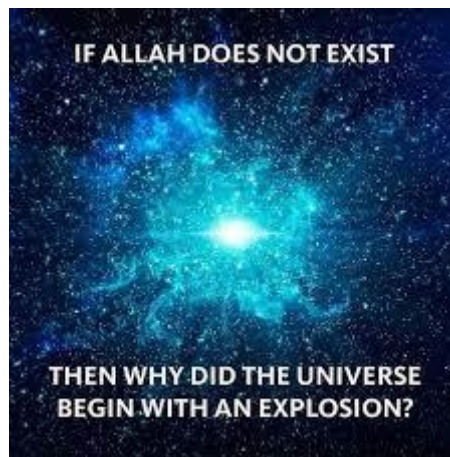### 4.1. Checkmate Atheist meme

Figure 3. A new format of The Checkmate Atheist meme utilized to mock the Moslem community. (Taken from 9gag.com)

The figure above illustrates a sarcastic expression utilized to justify religious arguments in a Checkmate meme. This meme is generally used to attempt to prove the existence of God. This meme is usually followed by a snippet of the phrase "Believers: 1, Atheists 0". Figure 3 shows the reproduction of the Checkmate Atheist meme model into a new, more modern form. However, this model has a distinguishable function, namely to give a sarcastic expression to the beliefs of Muslims. Based on the analysis of the visual aspect, it can be seen that the image that is the background of the meme is a cluster of galaxies or nebulae that emit light so bright as if it exploded. This image refers to the Big Bang theory, which explains that the universe was created from a big explosion 15 billion years ago (Linda & Mezhlumian, 1994). This theory is very favored among cosmologists and common people. However, this theory is not immediately accepted by religious people because the basic concept of the creation of the universe in each religion tends to refer to the intervention of transcendental power. However, lately, many hypotheses have tried to connect the big bang theory with one of the suras in the Koran (Anbia: 30 & Fussilat 11), which describes

exactly how the big bang theory happened (Baghirov , 2018; Jawaid 2021; Jallaluddin et al., 2021).

Based on the microstructural elements, the sentence in figure 3 illustrates a rhetorical question that does not need to be answered. The word "Allah" refers to the god in the Abrahamic faith in this context, Islam. Furthermore, the word "explosion" has no reference to its literal meaning but rather a satirical language repeatedly associated with the stereotype of Muslims as perpetrators of bomb terrors.

After observing the mesostructure, the researcher found a relationship pattern between the meme maker and the participants on the mimetic site, which pushed the meme to gain more upvotes in the international section. Most of this anonymous site's accounts agreed with the idea, and the researcher found that this post got 1,100 upvotes and only 163 downvotes. Most of these anonymous accounts responded by posting more offensive memes in the comments. However, several users tried to give different comments among the onslaught of negative comments. In the excerpts, U refers to users who post a comment on related memes.

> *"Actually, the big bang is mentioned in brief in Islam book, just like how scientists told"- U1*
> *"At the start, Islam was actually very progressive in the ways of science, while others were busy with burning witches and inquisitions" - U2*

The U1 stated the word "*Islam Book*", which refers to the Holy Quran. The U1 acknowledges that there is a description of the universe's creation that resembles the big bang theory. Moreover, the U2 argued that in the past era Muslim community was advanced in science and technology. Until now, this meme continues to be distributed on memetic sites and other social media sites. However, the researcher found that the post would obtain many downvotes if reposted in the Muslim country section.

4.2 Roses are red, Violets are blue meme

Figure 4. The new format of Roses are red, violets are blue meme (Taken from 9gag.com)

The meme above is an evolution of the *Roses are red, and violets are blue, combining* catchphrases from other memes. The *Knowyourmeme* website exemplifies that the catchphrase is taken from a 16th-century piece of Edmund Spenser's poem entitled The Faerie Queene. This poem contained a sentimental meaning that expressed the love message of a man who sees a fairy woman. However, in its use in the memetic community, the sentimental element is omitted to enclose an element of commentary, such as the following sentence, *roses are red, violets are blue, and a face like yours belongs in the zoo*

In addition, this meme is categorized as a *metameme* because this meme contained memes and conveyed other memes as a whole. Another meme included in the meme in figure 4 is the Memri TV meme. Memri TV memes are snippets of Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) news broadcasts that usually translate Middle Eastern media into English. The meme creators intentionally cleansed the translation of the cut scene to make absurd comedy and a translation that was different from the original context. In the visual element, this meme shows a man who is assumed to be a Muslim arguing with someone. Based on that person's gesture, his hand pointed in one direction, indicating they were in a heated discussion.

