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## Women issuing fatwas: female Islamic scholars and community-based authority in Java, Indonesia

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### Citation

Ismah, N. (2023, January 12). *Women issuing fatwas: female Islamic scholars and community-based authority in Java, Indonesia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3505634>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## CHAPTER FIVE



### **Amplifying Authority: Female Ulama and Mass-mediated Fatwas in the Public Sphere of Indonesia**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I discussed KUPI, its network, and fatwas. I argued that KUPI is a social movement in which Muslim women build solidarity among activists, scholars, and women at the grassroots. These connective structures have strengthened Indonesian women's Islamic authority. In this movement, female ulama use fatwas as an instrument not only to exert the authority of female ulama but also as a space for women to creatively apply the framework formulated by KUPI in daily life, creating legal decisions that are more sensitive toward gender equality. In the context of this movement, fatwas are articulated through formal and methodological expressions in both oral and written formats because they are dealing with authorities of ulamanness and fatwa institutions that have been established for a long time and are considered as the authoritative fatwa-givers by the Indonesian Muslim public.

This chapter explores the impact of changes in the public sphere and media on the articulation of fatwas issued by female ulama. I will deal particularly with the shift from fatwas as an oral form of communication towards a form of written communication that is published and mediatized for the wider Muslim public through magazines. As I explained in previous chapters, in the context of traditional oral forms of communication, the spaces in which fatwas are produced are relatively clear and contained. By

this I mean that the formulation of fatwas takes place in social and institutional spaces that are well known and intimate, and that they are defined by relatively clear boundaries. These are spaces characterized by face-to-face contact between the ulama and the *mustafti*. The ulama know the audiences, the local norms, and the conflicts within the *jamaah*. They also know the risk and the opportunities. Fatwas are still mediated using traditional means of communication such as personal communication between the female ulama and *jamaah*, question-and-answer forums in a *majelis taklim*, or written as a formal document intended for documentation. However, when fatwas are written in magazines or distributed through online media such as websites or social media platforms, they become mass mediated and enter the public sphere. These mass-mediated forms provide an opportunity because they allow women scholars to increase the spread of progressive fatwas. However, they also constitute a challenge because the mass-mediated public sphere is dominated by conservative, black-and-white messages, which generally spread more easily among a heterogeneous audience.

For this perspective on the public sphere, I chose women's Islamic magazines as my focus because the network of female ulama from Rahima and KUPI that I have studied is quite active in producing and publishing fatwas in magazines. They are less active in electronic media such as radio and television. I am going to examine the extent to which print media provide space for female ulama to issue progressive opinions and fatwas. I will concentrate my analysis on the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) sections of three publications. The first publication is an NGO-based publication. The network of women scholars and activists I've studied use print media published by Rahima to keep up to date with Islamic knowledge and reach their audiences. Rahima publishes both paper-based and online bulletins, titled *Swara Rahima* and *Swararahima.com* respectively. The second publication is *AuleeA*, a semi-commercial magazine published by the provincial board of Fatayat NU in East Java. I chose *AuleeA*

because it is grounded, ideologically, in Islamic traditionalism and NU, and thus has similar cultural roots to the network of female ulama that is central to this dissertation. The third case is *NooR* magazine. This publication illustrates a commercial enterprise that may have the largest impact of the three on Muslim readers in Indonesian society.



FIGURE 15: The cover pages of the three magazines, namely *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR*. Photos by the author.

The Q&A format is indeed commonly used by Indonesian publications, either in print or online, for displaying questions and answers on daily problems related to Islamic legal judgements. However, not every publication provides a space for female ulama to give answers. Apart from the fact that *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR* magazines employ a Q&A format, three other reasons led me to select these three magazines. Firstly, the Q&A sections of the magazines have employed female ulama as resource persons. For each of the three cases, I selected one female ulama who has featured extensively to analyse how their fatwas are constructed and communicated. Secondly, the appointed female ulama are part of the Rahima or KUPI network. Hindun Anisah, who is the resource person of *Swara Rahima*, is an associate member of Rahima. Bashirotul Hidayah, from *AuleeA*'s Q&A section has joined the alumni group of KUPI participants in Jombang, East Java, even though she did not attend the conference. Badriyah Fayumi, who manages *NooR*'s Q&A section, is the chairperson

of an associate committee of KUPI as well as a member of the advisory board of *Rahima*. Thirdly, the three magazines target audiences that differ in their education and social position. As gauged from the topics and terms used in the Q&A sections, the readers of *Swara Rahima* and *AuleeA* are religiously educated. However, the readers of *Swara Rahima* are very much connected, obviously, to the *Rahima* network, while the readers of *AuleeA* constitute a broader group. The readership of *NooR* is broader still. Their audience is larger yet also generally less informed, and less scholarly in background.

The central questions in this chapter are: What are the strategies of female ulama talking to different audiences on different dilemmas? What do female ulama take into account when formulating fatwas for *NooR* compared to *Swara Rahima*, and *AuleeA*? Why does it matter for them to talk to the readers of a commercial outlet versus the readers of a tightly networked NGO? How do they articulate their fatwas, in terms of the rules they set, and the language and styles they use? What space does the Q&A format give to female ulama to exercise their juristic authority? How do they maximize their Islamic authority and progressive messages in the Indonesian public sphere in which conservative messages are generally stronger and more mainstream? To answer these questions, I will focus my analysis on the interaction between three key agents in the process of mediated fatwa production, namely the audience (in particular people who send in questions but also the broader audience), the resource persons or female ulama who respond to the questions, and the editorial staff of the magazines. These three groups all have an influential yet different role in the production of media fatwas, and their relationship is constantly being renegotiated.

I begin this chapter with an explanation of the socio-political context of Muslim women in the public sphere of Indonesia. As with Muslim-majority countries and communities elsewhere, there has been a shift in the Indonesian Muslim public under the influence of the development of media technology. Religious

messages move from one medium to another medium and are displayed openly, which allows anyone to access and utilize these messages. These open and accessible forms of communication in combination with other factors have led to the fragmentation and contestation of religious authority (Eickelman and Anderson 1999, 14). The chapter will then look at the history of the use of the Q&A format, especially in the format of written fatwas published in magazines and the trend of questions and answers. In the next section, I will study the historical context of Islamic women's lifestyle magazines in Indonesia and introduce the three publications, *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR*, in more detail. This section will be followed by a structural analysis of the way in which questions and answers are formulated in the Q&A sections, including the language, format, style, images used, how female ulama are portrayed, and the interaction between audience, resource persons, and editorial staff in the section. My analysis is mainly based on the texts appearing in the Q&A sections of the magazines. I triangulate evidence with the help of interview data, focusing again on audience, resource persons, and editorial staff. The chapter will end by discussing the strategies of female ulama in producing and amplifying progressive fatwas in the dominant conservative Muslim public sphere.

### **Muslim Women in the Public Sphere of Indonesia**

The development of media technology and mass-mediatization has transformed the Muslim public sphere in Indonesia as much as everywhere else in the Muslim world. Media have become a tool for anyone to speak about Islam and convey their message to the Muslim public. As a result, religious authority has become fragmented in the sense that it is no longer the monopoly of those considered to have classical religious knowledge, namely ulama who lead *jamaah* and religious educational institutions such as *pesantren*. Rather, religious authority is scattered and can be exerted by anyone with access to the media and technology, as long as there is an audience. Likewise, people who want to learn

about Islam do not need to meet directly or learn from reputable sources of knowledge. Media and technology provide easy access (Burhanudin 2010; Eickelman and Anderson 1999). Thus, the requirement for gaining religious authority and learning about religion in the era of media and technology is no longer necessarily profound religious knowledge, but rather one's ability to use media and technology as a means to mediate this knowledge. This change certainly provides a wide opportunity for women to also speak about Islam and gain religious authority as they were previously denied this right because of their gender.

Mass mediatization has had divergent outcomes for the agency and authority of women in Islam, however. The success of the Salafi movement in reaching new audiences online is also an outcome, partly, of mass mediatization. Indonesian women preachers help the movement with their writing on the website *said.net* (Nielsen 2020). Eickelman and Piscatori (1996, 98-9) set out two conditions that increase the visibility of women's roles. Firstly, women have taken up significant roles in modern society in the areas that were previously the privilege of men. Some studies on Muslim women in the Indonesian public sphere have suggested active roles of women as Muslim activists (Rinaldo 2013), Qur'anic reciters using their voices in Qur'anic recitation competitions (Rasmussen 2010), and *nyai* who live in the restrictive circumstances of a *pesantren* and are nevertheless able to become political party members (Srimulyani 2012). These roles are increasingly open to women, thanks to the development of media, including print media, where women can appear in the public space through representational texts and can reach a wider audience compared to the roles that depend on face-to-face media such as preaching in a *majelis taklim*. Secondly, through their social networks, women can act as intermediaries of social relations and channels of information and communication. Women in Salafi websites, for example, are able to "draw on their identities as women to deliver messages supporting patriarchy that are persuasive because they are in

apparent opposition to the messenger's self-interest" (Nielson 2020, 64)

In this chapter, I attempt to further understand the relationship between religious authority, media, and the public sphere, particularly with regard to the role of women as fatwa-givers. The term *public sphere* has its origins in European historiography, in connection to the formation of the European bourgeoisie in the modern era. It was later developed to not only refer to specific temporal and geographic features. The public sphere has been defined by Hurvitz as "a social space in which discursive interactions between large segments of the public take place" (Hurvitz 2002, 17). The concept may help us to "understand the emergence of new arenas of debate that are not fully controlled by the postcolonial nation-state and generate shared ideas, sentiments, and moods among people who do not necessarily have the same cultural or ethnic background" (Meyer and Moors 2006, 4).

I am interested in the mediatization of religion but in a very specific form of mass-mediated communication, namely printed fatwas and the role of women in their production. The practice of producing fatwas, which is usually carried out through face-to-face communication, turns into a written conversation containing questions and answers on a religious issue and becomes widely distributed. Fatwas have been mass-mediated and become a subject of public conversation in the public sphere. Muslim audiences can also access fatwas through mass media, including fatwas that are issued by female ulama. In this development, on the one hand, mass media provide space for women to exercise their authority as Islamic sources in the same way as male ulama. Women can give their fatwas individually and the fatwas might be considered legitimate by some even without the support of a fatwa organization. But on the other hand, the use of media requires different individual skills related to media use and styles of delivering messages through writing. I am intrigued by the questions of how the use of media impacts existing modes of



fatwa mediation, what constraints and problems the transition leads to, to what extent female ulama are able to utilize the new modes of transmission to address their audiences, and the implication of these mass-mediated fatwas with regard to questions of female religious authority.