In addition, based on the textual structure, this meme consists of 2 rhymes. Roses and Violets refer to flowers and do not describe any context other than as opening rhymes. Then at the bottom of the picture, there is a sentence that was purposely edited as if the man in the picture seems to be saying.

1. By Allah, behave yourself (Imperative)
2. I will give you a taste of my shoe.

The first sentence is imperative, referring to the warning one wants to give the other person. The second sentence threatens the other person; if one cannot keep his behaviour, the speaker will kick him in the face, illustrated in the snippet of the phrase "*a taste of my shoe*". The language style used in the second sentence is the euphemism of kicking the face.

The purpose of using this meme is not only to describe the image of Muslims who are easily angry but also to illustrate that Muslims tend to involve verbal abuse in civilized discussions. In addition, this meme is also used by contributors in responding to flawed and absurd comments from other users.

The researcher found that this meme got 7200 upvotes with 469 downvotes. Many comments from users who claim Islam is a religion full of violence. Some users find this funny regardless of the religious context in which this meme contains. In addition, many comments explained that the information obtained from the internet does not necessarily explain the phenomenon accurately and needs to be validated.

"Religion of peace." - U3
"I prefer a taste of a shoe than a taste of a bomb. No complaints here." - U4
"Islam is a religion of peace, ISIS or anyone who throws bombs and shit isn´t a Muslim it clearly says Muslims aren´t allowed and shouldn´t kill people. Not even a single religion tells its people to kill people. Ffs people understand this without hating please." - U5
"This has nothing to do with religion itself ffs" -U6

> *"Ok, I don't agree with grouping all Islamic individuals into people that are violent. However, it bothers me that I'm seeing so many comments saying that Isis is not Islamic. They believe that they are following Islam, so saying they are not does nothing to solve the issue. You must accept that there are good Muslims and bad Muslims, they're just the bad ones." - U7*

4.3 What is the cure for such disorders meme

Figure 5. MEMRI TV meme about a parental method of educating children (taken from *9gag.com*)

Figure 5, demonstrates a man who wears middle eastern attire giving a description of parenting. This meme is a mistranslation of *MEMRI TV* channel. He was a Kuwaiti scholar who gave a sermon on *IQRA TV*, Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of the emergence of this meme, it was often associated with the Arabic patriarchal culture, which was assumed to legalize violence against married couples and was also often associated with domestic violence. The user utilized this meme when responding to an immoral act that requires firm action. Related to this, a considerable number of people have slanted views and doubts about the teachings of Islam, which again confuses the internet society. Based on a translation from MEMRI TV, this Kuwaiti cleric explained how Islam treats psychological disorders in marriage. He talked about husbands who suffer from sadism and wives who suffer from masochism. According to him, husband and wife must build an understanding to provide a satisfactory solution. He added that the correct solution based on consultations with psychiatrists was beatings. He said that if the wife has masochism, the husband is encouraged to beat her in a certain way so that the problem is solved fairly. The Kuwaiti statement reaped the pros and cons, and the truth still requires to be validated.

Based on textual elements, the catchphrase listed at the bottom of the image contains an interrogative sentence along with the answer. The word "*such*" from the sentence "*what is the cure for such disorders*" has an unclear context, so it is remarkably effortless to be spun into something comical or nonsensical. The word "Beatings" refers to physical violence that is carried out to teach lessons for mistakes made to teach someone. However, combined with the phrase at the top of the picture, "*such disorders*" refers to damage to a device, namely the

TV remote. The general habit of regular people is that when certain electronic devices are damaged or disturbed, the user tends to hit the tool in the hope that it will return to its original state after being hit. So that the purpose of this meme is not to demean certain people but to describe common problems that occur in society when using electronic devices. However, because the basis of this meme is to vilify certain groups, the responses from users tend to associate this meme with Muslims.