In addition, mass mediatization is signalled by the emergence of public interpretive practices between “the high textualism of ulama marked by the super-literacy of an interpretive elite” and “participative expressions of the non-literate sometimes identified as ‘folk’ Islam”, different modes of Islamic interpretation which are “textual analysis that probes for meaning” and “a more behaviourist analysis that probes for social forces”, and contemporary Islamist movements that occupy and expand Muslim publics and make them become polarized (Anderson 1999, 46). The progressive group of female ulama I study are competing for influence among media users and actively contest ideas propagated by conservative groups. They contest, for instance, the attempt by conservatives to limit women’s activities to the private sphere on the basis of concepts like *hijrah* (emigration), understood as “religious transformation in order to become better Muslims by acknowledging their nature granted by God” and *kodrat* (inherent nature) (Nisa 2019, 445). Thus, this chapter will not only analyse the fatwas by women, but it will also examine how female ulama navigate this broader, partly hostile, public sphere.

### **Question-and-Answer Format of Fatwas in Magazines**

Fatwas have had a Q&A format since the Prophet’s time. The fatwa was originally delivered orally, but gradually the format also employed handwriting, namely *ruq’ah* (chit). Muftis differed in their preference for oral or written fatwa-giving. For example, Shaykh Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Ali al-Shirazi (1083) preferred to write down the question he received with the answer on the same piece of paper. Subsequently, there were instructions regarding *ruq’ah*, such as that the writing should be clear and

should not leave a blank space where the *mustafti* can manipulate the fatwa. These instructions gradually transformed oral *istifta*, making it a very technical process (Masud 2009, 345-6). In the early 1700s, the Q&A fatwa was reproduced in print in the Middle East, which made it widely available, and eventually opened these conversations up to the masses (Petersen 1997).

Mass mediatization has allowed new forms of communication between religious authorities and lay Muslims; and as such, has enabled specific modes of reform. Mass-mediated fatwas have changed the relationship between religious authorities and their followers. Jakob Skovgaard Petersen (1997, 374) argues: "With the spread of literacy and the printed word muftis have taken part in a public discourse over Islam. Many of their fatwas have been fixed in print, been referred to, debated, and opposed. They have reached far beyond the circle of ulama and it is general public rather than the ulama who have determined which fatwas were to survive, and what they would be used for." The Q&A format implies two-way communication. Religious authorities spread their views by formulating written fatwas. Ordinary believers in turn approach these authorities by sending questions, thereby also influencing discourses and debates. Muslims who are among those who do not actively send questions may feel that the discussions they read refer to experiences and problems that they too have. Thus, this mass-mediated form is successful precisely because it allows different kinds of bonds between Muslims beyond their own particular localities.

The use of print media and the Q&A format have been recorded in the history of Islamic knowledge transmission and communication between religious authorities and ordinary Muslims. One example is the Islamic reformist movement around the turn of the twentieth century that made use of this particular way of communication by publishing *Al-'Urwa al-Wutqa* and *al-Manar*. These magazines were leading publications of the reformers of Islamic law in the era when use of the printing press for producing religious texts was challenging the ulama's

authority as guardians and transmitters of Islamic knowledge (Yasushi 2006, 9-10). *Al-Manar* magazine was first published in 1898 in Cairo by Muhammad Rashid Rida as a weekly magazine, and subsequently became a monthly magazine. *Al-Manar* was distributed to various Muslim countries and communities, such as Syria, Turkey, Chinese Muslims, and in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Rida published fatwas in *al-Manar* from 1903 onwards, first under the title "Question and Fatwa", and later under the title "Fatwas of *al-Manar*" (Yasushi 2006, 15-6). The Q&A format enabled these reformers, firstly, to give lay Muslims from all over the world access to religious debates by allowing them to send in a wide range of questions. Secondly, the Q&A printed format created a new way for producing fatwas adopted by Rida from his teacher, Muhammad Abduh, namely by *ijtihad*. Rida restored the practice of *ijtihad* as a response to everyday religious problems and in contrast to the *taqlid* tradition in the fatwa-making, which had been the norm for a very long time.

The use of print media as a means for disseminating Islamic legal opinions in the Malay-Indonesian world dates from the beginning of the 1900s. Azra (2006, 143, 153, 155) has noted that two local journals, namely *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*, were inspired by *al-Manar* in spreading Islamic reformism in Malay-Indonesia through print media.<sup>140</sup> Although he did not remark specifically on the influence of the Q&A format, it can be seen that *al-Munir*, for example, was used by religious authorities as a means for communicating messages to Muslim readers. *Al-Munir* published Islamic legal opinions through articles on subjects related to everyday Muslim practices, such as photography and the wearing of neckties and hats. *Al-Munir* told its readers that there is nothing in the Qur'an and hadith that conflicts with those practices. Another historical example of the use of media to report fatwas is *Islam Bergerak*. This is one of the newspapers founded

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140 *Al-Imam* was published by Shaykh Muhammad Tahir bin Jalaluddin al-Minangkabawi al-Azhari, who was born in Kototuo, Bukittinggi in West Sumatra in 1869, during his stay in Singapore in 1906. He collaborated with other ulama from Minangkabau, West Sumatra. *Al-Munir* was published in Padang in 1911 (Azra 2006, 146-153).

by Hadji Misbach (1876-1926), a leading leftist Muslim activist of Sarekat Islam. *Islam Bergerak* employed the Q&A format as shown by its issue on 10 June 1917. A reader sent a question about “eating pork when one was starving and could not find any other food to eat.” *Tanja Djawab*, the Q&A column in *Islam Bergerak*, “offered readers the opportunity to send questions to the editors to get an explanation on issues ranging from religious practices to sophisticated subjects of theology and philosophy” (Burhanudin 2010, 55).

The Q&A format has shaped a new mode of presenting Islam and religious authority that speaks to “the tastes, convictions, and conventions of the public”, as stated by Jakob Skovgaard Petersen (1997, 374): “Although respectful of the scholarly tradition, the new Muslim literate public does not know this tradition well. At the same time, this public has been influenced by numerous other factors and has formed ideas and values which it will strive to accommodate with tradition. Moreover, the muftis themselves are influenced by the public discourse and when they in turn strive to influence this discourse by referring to the classical sources, they have to take the tastes, convictions, and conventions of the public into consideration”. To meet the tastes, convictions, and conventions of the public, the presentation of fatwas may be reshaped through certain genres, involving styles and structures that are suitable for a broad Muslim public. The masters of these genres are not necessarily, or at least not only, religious scholars. They are, first and foremost, media professionals, including for instance editorial board members.

The Q&A format on religious topics has been adopted by Muslims in Indonesia, both on the conservative and on the progressive sides, in different media, including print, audio-visual media, and the internet. New media do not usually employ the term fatwa in the titles of these columns. Besides *Tanya Jawab*, various media use *Kolom Agama* (Religious Column), *Halaqah*, *Kolom Tanya Jawab* (Questions and Answers Column), *Tanya Jawab Agama* (Religious Questions and Answers), *Tanya*

*Jawab Islam* (Islamic Questions and Answers) and *Anda Bertanya, Ustadh Menjawab* (You ask, the Teacher answers) (Sunarwoto 2012, 247-50). NU Online uses the name Bahtsul Masail to refer to the fatwa section on its website. Every question posted begins by addressing Redaksi NU Online (NU Online editorial boards), instead of the name of the resource person who will give the answer. The resource persons who answer the questions can be different for each question. As far as I have observed, the resource persons at NU Online are all men. I will not be looking at the media run by an Islamic male-based organization. Rather, I intend to examine how this Q&A format has been used by female ulama in magazines and websites and what formats these women have used to exercise their religious authority.

### **Women's Islamic Magazines in Indonesia: The Historical Context**

Women's Islamic magazines first emerged in the late colonial period, which was also the period that saw the emergence of Islamic mass associations and their mouthpieces. One of the earliest serial publications that addressed women was *Suara Aisyiyah* (The Voice of Aisyiyah), printed first in 1926 by Aisyiyah, the women's wing of the Indonesian reformist Muslim association Muhammadiyah. From the early decades through to the 1990s, the content of *Suara Aisyiyah* represented female Islamic leadership and authority in Indonesia. For example, the magazine displayed pictures of the leader or preacher on stage, communicating to an audience using a microphone. In addition, *Suara Aisyiyah's* early editions also functioned as a centre of organizational information for its members regarding Aisyiyah's activities, meetings, and programmes (Ramadhini and Kloos 2017). The portrayal of women in *Suara Aisyiyah* that showed female emancipation resembled the depiction of women in Indonesian women's commercial magazines published in the beginning of the twentieth century, such as *Isteri-Soesila* (subtitled *Madjalah Soesila Taman Moeslimah / Women's garden*

*etiquette magazine*), published by Tjahaja Soerakarta in Malang from 1924, and *Alsjarq* magazine, published by Djatilan in Padang from 1925. “Commonly the discussions that appeared in Indonesian women’s magazines were about education and learning – two aspects that became the most important needs for Indonesian women to fight for their right further” (Mahayana 2003).

However, an important shift occurred at the beginning of the New Order (Orde Baru). The New Order regime came with a particular gender ideology, which was reinforced by establishing several state-controlled organizations such as Dharma Wanita (Women’s Service, the organization for the wives of civil servants) and Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK, Family Welfare Guidance) as well as through mass media, especially television and newspapers (Anwar 2004, Robinson 2009). Susan Blackburn (2004, 9) has explained that “state gender ideology refers to the assumptions about gender on which the state acts and the way it attempts to influence the construction of gender in society”. One of the concepts linked to gender ideology endorsed by the state was *kodrat*, or inherent nature, for men and women, distinguishing between the roles of men as primary breadwinners and women as housewives. The regime used the concept of *kodrat* to propagate social and political relations based on the image of *ibu* (mother) and *bapak* (father), with their gender expectations aligned with what Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis (1987) refers to as *ibuism*, a concept developed by Julia Suryakusuma (2011) into *state ibuism*. *Kodrat*, according to Nancy Smith-Hefner (2019, 84), is “an invented tradition introduced to the archipelago by Dutch authorities only in the nineteenth century.” *State ibuism* was based on a neo-*priyayi* ideal that placed the family at the foundation of the state (*asas keluarga*).<sup>141</sup>

141 In post-revolutionary Indonesia the term ‘neo-*priyayi*’ refers to “the officialdom of the new state; the ‘neo priyayi’ strata was most often identified with ‘the Javanese-aristocrat-stream. The term ‘neo priyayi’, in fact, was not far from ... to describe the old-fashioned, the reactionary, the inward-looking, the ‘Eastern’, in culture, administration, and politics—the *ningrat*” (Mrazek and Anderson 1994, 408).

The state propagation of *ibuisism* had implications for the ways in which the mass media portrayed women, especially in the popular women's magazines. Instead of driving women to play active roles in politics, the popular women's magazines that emerged during the New Order underpinned the Suharto regime's constant efforts to shape "an image of a stable, harmonious, prosperous society built on a foundation of moral, apolitical, middle-class families" (Brenner 1999). *Femina*, *Kartini*, and *Sarinah* were among the popular New Order magazines. *Femina* was first published on 18 September 1972 by Femina Group, whose shares are mostly owned by the Alisyahbana family, relatives of the prominent Indonesian writer Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana. Since the beginning, *Femina* tried to attract high-class and well-educated female readers, some of whom were used to reading women's magazines in foreign languages. Featuring cuisine and fashion, the magazine provided a food test kitchen, photo studio, and sewing room (Febri 2013, Femina 2021). *Femina*'s success was followed by other press companies that published similar magazines, such as *Kartini*, published by former *Femina* agent, Lukman Umar, from 1974 and *Sarinah* from 1982 (Vida 2011).

Besides secular women's magazines, Islamic women's magazines appeared particularly at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with the emergence of a new field of lifestyle media aimed at Muslim readers (Lewis 2010).<sup>142</sup> Large publishing groups started to see pious Muslims as a potential market in search of "Islamic products". This growing spiritual marketplace led to the "commodification of Islam". Greg Fealy (2008, 16-17) defines this as "in effect, the commercialization of Islam or the turning of faith and its symbols into a commodity capable of being bought and sold for profit". The first Indonesian popular Muslim women's magazine was *Amanah* ("Mandate"), published since 1986 by *Kartini* magazine publishing group. This magazine

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142 It was preceded by the Islamic revival in the late 1970s.



addressed audiences of Islamic families and is believed to be the pioneer of a light, popular, and lively Islamic press with a strong commercial orientation. Only one-third of *Amanah's* content consisted of articles on Islamic teachings, while the rest was made up of popular articles (Zaini 2014, Ramadhini and Kloos 2017). In addition to Islamic commercial publications, Islamic women's magazines emerged that were tied to mass Muslim organizations. Unlike the first category, which consists of purely commercial magazines, organization-based magazines were intended to be organizational mouthpieces. Later, some of these magazines turned into semi-commercial publications. An example of this category is *AuleeA* magazine, published by the provincial board of Fatayat NU in East Java.

The third category discussed in this chapter consists of non-commercial publications by NGOs, including magazines and newsletters. One example is the newsletter published by Kalyanamitra, the second earliest Indonesian women's NGO established during the New Order in 1985. In the early period, Kalyanamitra published a newsletter called *Mitra Media* and a bulletin named *Dongbret*, which was printed in the form of an illustrative story supplement so that readers could easily understand the messages. However, in 1994, when *Tempo* and *DeTik* magazines were banned by the government, the publication of *Mitra Media* was also prohibited (Kalyanamitra 2016).

## **Content Analysis: Fatwas through the Question and Answer (Q&A) Format**

### ***NGO-Based Publication: Swara Rahima***

Rahima started publishing *Swara Rahima* as a quarterly magazine and its online version *Swararahima.or.id* in 2001. Besides publishing books related to the themes of Islam, gender equality and justice, women's rights, and female ulama, Rahima also produces modules/educational series. More than fifty-two issues of *Swara Rahima* and its supplements discuss various



topics such as marriage and family, reproductive health and rights, and contemporary themes that have a strong relationship with gender and Islam, such as female ulama and environmental management. In 2017, the website was revamped under a new address, *Swararahima.com*. Since 2019, Rahima has developed its content further and in 2020 it launched an English version to reach out to a wider audience. As is written on its website, the main purpose of this publishing activity is to support ulama, especially women and community leaders, in building arguments for gender-sensitive Islamic interpretation. It also attempts to raise awareness of the importance of justice and gender equality, which are based on the Qur'an and hadith as well as Islamic references from classical literature and contemporary Islam (Rahima n.d.).

The editorial board of *Swara Rahima* consists of individuals from associates and board members of Rahima. *Swara Rahima* usually consists of fifty pages with seventeen sections, and is printed in black and white, except for the front and back covers, which are in colour and printed on glossy paper. The print run of *Swara Rahima* is 1,000 copies and the magazine is not sold commercially. Its publication is funded by donors including the Canadian Embassy, in collaboration with Global Affairs Canada, and Rutgers WPF Indonesia, in collaboration with Rutgers in the Netherlands. The price of USD 1.00 covers printing costs only. *Swara Rahima* is distributed free to Rahima's network spread across Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Ambon. Although the magazine cannot reach all the members of Rahima's network, some of ulama who receive the magazine have taken the initiative to establish a *Lingkar Baca Swara Rahima* (*Swara Rahima* reading club) in their *pesantren* or community to discuss the content of *Swara Rahima*. Some of the ulama are in Madura and Lamongan in East Java, and Bandung and Garut in West Java. In the midst of the advancement of digital technology, Pera Sopariyanti, the director of Rahima, stated that *Swara Rahima* is still in demand, especially for female ulama who need Islamic

sources for their *da'wa*.<sup>143</sup>



FIGURE 16: The appearance of the Q&A section in *Swara Rahima*. Photo by the author.

*Swara Rahima* and *Swararahima.com* contain various sections, such as *Fokus*, which is the headline topic, and *Dirasah Hadis* discussing a certain hadith, but I will focus on the *Tanya Jawab* section. It employs a Q&A format and follows the form of fatwas. The section is around two pages and consists of the section name, the title of the question, name and address of the sender, a picture of the resource person, an elaboration of the question and answer, and some drawings to make the context tangible to the readers and more accessible. The procedure for the *Tanya Jawab* section is that a sender requesting a legal opinion (*mustafti*) sends a question to the editorial staff of *Swara Rahima*. Anyone can ask questions about all kinds of problems that occur in daily life. Readers can choose the topic themselves. The structure of the question consists of an opening addressing *Ibu Nyai*, a self-introduction by the sender, one or two paragraphs on the background of the problem followed by questions. It is signed with the sender's name and address. The senders comprise men and women who ask various questions related to Islam and Muslim daily life.

143 Author's interview with Pera Soparianti, 2 July 2021.

In 2008, Rahima published a book containing Q&As of *Swara Rahima* published between 2001 and 2007 (Ahmad and Nurrohmah 2008). The questions included topics regarding, firstly, women and their right to public life, for example women becoming leaders, women's voices as *aurat*, and husbands prohibiting wives from working. A second category was discussions regarding marriage and family, for instance, the law on marriage via teleconference, and sexual intercourse during menstruation. A third topic was domestic violence, and forced marriage and polygyny in Islamic law. A fourth set of questions concerned contemporary issues such as differentiating between men and women in *hibah* (giving property according to Islamic rules) and specific practical issues like washing the bodies of people who died of AIDS. To make the questions readable and understandable, the editors reformulate questions if needed. The questions are written in simple language and structure, for example, *bagaimana hukumnya?* (What is the legal judgment?), *benarkah atau tidakkah* (Is it correct or wrong?), and *bagaimana mengatasinya?* (How to deal with it?).

To illustrate the ways in which fatwas are formulated in *Swara Rahima*, I will focus on the case of Hindun Anisah (b. 1974), as one of the most prolific contributors to the Q&A section of *Swara Rahima*. She leads Pesantren Hasyim Asyari in Jepara, Central Java, with her husband. She got her *pesantren* education from Komplek Hindun, led by her mother and located in Pesantren Krapyak in Yogyakarta. She holds her Bachelor's degree from the State University for Islamic Studies, Sunan Kalijaga, in Yogyakarta, and she obtained her Master's degree in Medical Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam. She began to be involved in gender activism with Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat (Fatayat Welfare Foundation) in Yogyakarta and later participated in the Fiqhunnisa' programme organized by P3M in Jakarta. She is one of the board members of Rahima and took part in the preparation of KUPI in April 2017.

### ***Semi-commercial Magazine: AuleeA***

*AuleeA* is a monthly magazine published since May 2014 by PT Aula Media NU, which is one of the business entities of the Provincial Board of Nahdlatul Ulama in East Java. PT Aula Media NU, which was founded in 1977, initially published *Aula* magazine targeting students, *kiai*, and members of NU. Subsequently, they planned to address female readers from NU and collaborated with the Provincial Board of Fatayat NU in East Java to publish a magazine for women, namely *AuleeA*. It was the first magazine containing Muslim family topics and issues that targeted women from NU backgrounds. In January 2017, PT Aula Media NU turned over the management of *AuleeA* to Fatayat NU in East Java. Hikmah Bafaqih, the former head of Fatayat NU in East Java, explained that the purpose of publishing *AuleeA* was to provide alternative reading for young urban Muslim women as a counternarrative to media published by conservative groups, such as *Ummi* magazine. "We see that this is a problem because Muslim women in Indonesia are mostly not adherents of the conservative group, right? But how come they tend to read *Ummi*? So, the basic purpose was how to respond to their works with [our] works," she stated.<sup>144</sup> In addition, Fatayat NU in East Java also wanted to affirm their preaching about the values of justice and gender equality, and Islam seen as *rahmatan lil'alamiin* (compassion for the universe) and as rooted in the archipelago (*nusantara*), in a way that is inclusive of local tradition.

With seventy-six colourful and glossy pages and twenty-two sections, *AuleeA* covers different topics related to Islam, women, and the lifestyle of modern Muslim women associated with the values of NU. As a lifestyle magazine, *AuleeA* attempts to combine educational content and popular content based on the feedback gathered from its readers. The managing editors of *AuleeA* consist of the board members of Fatayat NU in East Java, but they have expert editors for the fashion and lifestyle sections. Initially

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144 Author's interview with Hikmah Bafaqih, 6 November 2017.

*AuleeA's* tagline was “Muslimah Family Magazine” (Majalah Keluarga Muslimah) which meant a magazine on family topics and issues targeting Muslim women. But since November 2017 it has changed to be more inclusive with a new tagline: “Indonesian Family Magazine” (Majalah Keluarga Indonesia) meaning that the magazine targets not only Muslim women but all Indonesian family readers in general. “Because it turns out that many of our readers are non-Muslims and many of our contributors are non-Muslims as well. So we want to show our Indonesian spirit,” explained Hikmah.<sup>145</sup> She added that *AuleeA* has been more widely distributed and is better known to readers throughout East Java, compared to other Muslim women magazines such as *Nurani* and *Ummi*. One of its marketing strategies to attract public interest has been to take part as a media partner of Muslim festivals and events, such as the Indonesia Moslem Fashion Expo and Islamic Tourism 2015 at Grand City Super Mall Surabaya, East Java.



FIGURE 17: The appearance of the Q&A section in *AuleeA*. Photo by the author.