This meme was getting quite a lot of engagement and was frequently reproduced by internet users on 9gag. One post was even able to get more than 20000 upvotes because this meme is very easy to adopt to diverse social contexts and is used to respond to news or indecent actions that are exposed to the media. However, the comments were still dominated by abuses that corner the teachings of Islam as the religion of brutality.

> *"What the actually fuck is wrong with those people I'm a Muslim living in Norway I have read the Quran like 1000 times newer have I seen a place where saying hit people the Quran does actually literally say don't hit people wtf is wrong with these motherfuckers"* – U8.
>
> *"I'm from Indonesia and I think that's brutal."* – U9.
>
> *"Looks to me as if beatings don't help with that. Look at the people who still do these things although they know there is punishment in form of beating for it. I'm just saying MAYBE violence is not the answer. And violence from parents against kids is never ever the answer. They shall have respect, not fear."* – U10.

The researcher witnessed that not all users condemn all Muslims based on the memes posted. Some users assume the cleric is inappropriate in explaining the issue in the meme and ought to be reconsidered.

4.4 Wait what meme

Figure 6. Meme about sexual abuse in a vocational institution (taken from *9gag.com*)

Figure 6 demonstrates two men who wore the typical attire of Muslims shaking hands. On the left side was a middle-aged older man whose hands were kissed by a younger man. It can be assumed that the man on the right side of the picture is the teacher while the man kissing the hand is the student. The tradition of kissing hands is commonplace in Indonesia as a form of respect for older people. Both men and women do this to people they respect in the family or educational environment. This picture has a cultural context of mutual respect in the Islamic community in Indonesia. However, when a few phrases were added in the form of a dialogue, it modified the context of the image.

> *Teachers: I beg your forgiveness Kyai. I made a mistake sleeping with 14 students.*
> *Kyai: Savage! Where are those women?*
> *Teacher: Women?*
> *Kyai: What!*

Kyai is a term for people considered experts in Islamic religious knowledge in the Javanese tribal community. The textual element of the dialogue depicts a madrasa teacher begging for forgiveness from the *Kyai*. The first dialogue was composed of two complete sentences, but the reference to the word "student" was still unclear by gender, so in the second sentence, the *Kyai* assumed that the victim was a woman. In the dialogue in the second panel, the teacher was confused by the word "*women*" which refers to the reference that the victim in the second panel is a man, so *Kyai* responded with the word "*What*?". The dialogue in panel 2 shows several ellipses in interrogative sentences, which are commonly used in everyday conversation.

Regarding conditions in Indonesia, recently, in 2021, there have been many immoral violations in Islamic educational institutions where the perpetrator were teachers. This meme is a form of criticism of Islamic educational institutions that are supposed to ensure the safety of students while studying at their institutions. There are many pros and cons related to the case, but this does not necessarily indicate that Islamic teachings teach these violations.

5. DISCUSSION
5.1 Islamic Society prone to be a target of hateful discourse

As previously explained, since the incident at the *World Trade Center* in 2001, Muslims have become the target of anger from the world community because of the terrorists' affiliation with Islam. This hatred is accompanied by society's false assumptions about religious practices and traditions in the Islamic religion. With the widespread use of social media, Islamophobia has evolved into *cyber-Islamophobia* (Aguilera-Carnererro and Azeez, 2016). In addition, many people do not understand Islamic teachings' terms and philosophical views and tend to associate them with things that have absolutely nothing to do with, for example, the accusation that Islam permits the rape of minors by twisting the meaning of the Holy Quran surah At-Talaq verse 4 which discusses divorce law. This is an attempt to vilify through memes and discourses disseminated through social media. Muslims are different from others who are very submissive to teachings that have not changed during the last 1400 years and will not alter the teachings that the last prophet brought. For

Muslims, following sharia law is very consequential, but for some people, this practice is considered bizarre in the modern era. Islam does not tolerate crimes that harm society and provides harsh punishments for the perpetrators to set an example in society (Brown, 2017). On the other hand, people who are outside Islam consider this punishment very inhumane. Therefore, it responded that Islam is a harsh religion and does not uphold human rights.