The Q&A section in *AuleeA* is titled *Fiqhunnisa* (Islamic jurisprudence pertaining to women). This section has

145 Ibid.

part of *AuleeA* since it was first published. It takes the form of questions and answers regarding *fiqh* issues related to daily worship as experienced by readers. "In the beginning, we wrote questions ourselves, but after some time readers started to send in questions," explained Hikmah. According to her, *Fiqhunnisa'* is an important section in *AuleeA* because it relates to *fiqh*, which regulates the behaviour and ethics of daily Muslim life according to Islam. So the answer given is a kind of guideline on how to solve the *fiqh* problem according to the teachings of Islam as practiced by NU. "Because if you read *Ummi*, the *fiqh* can be different, right? So, we are here of course, because our magazine belongs to NU, we are here practicing and promoting NU's *fiqh*," added Hikmah.<sup>146</sup> The *Fiqhunnisa'* consists of two pages displaying questions and answers, a photo of the resource person, and a picture that illustrates the topic of the question.

Questions in the *Fiqhunnisa'* section begin by addressing the name of the resource person, then giving the background of the problem, written in one or two sentences, followed by questions articulated as: *bagaimana hukumnya?* (What is the legal judgement?), *bagaimana mengatasinya* (How to deal with it?), *apa yang harus kita lakukan?* (What should we do?), *bagaimana tata aturannya?* (What is the procedure?), and *apakah hal itu diperbolehkan?* (Is that allowed?). The topics vary, but are generally related to the daily practice of lay Muslim women as modern women and their compliance with the rules in *fiqh*. These topics include, firstly, topics related to *taharah* (purification), *salat* (ritual prayer), *zakat* (the welfare tax), *puasa* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage), such as the legal judgement on washing clothes with a washing machine and *zakat* on jewellery. Secondly, some topics discuss women's issues, such as the procedure of *iddah* (a waiting period for a woman whose husband has passed away or a divorcee woman before she can remarry), *ihdad* (the mourning period for a woman after her husband passed away), and the menstruation cycle. Thirdly, there are topics relating to marriage

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146 Ibid.



and family matters, for instance, the legal judgement on sexual intercourse with the husband while imagining other people, and how to deal with husbands who are not confident about their income. Fourthly, contemporary issues are covered related to the development of society and technology, for example, questions about abortion, test-tube babies, plastic surgery, womb check-ups conducted by male doctors, and the Islamic concept of healthy and environmentally friendly living. Each question is articulated using the first-person pronoun, and the questioner's name and city are also mentioned. Based on my observation, the questioners are mostly women.

The *AuleeA* editorial staff forward questions sent by readers to a resource person for the *Fiqhunnisa'* section. Bashirotul Hidayah, or Ida, is one of the many resource persons and writes in *Fiqhunnisa'* quite often. She is a member of Forum Daiyah Fatayat (FORDAF), the Preacher's Forum of the Regional Board of Fatayat NU in East Java. Many FORDAF members are *nyais* or *pesantren* female leaders. Bashirotul Hidayah was asked to provide answers for the *Fiqhunnisa'* in 2015. She leads Pesantren Al-Amanah together with her husband in Jombang, East Java. She got her *pesantren* education in Jombang, and completed her Bachelor's and Master's education at the UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Since 2008, collaborating with Nyai Salma Nashir, a *nyai* in Tambakberas, and other *nyai* from the Rejoso and Tebuireng Pesantren in Jombang, Ida has formed the Pesantren Women's Discussion Forum on *fiqh*. With her educational background and religious activities, the editorial staff of *AuleeA* recognize her as having the authority to answer people's problems from the perspective of *fiqh*.<sup>147</sup>

### ***Commercial Magazine: NooR***

*NooR*, a monthly Muslim women's magazine, was first published in May 2003 by Pinpoint Publications. Sri Artaria Alisjahbana, Mario Alisjahbana, and Jetty Rosila Hadi were among the founders

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147 Author's interview with Bashirotul Hidayah, 19 January 2018.

of *NooR*. Jeti, who is also the editor-in-chief of *NooR*, explained to me that Indonesian women's magazines were still dominated by magazines with content translated from foreign magazines so obviously the content did not have roots in Indonesian culture. There were only a few commercial magazines that targeted Indonesian Muslim women, such as *Amanah*. Besides, she saw that the image of Muslim women at that time still stigmatized them as uneducated, poor, and old-fashioned. Similarly, Mario also observed that Indonesian Muslim women had not appeared much in public, and therefore, he thought that there was a need for a magazine that was culturally appropriate to Indonesia. The tagline of *NooR* is "Yakin, Cerdas, Bergaya" (Sure, Smart, Stylish), meaning that *NooR* may inspire women in doing something that they are good at, they believe in, and can be an example and be followed by others. With 116 pages printed on glossy coloured paper, *NooR* seeks through its content to portray Muslimah who are well educated, modern, economically empowered, and following the Qur'an and hadith.<sup>148</sup>

*NooR*'s print-run started at 15,000 and has grown to 25,000 copies today. It is distributed in all regions in Indonesia. *NooR* targets educated Muslim women aged 25-45 as its readers. Jeti explained that the readers are not only from urban areas, but also from rural areas. In each edition, *NooR* discusses one main topic in depth in accordance with the issues that are currently topical in the public arena. For instance, "Haji, Ibadah atau Wisata?" (Hajj, is it Worship or Tourism?) discusses various issues related to the hajj, including hajj practices that tend to be troublesome in the preparations, for example, regarding clothes, plans to travel through Turkey or other countries en route, or what hotels to stay in. "In fact, the hajj is not like that. Yes, we just explain that the Qur'an says this and that, then if there are various kinds of phenomena, how should we react to them," explained Jeti. The editorial board considers that *NooR*'s readers are smart, so it provides a lot of menus to give readers the opportunity to

148 Author's interview with Jeti Rosalia Hadi, 9 December 2017.



149 Ibid.

FIGURE 18: The appearance of the Q&A section in NooR.  
Photo by the author.

The title of the religious Q&A section in NooR is *Worship to Allah*. It is a one-page section that displays religious questions from readers and answers given by a resource person. This section may illustrate the brand of *NooR* as a commercial women's Islamic magazine in which readers can ask questions on religious phenomena in daily life, such as on the phenomenon of *hijab syar'i*. Compared to *Swara Rahima* and *AuleeA*, which address a more segmented Muslim readership, *NooR* attempts to reach a

wider Muslim audience. Jetti said that sometimes editorial staff get inspiration for topics that will be discussed in the following month's edition through questions sent by readers. The topics that are being asked include, firstly, *fiqh taharah* (Islamic jurisprudence on purity), for example questions about common but contested consumer and beauty products, including the legal judgement of using perfume containing alcohol. Secondly, there are questions relating to the implementation of the pillars of Islam, such as combining and distributing *zakat* for husband and wife together, and questions about *waqf* and inheritance. Thirdly, there are questions on marriage and family matters, for example, on how you may overcome the problem of having a guardian who refuses to marry you off. Fourthly, questions deal with Islamic ethics that are related to the problems of modern society, for example, on a woman who is veiled but still wants to hang out, the ethics of using social media, drawings of animals and humans on cloth, and taking selfies.

In the *Worship to Allah* section, senders of questions have different ways of addressing the resource person. Some of them address them as “ustazah”, NooR, editorial staff, or do not mention any name. Senders often write one or two sentences sketching the problem background, using the first-person pronoun, followed by a question. They also give their name and city address; as far as I noticed, they are mostly women. The question formulations they use are “*bagaimana hukumnya?*” (What is the legal judgement?), “*bagaimana menurut Anda?*” (What do you think?), “*mana yang boleh dan mana yang tidak?*” (Which one is lawful and which one is not?), and “*bagaimana sebaiknya?*” (How should it be?). Badriyah Fayumi was invited by Jetti to become an Islamic expert editor as well as the resource person of *Worship to Allah*. As she is the only person who is in charge of this section, I will focus on her answers to illustrate how fatwas in the media are formulated. According to Jetti, in addition to being religiously competent, Badriyah is a woman who is educated, comes from a *pesantren* background and studied in Egypt, majoring in hadith.

She is also one of the influential figures of KUPI. Selecting a woman as a resource person is an important consideration because she is an “insider” who may know women’s problems and experiences better than men do. “Bu Badriyah is very open, willing to understand the opinions of various Islamic scholars and can explain them to readers of *NooR*,” Jeti explained.<sup>150</sup>

### **Questions: Reflecting the Dilemmas and Worries of the Audiences**

The questions displayed in the Q&A sections of *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR* can be grouped together into several discussion subjects, as has been done also in compilations of classical Islamic knowledge. For example, *Al-Muwattaʿaʿ* (the Beaten Path) of Imam Malik (d. 795), a collection of hadith *ṣaḥiḥ*, divides its subject into two main parts. The first part relates to *ibadah* (ritual actions), including *salat*, *zakat*, and *ḥajj*. The second part treats subjects linked to *muamalat* (social relationships), such as the family and household, economic activities, and moral ideals (Larsen 2018, 44-5). However, while they can thus be grouped together, the questions in the Q&A sections in the three magazines also each have a different character and thereby exemplify different groups of questioners, their class backgrounds and social settings (e.g. urban versus rural), and different norms prevalent in their communities. In order to identify the differences between the questions, I have selected one field of inquiry, namely financial responsibility between husband and wife, and subsequently chosen one question within this field from the Q&A section of each of the three magazines as an example.

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150 Ibid.

Name of Magazine and Q&A Section	Example of Questions
Tanya Jawab of <i>Swara Rahima</i>	<p><b>Title: How to deal with husbands who dare to abandon their wives?</b></p> <p>My name is Aminah, 55 years old, a mother who is of Betawi descent. I married a man of the Javanese ethnicity, let's call him Hardjo. In our marriage, we are blessed with seven children, all of whom are male.</p> <p>My husband seldom supports us: his wife and the children. Worse yet, he had the heart to flirt with another woman behind my back and even abandoned me. The house we lived in was actually an inheritance from his parents. But without my knowledge, my husband had the heart to mortgage the house to pay his debts and to marry another woman. After that, my children and I were just left behind. We are forced to live in a rented house, and I became the sole breadwinner for our children. Meanwhile, in his second marriage my husband became the father of three children (two girls and one boy). One of his daughters is entrusted to me to be cared for and I have looked after her since she was a baby.</p> <p>Now that nearly twenty years have passed since that event, and his second wife has passed away, my husband intends to marry me again. What should I do? Do I have to accept him, given his abusive treatment and his neglect of us as a family? What is our marital status, are we still considered as husband and wife considering he had left me for so long? In fact, to my knowledge, women whose husbands have left them for two consecutive years without news are automatically considered divorced. Is my understanding correct?<sup>151</sup></p> <p>(Aminah, Ciracas, East Jakarta)</p>
Fiqhunnisa' of <i>AuleeA</i>	<p><b>Title: When a husband is not confident with his income</b></p> <p>My husband always feels burdened when we visit my parents (for example during Eid or when there is a family celebration) because we are relatively less well off compared to my brothers and sisters after their marriage. We still don't have a car and I don't wear the fancy jewellery that my younger and older sisters-in-law wear. I tried to comfort him actually, but he still looks uncomfortable when I gather with my extended family. [He feels insecure that he has not given me sufficient amount of <i>nafkah</i>]. According to the <i>fiqh</i> perspective, what are the limitations regarding the husband's wife's <i>nafkah</i>?<sup>152</sup></p> <p>(Nita, Probolinggo, East Java)</p>
Worship to Allah of <i>NooR</i>	<p><b>Title: Combining and distributing couples' zakat</b></p> <p>My husband and I both work. If we calculate the income individually, it has not yet reached the <i>nishab</i>.<sup>153</sup> But if we combine our income, it will exceed the <i>nishab</i>. How is <i>zakat</i> law for us? One more thing. What is better, for our <i>zakat</i> to be delivered to many people or to one or two people, which is useful for business capital?<sup>154</sup></p> <p>(Ibu Listya, South Tangerang, Banten)</p>

151 *Swara Rahima*, No.44 Th. XIV, March 2015, 51-2.

152 *AuleeA*, No.7, January, 2015, 60-1.

153 *Nishab* is the minimum limit of assets that must be subject to zakat.

154 *NooR*, Volume XXIV, Th. XII/2017,19.

The question in the *Tanya Jawab* of *Swara Rahima* arises from the lived reality of a woman who is dealing with neglect by her husband. The problem she faces is not only how to obtain financial support from her husband, but also the problem of the legality of her marriage after being separated from her husband for twenty years due to his polygamous marriage. Meanwhile, in *AuleeA's Fiqhun Nisa'*, the question shows that the questioner comes from a couple with a good marriage, has sufficient income for everyday living, and requires guidance on Islamic rules regarding the husband's and wife's income. These two cases are different from the question in *NooR's Worship to Allah*. The question illustrates that the sender is from a middle- to upper-class family, able to meet the financial needs of the family, and who therefore is obliged to pay *zakat*. The problem is whether they can combine the remaining finances of both husband and wife so that they reach the *nishab* of *zakat*. These examples illustrate, firstly, that different audiences come with different dilemmas and therefore different questions are being asked. Secondly, different types of magazines imply different backgrounds among the readers or audience because each magazine has its goal and targeted readers.

Compared to the two other magazines, *Swara Rahima* targets a more specific audience, namely people who are included in Rahima's network or the network of Rahima's female ulama. Therefore, *Swara Rahima* is more "private". It also has the potential, however, to reach readers from the rural and lower-middle classes with their specific problems in daily life. Interestingly, it targets a group who are relatively well versed in Islamic knowledge. The articulation of, "*padahal sepengetahuan saya ... benarkah pemahaman saya?*" (as far as I know ... is my understanding correct?)" shows that the questioner is someone who has studied and has some basic knowledge of Islam. The question posed has the nuance of critical reflection on the problems that she experienced. *AuleeA*, which I categorize as semi-popular, targets a wider readership market than *Swara*

*Rahima* in terms of geographical location and background as well as the social class of the readers. This readership is reflected in the example. Meanwhile, the use of the words “*dalam tinjauan fiqh*” (according to the *fiqh* perspective) in the question shows that this questioner too is familiar with Islamic terms and knowledge, fitting with the earlier explanation that *AuleeA* is also read by readers from *pesantren* circles. Meanwhile *NooR*, which is a popular Muslim women’s magazine, has an even wider audience. And the question in *Worship to Allah* illustrates that the sender is a middle-class Muslim who is beginning to learn about Islam and articulates her problem with commonly recognized terms and phrases.

The dilemmas raised in all Q&A sections are often “women-related questions”. By this I mean questions that make “visible women’s issues that are often made invisible in the description of religion, and not least, of Islam” (Larsen 2018, 17). “Women-related questions” are based on “women-specific experiences” (*pengalaman khas perempuan*), which in turn can be divided into two types: experiences related to the biological condition of women and experiences related to socially constructed gender roles. Biology-related experiences include problems specific to women’s bodies. They deal, for instance, with menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, *nifas* (after childbirth), and breastfeeding (it should be noted of course that many aspects of these subjects are also fundamentally grounded in gender constructions). Women’s social experiences are a broad category related to experiences of marginalization, subordination, stigmatization, violence, and multiple burdens (Rofiah 2020, 80). Some examples of women-related questions are given below.

Name of magazine and Q&A section	Women-related questions	Examples of questions
Tanya Jawab of Swara Rahima	<b>Biology-related experiences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual intercourse during menstruation</li> <li>• Breastfeeding, whose rights and obligations?</li> </ul>	<b>Title: Refusing or accepting arranged marriage as devotion to parents?</b> <p>I am Siti Zahroh, sixteen years old, I am a student at a private <i>madrasah</i> in Pandeglang, Banten. I am also a student at a <i>pesantren</i>. I am the eldest of five children from a less wealthy family.</p>
	<b>Social-gendered experiences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women going out at night; do you need a <i>mahram</i> (those who you cannot be married to according to Islamic rules)?</li> <li>• Refuse or accept arranged marriage as devotion to parents?</li> <li>• Do I need to circumcise my daughter?</li> <li>• The wife is depressed because her husband always defends his mother.</li> <li>• What is the legal judgement on a wife who, after suffering from domestic violence, has an affair so that her husband may divorce her?</li> <li>• Distribution of <i>hibah</i> (grants); why are women treated differently?</li> </ul>	<p>Some time ago, when I returned home, my father said that he would set me up with a man of his choice. He is fifteen years older than me. My father urged me to accept it because, firstly, the man is wealthy, and secondly, my father is worried that I will be trapped in promiscuity. This is because he often hears the news that nowadays many young women lose their virginity.</p> <p>Actually, I have something to say in my mind, <i>Bu Nyai</i>. Given that my age is still too young and I have a dream to pursue higher education and graduate, I don't agree with my parents. But I never had the courage to tell them about this for fear it would cause a burden on their minds. On the other hand, I am afraid of the people's belief that refusing someone who comes with a marriage proposal will keep me away from a marriage.</p> <p>Dear Ibu Nyai, what should I do? Please enlighten me.<sup>155</sup></p> <p>Siti Zahroh, Pandeglang, Banten</p>

<p>Fiqhunnisa’ of AuleeA</p>	<p><b>B i o l o g y - r e l a t e d experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The legal judgement on abortion in the case of pregnancy before marriage.</li> <li>• How to calculate the menstrual cycle.</li> <li>• Vaginal liquid coming out during <i>salat</i>, is the <i>salat</i> valid?</li> <li>• The legal judgement on male doctors checking one’s womb.</li> <li>• Practices that can and should not be done during <i>nifas</i> (after childbirth).</li> </ul> <p><b>Social-gendered experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding about <i>najis</i> (unclean) while caring for a baby.</li> <li>• Ethics of socializing with <i>mahram</i> and <i>non-mahram</i>.</li> <li>• <i>Iddah</i> and <i>ihdad</i>.</li> <li>• The legal judgement on cosmetic surgery.</li> <li>• Prayers with the robe dangling and wearing socks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Title: The legal judgement of womb checks conducted by a male doctor</b></p> <p>I am pregnant with my first child. My gynaecologist was female but currently she is studying abroad. She recommended a male replacement doctor. Incidentally also a non-Muslim. What should I do? What does Islamic law say about this matter?<sup>156</sup></p> <p>Nadia, Surabaya, East Java.</p>
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156 AuleeA, No.31, January 2017, 64-5.



<p>Worship to Allah of NooR</p>	<p><b>Biology-related experiences:</b> NA</p> <p><b>S o c i a l - g e n d e r e d experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using perfume containing alcohol.</li> <li>• Guardian refuses to marry you off.</li> <li>• Already wearing a hijab but still want to “hang out”.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Title: Guardian refuses to marry me off</b></p> <p>My father refused to marry me to my future husband because the future husband gave up following the father’s request, which is giving extra spending money. Last year, the proposal was accepted with an agreement on a certain amount of spending money. But with this extra money, the amount increased. So, my future husband objected and my father immediately refused to become the guardian for my marriage. Now I am in Jakarta and stay in the family house of my future husband, while my father is in Palembang. My future husband and I are both adults and have decided to get married without registering it (<i>nikah sirri</i>) as we can register it later. We will let my father know later also. Anyway, I am a nurse, twenty-nine years old and my future husband is an entrepreneur, thirty-two years old. Please advise: what should I do? Is it right that we are married <i>sirri</i> first?<sup>157</sup></p> <p>Shafia, Palembang.</p>
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These three examples are indicative of the geographical location, social background and social class of the women questioners. The question in *AuleeA* shows the experience of a pregnant woman from the upper-middle class who has access to the services of an obstetrician (contrasting with the experiences of middle- to lower-class women who may only get access to midwife services). Meanwhile, the example of women-related questions on social-gendered experiences can be seen in *Swara Rahima* and *NooR*. Even though the topic of the question is the same, namely marriage, the focus of the two questioners’ problems is different. *Tanya Jawab* of *Swara Rahima* has a question that is close to the experience of a woman who is disadvantaged socially

157 *NooR*, Vol. XVIII Th. XIII/2016, 19.

and culturally and from a family background that holds strong religious values. The questioner in *Worship to Allah* gives the description of an independent urban Muslim woman who has the opportunity to choose her future husband. She would have been able to get married if only her father did not refuse to marry her off.

The absence of biology-related questions and presence of only a few socially determined gendered experiences in *Worship to Allah* may indicate that religious problems pointed to in the section constitute questions that are more gender neutral, while if there are questions on women, they are dealing with general Islamic problems. Meanwhile, *Swara Rahima* and *AuleeA* have more biology-related questions and social-gendered questions that are specifically related to issues and Islamic terms associated with gendered issues such as *mahram* and *nifas*. Many of the problems in *Fiqhunnisa* focus on that part of *fiqh* (*fiqh ibadah*) that regulates how women may or should conduct their daily worship. *Rahima*'s religious questions are even more specific compared to the two other magazines and focus on women's rights in Islamic law, for example in the context of economic violence and female circumcision. I assume this difference relates to the scope of the targeted readers of each magazine and the different educational backgrounds of the readers. In other words, the wider the audience for a magazine, the more gender-neutral and general the religious issues that appear in the Q&A section seem to be.