In Indonesia, where Muslims dominate, the issue of Islamophobia is not spared. It was due to many terror incidents and racial conflicts concerning Muslims as the majority religion in the late 90s. That incident was often associated with the end of the Suharto regime, which eventually gave birth to many intolerant Islamic sects and sectarian conflicts (Abuza, 2006). This conflict was not only in the spotlight of the local media; even the international media also highlighted this incident due to the social inequality that occurred at that time (Barton, 2017). Ahead of the 2019 election, multiple controversial cases related to religion exist. For example, the prohibition of the construction of houses of worship by a group of residents who claim to be Muslim. In addition, many hashtags on social media deliberately made a dispute about the term "do not choose an infidel leader." It is unfortunate because so many people use religious discourse for political purposes. Until now, considerable people and netizens have begun to be sensitive to public figures peddling religious verses for political pursuits.

So that there are names or nicknames intended for Muslims who are only religious by surviving and looking for food; the name is *Kadrun* which is a blending of the words in Bahasa Indonesia *kadal* and *gurun* (*lizard* and *desert)*. For netizens, *Kadrun* is an individual who embraces Islam but is not literate and opportunistic. In addition, the nickname *Kadrun* is also assigned to someone who uses Islamic attributes in everyday life. In the 9gag community, they dub Muslims as sand-people. Thus, this point of view is often disseminated on social media so that it is attached and used in social and metacommunity.

5.2 Meme as Dissemination Motive

Meme aficionados have various motives in the process of disseminating ideas. First, the researcher found that meme creators tended to follow the hottest issues and attempt to reproduce the discourse into memes. Many meme creators do not know the real context of discourse and rush to disperse certain issues to avoid missing the trend. It causes numerous discourses to spread through memes not accompanied by accurate validation of information because they consider that memes do not require further research. In addition, memes are also created because there is an urge to misbehave (Jabbar, 2019) and researchers see this tendency as remarkably common in anonymous forums. They were immensely satisfied when the audience was provoked when they saw their posts. This behavior has evolved from creating online negative sentiments to trolling and memes as subversive and denigrative humor (Ibrahim, 2022). Muslims are people who are especially firm in protecting their religious teachings so that they become leisurely and fun targets for cyber trolls. Cyber trolls are people who willfully interfere with and threaten one's communication and dignity in cyberspace (Shin 2008). Social media utilized a novel way of expressing aggression and violence that is exclusively found online in cyberspace (Kumar & Bhat, 2022). In Indonesia, certain popular social media account tends to reveal or publish gossip about a specific individual. The behavior generates a detrimental effect on personal lives and becomes an

easy victim of cyberbullying (Mao, 2022). Again, anonymity makes these perpetrators feel that there is no precise code of ethics that applies on the internet, so for them, there is no need to patrol the morals and dignity of others. Moreover, Islamophobia is considered a form of neoliberalism because there are no clear limits on freedom of speech, so everyone feels entitled and comfortable expressing their opinion without concerning about the social consequences (Hokka, 2021). So, the researcher also concludes that unclear regulations and rules in cyberspace contribute to increasing discourses that corner others.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher found that memes with an Islamophobic discourse often portray the attributes of Muslims in their visual aspect, and then the context of the image is altered according to the motives of the meme maker.

Textually, memes with Islamophobia discourse often include provocative sentences that satirize the teachings of Islam accompanied by words that collocate with aspects of *terror*, *terrorism*, *radical*, *extremism*, *violence*, and *abuse*. Those discourse influences opinions and damages the image of the target meme, and based on demographics and dissemination methods, this method is remarkably efficacious, as evidenced by a large amount of support obtained on anonymous sites. In addition, this meme was distributed in anonymous forums, where this forum ensures the privacy of the meme's sender without worrying that his insults in cyberspace will affect the real world. In addition, the researcher found that memes provided false information and propaganda to control public opinion to hate Islamic groups. thus, observation and validation in accessing information in cyberspace need to be prioritized.

This study delivers practical information that memes, apart from being an entertainment source, can be a sufficient propaganda instrument in influencing opinions and shaping the image of certain groups so that this multimodal approach can be operated for better purposes in the future to enforce literacy in the community. In addition, this research definitely cannot be separated from shortcomings, and the researcher admits that he has not made in-depth observations by scrutinizing how Muslims respond to these memes and the extent to which these memes reproduce. Therefore, future research can further examine how the public responds to memes containing Islamophobic discourses to explain the phenomenon of meme dissemination more comprehensively.

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