The process of posing and answering questions about daily matters in Islamic law has become an integral part of the production of "fatwa media" in the case of *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR*.<sup>158</sup> The questioning is not simply "asking a question" but rather *istifta*' or a "request for a fatwa" (Masud 2009, 344). The questions set in motion an interpretive process between

158 Fatwa media means fatwas publicized through mass media. This is in accordance with Brinkley Messick's "Media Muftis". He used the term "Media Muftis" in his study of radio fatwas in Yemen. The term refers to the mufti who conducts fatwa consultations through mass media such as the newspapers, television, radio, telephone, and the internet (Messick 1996, 310).

the female ulama who give their fatwas and the audience who ask about daily Islamic practices, and at the same time allow the ulama to exercise *ijtihad*. As mentioned earlier, questions are a very significant part of fatwas because they bring tangible worries and dilemmas of the audiences to religious authorities to provide guidance. Through these questions, the female ulama get access to and familiarize themselves with the “actual” problems of specific communities. However, as indicated by my interlocutors, the questions in the media fatwa are not only determined by the questioners. The magazine editors play an important role in constructing the questions by selecting them according to the magazine’s goal and editing the language to make them accessible for the readers. Therefore, “far from representing simple windows on reality, many questions are themselves carefully constructed, containing motivated, and selective rendering of the facts and issues” (Masud et al. 1996, 22).

In the case of *Swara Rahima*, the editorial staff make a selection from the questions they receive by considering the extent to which the topics touch on the themes that Rahima promotes, including equality, justice, democracy, openness, togetherness in diversity, and non-violence. They also make sure that the topic has not been discussed in previous editions so that there is no repetition and the reader can learn something new each time. Once the question is selected, it is forwarded to the resource person for the answer. Meanwhile, questions that are not selected are forwarded to other resource persons from Rahima and the answers are sent back to the questioners privately. *Swara Rahima* has several resource persons for the *Tanya Jawab* section. The assignment of questions is based on an alternating schedule among the resource persons. They are members of the Rahima association, so it is certain that they have solid Islamic knowledge and gender perspectives. The editorial staff at *AuleeA* play a similar role. As Hikmah Bafaqih, the editor of *AuleeA* explains: “In the beginning, we were the ones who

formulated the questions. But after a while the questions were sent by readers.” Meanwhile, Jetti explained that there is no specific selection process at *NooR* for questions sent by readers, including questions that are controversial in society, such as polygamy. “Oh no, usually we just use it [the controversial topic] in a good way,” said Jetti. “A good way” means that the articulation of questions and answers can be accepted and understood by Muslim readers regardless of their religious affiliation and group, meaning it is compatible with Islam which is inclusive in the style of *NooR*. And this goal indicates that the role of the editor is important.

The fact that posing questions by questioners is being referred to as *istifta*’ in the fatwa-media production suggests, firstly, that it follows the procedure of conventional *istifta*’ as it has been practiced in the case of oral fatwa-making, namely questions followed by responses from individual scholars. Secondly, *istifta*’ produces a discourse which determines the development of *fiqh* in response to people’s daily problems and leads to “the emergence of Islamic law based on lived experience” (Larsen 2018, 45). In this context, the questioners are in a strong position to ask the fatwa-giver to respond to their question without having to follow the views of other ulama (Masud 2009, 349). As with magazine readers, they can accept or reject answers from female ulama, or forward their questions to other Q&A sections and resource persons. Thirdly, it is notable that because the *istifta*’ of media fatwa is determined by the readers, therefore the more popular and broader the market of a magazine, the more “public” and “common” the religious questions and problems that are being asked, corresponding to the experiences of lay Muslims in general. Fourthly, because readers’ questions are publicized among a wide audience, the role of the editorial staff is significant to ensure that the questions are understood and in accordance with the goals and characteristics of the magazines. Therefore, the editors are selecting, reformulating, and editing the questions.

## **The Answers: Challenges and Strategies in Constructing and Amplifying the Progressive Message of Islam**

The answers in the Q&A sections of the three magazines reflect the three key dimensions of the fatwa, namely “the question, or indication of the issue at hand; the answer, or interpretation; and the justification” (Larsen 2018, 7). Fatwas are answers to questions sent by readers, meaning that the resource persons give their religious opinions based on the issues and dilemmas being asked about. To answer the question, they interpret the question as well as the sources of Islamic teachings to get to the answer. They attempt to connect social and cultural realities implicated in the questions with Islamic norms as stated in the Islamic texts, and justify their legal opinion by referring to the Islamic sources such as the Qur’an, hadith, and texts written by Muslim scholars. I will analyse the responses to the questions presented in the previous section to illustrate how women ulama as resource persons of the three Q&A sections central to this chapter—*Tanya Jawab*, *Fuqhunnisa’*, and *Worship to Allah*—interpret the questions and the Islamic sources and articulate their written fatwas.

Name of Magazine and Q&A Section	Examples of Answers to Questions about Financial Responsibility of husband and wife
<p><i>Tanya Jawab</i> of Swara Rahima</p>	<p><b>Title: How to deal with husbands who dare to abandon their wives?</b></p> <p><i>Wa 'alaikumussalam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh</i></p> <p>Dear Mrs Aminah,</p> <p>Thank you for your trust in us. It is truly extraordinary, Mrs Aminah, we salute your struggle as a single mother of seven sons for more than twenty years. May Allah always protect and take care of you. Aamiin.</p> <p>Respected Mrs Aminah,</p> <p>The purpose of marriage is implied in the QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 12, which is to achieve peace and tranquillity of the soul. A wife will feel calm and at ease if her husband always accompanies her and becomes a partner in navigating domestic life, including in educating and caring for children. A wife will feel comfortable in the house when he is responsible for his wife and children.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of husband to meet the needs of the wife and children as stated in the Qur'an:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ</p> <p>Meaning: "... The child's father will provide reasonable maintenance and clothing for the mother 'during that period'" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 233).<sup>159</sup></p> <p>When your husband left and did not support you and seven children for more than twenty years, it can be said that he has neglected his wife and children. He did not obey the Qur'an and act in accordance with Law No. 23 of 2004 concerning PKDRT (Penghapusan Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga, Elimination of Domestic Violence), which prohibits the neglect of family members in the household sphere. You as an abandoned party have the right to sue your husband for such an unfair treatment.</p> <p>His neglect can also be used as a reason for you to file for divorce at the Religious Court if you wish. Although your husband left you twenty years ago, divorce does not automatically occur</p>

159 <https://quran.com/2> accessed 21 March 2021.

	<p>unless it has been ruled or decided by a judge at the Religious Court. This is because according to the Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam, KHI), divorce can only be executed in front of a Religious Court hearing (article 115). Divorce registration at the Religious Court is also intended to protect women so that husbands do not easily divorce their wives.</p> <p>Returning to your question about what you can do when your husband wants to return to living together with you, our suggestion is that you should consider the positives and negatives of your decision. Are you sure that the return of your husband will be able to provide peace and tranquillity for your family or vice versa? Do you also believe that your husband will be a good and responsible husband when he returns to live with you? We hope and believe that you can take a wise and good decision for you and your seven sons.</p> <p>Dear beloved Mrs Aminah, This is some explanation we can provide. Hopefully it can be a useful consideration for you to make a decision. <i>Wallahu a 'lamu bisshawab.</i><sup>160</sup></p> <p>(Nyai Hj. Hindun Anisah, M.A.)</p>
<p>Fiqhunnisa' of AuleeA</p>	<p><b>Title: When a husband is not confident with his income</b></p> <p><i>Walaikum salam</i></p> <p>Sister Nita, from your question, there are actually things that need to be looked into and explored and that even need to be slightly changed regarding the understanding of the concept of wealth. Let's look at the definition of <i>nafkah</i> first.</p> <p><i>Nafkah</i> literally means something that is spent so that it is not left over. Meanwhile, in terms of <i>shari'at</i>, it means to fulfil the needs of anyone who is dependent, whether in the form of food, drink, clothing or a place to live. The obligation to provide a living can be distinguished from its causes, one of which is due to marriage.</p> <p>If a man marries a woman, it is obligatory for him to provide her with a living. It is based on the word of God: "... Women have rights similar to those of men equitably" (QS Al-Baqarah [2]: 228).<sup>161</sup></p> <p>Ibn Kathir said: "... It means that wives have the right to be supported by their husbands in proportion to the rights of the husbands given by their wives. So, let each fulfil his obligations in a literal way, and this includes the husband's obligation to provide for his wife as well as other rights." (Tafsir Al-Qur'anil Adhim 1/272).</p>

160 *Swara Rahima*, No.44 Th. XIV, March 2015, 51-2.

161 <https://quran.com/2> Accessed 21 March 2021.

In another saying it is said: "And they (wives) have the right to be given *rizki* and clothing (subsistence) which are required of you (husbands)" (HR. Muslim 2137).

The scholars agree on the obligation of a husband to provide *nafkah* for his wife. As said by Ibnul Mundzir, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Qudamah, and others.

As a side note, a husband is not obligated to provide *nafkah* if the wife refuses, nor if the wife's family prevents the husband from approaching and contacting his wife. This is because the husband's obligation to provide *nafkah* is in return for the benefits provided by the wife.

The *fuqaha* (jurisprudence experts) agree that the measurement of *nafkah* that must be given is according to *ma'ruf* (proper or reasonable), while the majority of followers of the Hanafi, Maliki, and Hambali schools of thought stated that it is mandatory for the husband to provide *nafkah* that is sufficient for daily needs. And that sufficiency varies according to the conditions of husband and wife. Then the judge will decide the case if there is a dispute. This is based on the word of Allah: "... the child's father will provide reasonable maintenance and clothing for the mother 'during that period'. No one will be charged with more than they can bear" (QS Al-Baqarah [2]: 233).<sup>162</sup>

The amount of *nafkah* that should be sufficient for reasonable daily expenses in the family was emphasized by the Prophet when Hindun bintu Utbah reported her husband. He said: "Take a sufficient livelihood for you and your children in a reasonable way" (HR Bukhori 4945).

The scholars differ about the amount of *nafkah* that a husband should give to his wife.

The first opinion from Maliki said that the amount of *nafkah* is determined by the condition of the wife, based on the word of Allah: "... the child's father will provide reasonable maintenance and clothing for the mother 'during that period'. No one will be charged with more than they can bear" (QS Al-Baqarah [2]: 233).<sup>163</sup>

Meanwhile, according to the second opinion which is a well-known opinion by Hanafi and Shafi'i, the amount of *nafkah* must consider the condition of the husband. It is based on the verse: "Let the man of wealth provide according to his means. As for the one with limited resources, let him provide according to whatever Allah has given him. Allah does not require of any soul beyond what he has given it. After hardship, Allah will bring about ease" (QS At-Thalaq [65]: 7).<sup>164</sup>

162 <https://quran.com/2> Accessed 21 March 2021.

163 Ibid.

164 <https://quran.com/65> Accessed 21 March 2021.



According to the third opinion, the amount of *nafkah* is determined by the conditions of both (husband and wife). This is the opinion of Hanbali and all the ulama from the Hanafi school of thought. This opinion is more comprehensive as it covers the two previous opinions.

Basically, a husband is obliged to provide *nafkah* for his wife at the beginning of the morning every day because that is the time to start having food and drink. However, if both agree to postpone or to have the food early such as during the weekend or at the beginning or end of the month or as their preference, then it is allowed because *nafkah* is the right and the obligation between husband and wife. It is obligatory for a husband to provide a place for his wife to live properly according to her need. This opinion has been agreed by ulama according to verse: "... Treat them fairly..." (QS Al-Nisa' [4] 19).<sup>165</sup>

Treating a wife fairly includes providing her with a proper house to live. Because a wife needs a place to live where she can rest, share love with her husband, and cover her *aurat* from the view of non-*mahram* and to protect her property.

However, a husband must consider his ability when buying a house, because Allah says: "Let them live where you live 'during their waiting period' according to your means..." (QS At-Thalaq [65] 6).<sup>166</sup>

Husbands meet the needs of wives according to local customs. If the husband is able (see QS. At-Thalaq [65] 6 above), it is obligatory for him to provide for the needs of his wife in accordance with the local custom (because this is explained by QS. al-Nisa' [4] 19).

For example, if the local staple food is bread or people usually sleep on a bed with a pillow (not on the floor or on a mat) then it is mandatory for a husband to provide this if he can.

So actually, what we wear should refer to *syuhro* clothes (see the explanation in the first edition).

You are obliged to convince and strengthen your husband's self-esteem that he has carried out his duties in providing *nafkah* according to the appropriate living standards. Seeing other people's lives as a living standard will only make us suffer.

Hopefully this is useful.<sup>167</sup>

(Ning Musyfiqoh, Tim FORDAF, Forum Daiyah Fatayat, PW Fatayat NU Jawa Timur)

165 <https://quran.com/4> Accessed 21 March 2021.

166 <https://quran.com/65> Accessed 21 March 2021.

167 *AuleeA*, No.7, January, 2015, 60-1.

<p>Worship to Allah of Noor</p>	<p><b>Title: Combining and distributing couples' <i>zakat</i></b></p> <p>Walaikum salam, dear Bu Listya,</p> <p>A husband and wife who both work basically have the same responsibility, namely to support the family. The husband and wife in a family are seen as two parties who are bound in a partnership called <i>syirkah</i>. This is what underlies Indonesian <i>fiqh</i> regarding the existence of <i>gono-gini</i> (joint property) assets which are regulated in the Marriage Law and the Compilation of Islamic Laws.<sup>168</sup></p> <p>With the provisions regarding these <i>gono-gini</i> property, what you have done is right, which is to combine your money and your husband's money for <i>zakat</i>. This is a very good deed because you have a good intention to pay <i>zakat</i>, not the other way around which is finding loopholes to avoid <i>zakat</i> even though you actually have the wealth to pay <i>zakat</i>. (Please read the topic on "Gaya Hidup, Patgulipat Zakat"/Patgulipat Lifestyle). May God bless and add to both your wealth because of your willingness to pay <i>zakat</i>.</p> <p>About the question, is <i>zakat</i> better distributed little by little but with many people receiving it or to a few people but empowering them? If we go back to the main goal of the <i>shari'a</i> of <i>zakat mal</i> (<i>zakat</i> of property/wealth), this is to create justice and social welfare. <i>Zakat</i> is considered good if it can change the lives of people from <i>mustahiq</i> meaning they are destitute, poor, <i>gharim</i> (a person with debt), converts and so on to become <i>muzakki</i> (<i>zakat</i> payer) because <i>zakat</i> can be used as capital for business that strengthens their economy. It is hoped that <i>zakat</i> can help poor people to become prosperous, so that wealth does not only circulate around the rich. This is in accordance with the spirit of <i>zakat</i> as Allah says in the al-Hasyr [59]: 7 that means "... so that wealth may not circulate among your rich..."<sup>169</sup></p> <p>Therefore, if the amount of <i>zakat mal</i> is not large, it should be given to only one or two people whose <i>zakat</i> can be used for capital, school tuition for their children or other productive things, so that <i>zakat</i> can be used to alleviate poverty. Besides, paying <i>zakat</i> is a form of obedience to Allah and social generosity. It would be very good if it was given to poor divorcees who have the responsibility of supporting their orphans because in that way, we are supporting the orphans and at the same time empowering their mothers. Rasulullah Saw said which means, "Someone who takes steps (to help) divorcees and poor people, he is like a person who has done <i>jihad</i> in the path of Allah" (Bukhari and Muslim or Hurairah</p>
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168 *Gono-gini* is joint property owned by the husband or wife at the time of marriage. The arrangement of the assets of *gono-gini* is regulated both in the Civil Code and the Indonesian Compilation of Islamic Law (Kompilasi Hukum Islam).

169 <https://quran.com/59> Accessed 21 March 2021.

RA). And it will be even better if the use of *zakat* can be assisted by aids so that existing funds can be managed properly and can empower. God knows best (*Wallahu a 'lam*).<sup>170</sup>

(Badriyah Fayumi, Redaktur Ahli)

The answers written in the three Q&A sections employ the same structure, namely introductory sentences in the form of greetings, appreciation of the sender's questions, and acknowledgement of the questioner's situation, restatement of the question topics, the content of answers from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, and conclusions in the form of opinions or advice from the resource person. The use of words of greeting in the introductory part indicates that posing questions and giving answers in the sections take the form of a conversation between the resource person and the questioner. They include: "Respected Mrs Aminah, thank you for your trust in us "," Sister Nita ... ", and "Dear Bu Listya ...". These greetings also appear in the middle of a description of the answer. Furthermore, the resource person interprets the question by restating it and relating it to the subject of discussion in Islamic jurisprudence. For example, a question about irresponsible husbands in *Tanya Jawab* section is related to issues of livelihood obligations between a husband and a wife, the duty to support the wife and children, and the legal consequences if a husband neglects their rights. This identification has helped the resource person in finding the right answers and reference sources.

The resource persons of *Swara Rahima*, *AuleeA*, and *NooR* refer to the Qur'an and hadith as the main sources for their religious opinions and advice. These main sources are supplemented with *aqwalul 'ulama* (Muslim scholars' opinions) taken from classical and modern Islamic books, and sources on the use of Indonesian law, such as *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (KHI, the Compilation of

170 *NooR*, Volume XXIV, Th. XII/2017, 19.

Islamic Law) and Penghapusan Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga (PKDRT, the Elimination of Domestic Violence Law) if the answer to a question requires an explanation of the law. Hindun Anisah at *Swara Rahima* and Badriyah Fayumi at *NooR* use KHI as their answer reference, while Siti Musyfiqoh and Bashirotul Hidayah at *AuleeA* tend to use additional references from *aqwalul 'ulama*. For example, to explain the meaning of *nafkah*, Siti Musyfiqoh mentions the opinions of Ibnul Mundzir (856-930), Ibn Hazm (994-1064), and Ibn Qudamah (1147-1223). It is the obligation of a husband to provide *nafkah* for his wife. She also refers to opinions regarding the meaning of *ma'ruf* (goodness) from four different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, interpreted as a standard of living that should be provided by a husband. However, in contrast to Basyirotul Hidayah, Siti Musyfiqoh does not mention the name of the book she refers to in her answer.

There are also conspicuous differences between the three sections, firstly, in terms of length. Of the three, the answers in the *Worship to Allah* of *NooR* seem more concise than in the *Tanya Jawab* of *Swara Rahima* and *Fiqhunnisa'* of *AuleeA*. Meanwhile, the answers in *Fiqhunnisa'* seem to be the longest as they discuss various laws related to the topic being asked and from various viewpoints among Muslim scholars. The length of the answers in the *Fiqhunnisa'* section is related to the second difference, namely the format. *Fiqhunnisa'* uses the essay format. Bashirotul Hidayah said that this serves to make it more interesting to read because it provides a comprehensive answer, and to make it different from the Q&A section in NU's *Aula* magazine, which only provides straightforward legal questions and answers. For example, in the answer about the provision of *nafkah* by a husband to his wife, the answer is delivered according to the essay format, starting with a definition of *nafkah*, followed by a legal basis for the husband's obligation of *nafkah*, the amount of *nafkah*, and some opinions from Muslim scholars regarding this amount, and ending with a suggestion that the questioner may reassure her husband that he has done the right thing.

A third difference concerns the use of language and choice of words. Apart from being the most concise answer, Badriyah Fayumi's answer in *Worship to Allah* also refrains from presenting the complexity of available opinions and from mentioning the names of Muslim scholars with their different arguments. The reason for this, I suspect, lies in the nature of the readership of *NooR*, which is more open and public compared to the readership of *Swara Rahima* and *AuleeA*. Bashirotul Hidayah was informed by the editor of *AuleeA*, Hikmah Bafakih, that the readers of *AuleeA* are not only people with a *pesantren* background, but that they also come from both urban and rural communities. Therefore, Hikmah suggested to Bashirotul Hidayah to consider this readership when she formulates the language so that the essay can be read by lay Muslim people and *pesantren* as well.<sup>171</sup> This precondition caused a dilemma for Bashirotul, however, because it meant that she had to consider two completely different groups of readers, namely advanced readers and beginners. Meanwhile, *Rahima* appears to have an easier task in choosing the language because the audience is more precisely demarcated compared to that of *AuleeA* and *NooR*. The presentation of the arguments in Hindun Anisah's answer even uses Arabic texts from *kitab kuning* and *al-qawa'id al-fiqhiyyah* (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence), which are familiar to *Rahima*'s female ulama.

Similarities and differences between the three Q&A sections can also be found in the answers to women-related questions.

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171 Author's interview with Bashirotul Hidayah, 19 January 2018.

Name of magazine and Q&A section	Examples of Answers to Women-Related Questions
<p>Tanya Jawab of Swara Rahima</p>	<p><b>Title: Refusing or accepting arranged marriage as devotion to parents?</b></p> <p>Sister Zahroh who is blessed by Allah.</p> <p>Wah, I am very happy to read your critical letter. I am grateful for your trust in us to help you in solving your problems.</p> <p>Dear sister Zahroh. Many teenagers have dilemmas like you. The dilemma between refusing an arranged marriage and obeying it in the name of the parents. Basically, these two things cannot be contradicted, because refusing an arranged marriage does not mean you are not devoted to your parents as long as you convey your refusal in a good manner.</p> <p>The age of sixteen years is still too young to get married. In order to have a marriage, physical (biological) and psychological maturity is very important. According to experts, biologically women under the age of twenty have a high risk of disease and death when carrying out reproductive functions. Psychologically, a sixteen-year-old girl is still in an unstable condition, so she is not ready yet for a marriage. We need to remember that the purpose of marriage is to achieve <i>sakinah</i> (peacefulness), <i>mawaddah</i> (love), and <i>rahmah</i> (compassion) (QS. Ar Rum [30]: 21). This precious goal implicitly presupposes psychological maturity for whoever is getting married.</p> <p>The results of various studies show that the psychological impact of getting married at a young age includes setbacks in terms of education, poverty, loss of employment opportunities, easy divorce, children who get insufficient attention, stunted development and being easily influenced to engage in deviant behaviour. With all these negative psychological effects, how can the precious goal of marriage be achieved?</p> <p>Sister Zahroh who is <i>birrul walidain</i> (dutiful to parents),</p> <p>Parents do have an obligation to become guardians for their children when the child is getting married. The obligation to become a guardian does not contain an obligation to match his</p>

sons and daughters, let alone force an arranged marriage. In this case our Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

لا تنكح الأيم حتى تستأمر، ولا تنكح البكر حتى تستأذن

Meaning: A divorcee cannot be given in marriage without consulting her, nor a virgin without her consent.

Based on this hadith, a woman has the right to refuse when she does not approve of the matchmaking and parents are not allowed to force their will on their daughter.

The hadith above emphasizes women's rights over themselves. No one, not even her parents, has the right to rule when and with whom a woman will get married except the woman herself. The word *hatta* (Arabic: until) in the hadith emphasizes the importance of parents respecting the rights of their daughters. An arranged marriage will not occur if the woman who is going to be married in the arranged marriage does not agree with it.

The hadith also implies that refusing an arranged marriage suggested by the parents is not considered as an act of defiance or non-devotion to the parents. Accepting or rejecting matchmaking is a right for women. Being dutiful or not to parents is not measured by the person accepting or rejecting the match, but by the way the child communicates with the parents.

Many verses in the Qur'an emphasize that what is meant by *wa bi al-walidaini ihsana* (doing good to parents) lies in the way children interact and communicate with their parents. When a girl agrees or disagrees with the opinion of her parent, the girl is not prohibited from conveying disagreement to her parent. However, she must convey it in a good way and in a language that does not hurt the parents.

Beloved Sister Zahroh,

I think it is best for you to explain your disagreement to your parents. Invite your parents to discuss the negative effects that will be experienced if you get married early. Show and convince your parents that their concerns that you will take a wrong path into promiscuity will not happen. I am sure that your parents really love you and will not be willing for you to experience the consequences or become a victim of early marriage.

As a *pesantren* graduate, you must understand the principle of *fiqh* that you can use when you talk to your parents, namely:

الضرر يزال

Meaning: eliminating *mudarat* (harm); avoiding early marriage can be meant as eliminating various *mudarat* that will occur [after marriage].

As for the public opinion that refusing a man's proposal can cause bad luck such as being an 'old maid'; that is only a myth that cannot be proven. There are so many women who get married to

	<p>men after refusing a number of marriage proposals. So, you don't have to worry about this myth.</p> <p>Dear sister Zahroh,</p> <p>Hopefully my answer is useful and can help reduce your anxiety. Hopefully you can discuss your problems with your parents. Once again, thank you for your trust in us. Have a good activity!</p> <p><i>Wassalamu 'alaikum wr.wb.</i><sup>172</sup></p> <p>(Nyai Hj. Hindun Anisah, M.A.)</p>
<p><i>Fiqhunnisa' of AuleeA</i></p>	<p><b>Title: The judgement on womb check by a male doctor</b></p> <p><i>Walaikum salam wr. Wb.</i></p> <p>Congratulations on the pregnancy, Miss Nadia. Hopefully you will always be healthy and be blessed with a lovely child. Here is what I can answer to your question.</p> <p><b>Islam and Pregnancy</b></p> <p>In the view of Islam, pregnancy is not just women's physical changes that occur due to sexual intercourse. However, having pregnancy in Islam is highly appreciated as a form of worship, because pregnancy means maintaining the continuity of generations of human beings, the caliph of Allah on this earth. Children are a blessing from Allah SWT and entrusted to every parent. In the future, when they have grown up, they will take responsibility in carrying out Allah's commands and protecting nature by doing good and productive deeds for the advancement of the civilization.</p> <p>Therefore, it is very important to protect the pregnancy, including the physical and spiritual health of the pregnant mother and to protect the physical and psychological health of the foetus by seeing and consulting competent people such as midwives or obstetricians. Maintaining the psychological health of the foetus can be done by taking care of the mother's psychological condition such as sending a lot of prayers during her pregnancy and getting closer to Allah SWT by reciting the Qur'an, <i>zikir</i> (reciting prayer), and by positive thinking, and being calm and happy.</p> <p>The process of human creation in the womb is described in the Qur'an surah al-Mu'minun [23]: 12-14. "And indeed, we created humankind from an extract clay. Then placed each 'human' as a sperm-drop in a secure place. Then We developed the drop into a clinging clot 'of blood', then developed the clot into a lump 'of flesh' then developed the lump into bones, then clothed the bones</p>

172 *Swara Rahima*, No. 48 Th. XIV, March 2015, 55-6.



with flesh, then We brought it into being as a new creation. So blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.”<sup>173</sup>

The above verse clearly describes the human embryo formation process. The Qur'an talked about the growth process of the foetus in the mother's uterus, step by step. This process cannot be seen immediately without the help of modern inspection tools like today. Medical examination tools such as ultrasound help humans know every phase of foetal development, so that the safety of mothers and babies can be more easily monitored.

#### **Using the services of a male obstetrician**

In order to maintain a pregnancy or foetus, it is important for a mother to selectively choose competent health workers. Because it is not only related to physical health, the presence of competent health workers will also ensure pregnant women inner peace. And indeed, we are encouraged by religion to entrust the problem to the experts, right?

In the book *at-Tahdzib fi Adillah Matn al-Ghayah wa al-Taqrīb* by Dr Musthofa Dīb al-Bughā, page 425 in the chapter “Law of Seeing Women”, it is explained as follows:

For medical purposes, the argument is allowed to view women only in terms of the body parts that need to be seen, referring to the hadith narrated by Jabir r.a. who said:

That Umm Salamah RA asked permission from the Prophet Muhammad SAW to seek treatment with cupping. The Prophet then ordered Abu Thaibah to seal Umm Salamah. Jabir said: 'I thought the Prophet said: He (Abi Thaibah) is the brother of Umm Salamah's age or a son who has not reached maturity (Muslim, *Al-Salam*, Bab Likulli Da'in Dawa'un wa Istihab al-Tadawi, hadith no 2206).

Women should seek treatment from a doctor or female healer. If there is no doctor or female healer, the woman seeking treatment must be accompanied by her husband or *mahram*. If in an area there is a doctor who is Muslim and has the competence, it is prohibited to seek treatment from a doctor other than that doctor.

The provisions that apply to women also apply to men. Therefore, men should not go to a female doctor if there is a male doctor in their area. If there is a female doctor, it is required for the man to invite another person who can prevent *khalwat* with the doctor.

And the *fiqh* book *Fathul Wahab*, volume 2, page 56 described:

173 <https://quran.com/23> Accessed 21 March 2021

	<p>The judgement on seeing and touching for medicinal purposes is permitted, (such as hooks and cupping), subject to the following provisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same sex, or if different sex must be accompanied by <i>mahram</i>.</li> <li>2. Use the services of non-Muslim doctors only when there are no Muslim doctors with the required expertise.</li> </ol> <p>This discussion reaches the following conclusions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Female doctors are not allowed to treat male patients, if there are male doctors who can treat them, and vice versa.</li> <li>2. It is not permissible for male doctors to treat female patients, and vice versa, when there is no same-sex doctor, except [when the patient is] accompanied by a <i>mahram</i>.</li> <li>3. Non-Muslim doctors (both male and female) are not allowed to treat Muslim women patients, if there are Muslim male or female doctors who can treat them.</li> </ol> <p><i>Wallahu a'lam bi al-shawab</i> (Only Allah who knows the truth).<sup>174</sup></p> <p>(Hj. Bashirotul Hidayah, M.Pdi, Tim FORDAF, Forum Daiyah Fatayat, PW Fatayat NU Jawa Timur.</p>
<p>Worship to Allah of NooR</p>	<p><b>Title: Guardian refuses to marry you off</b></p> <p>Shafia who is trying to find a solution, NooR empathizes with the problem you are experiencing. Hopefully you will remain patient, tough, and rational.</p> <p>NooR suggests, as the first step, to look for scholars or figures whom your father heard of. Try to tell the scholar hat happened, and ask him or her to be the mouthpiece of your aspirations so that your father will be pleased to be a guardian and at the same time ask him to advise you. Your father needs advice because his refusal to become a guardian is so unfair. It is just a matter of spending money. Moreover, there has been an application and there has been a previous agreement regarding the spending money that the prospective husband can afford. And, you and your future husband are both adults and economically independent. Your marriage should not be prevented.</p> <p>While asking for help from the religious scholar or figure heard of by your father, ask God for direct help with lots of <i>doa</i> (prayer) and <i>sedekah</i> (charity). Recite al-Fatihah after every prayer dedicated to your father. May Allah soften his heart.</p> <p>While trying and praying, consult BP4 or the leader on how your marriage should still take place officially and be registered by</p>

the state, with the guardian of the judge. Rasulullah SAW said, which means, "Any woman who marries without the permission of her guardian, her marriage is cancelled, her marriage is cancelled, her marriage is cancelled. If her husband has intercourse with her, she is entitled to a dowry because her *farjā* has been legalized (for her husband). If the guardian refuses (to marry her off) then the sultan is the guardian for someone who does not have a guardian." (HR Ahmad, Abu Davud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah from Aisyah RA.)

Frankly speaking, NooR does not recommend *sirri* (unregistered) marriage because the biggest risk lies with the women, if a child is born. NooR recommends a legal marriage with a biological father's guardian or legal with a judge's guardian. If, for example, it is official with the judge's guardian and if one day the father agrees, this just strengthens the marriage. I hope this advice helps. *Wassalam*.<sup>175</sup>

(Badriyah Fayumi, Redaktur Ahli)

The answers on women-related questions in the three Q&A sections of the magazines indicate an integral spirit and messages that are in favour of women, including messages of *maslaha* (benefit) for women, reciprocity, and equality. These findings exemplify the fact that through written fatwas in the Q&A sections, women ulama who are the resource persons and part of Rahima and KUPI's networks have also mainstreamed progressive ideas, as has been done by the KUPI movement. For example, in the answer in the *Tanya Jawab* section, Hindun Anisah argued that marriage at the age of sixteen does not bring *maslaha* to women, from the perspective of both the physical and psychological aspects of women. This harmful impact cannot be ruled out for the sake of carrying out the order in Islam that a child should obey and serve their parents, namely by agreeing to the arranged marriage. Hindun provided the argument of *al-qawa'id al-fiqhiyyah: al-dhararu yuzalu*, meaning that *kemudaran*

175 NooR, Vol. XVIII Th. XIII/2016, 19

(harm) should be eliminated. She also emphasized in her answer that women have the right to refuse an arranged marriage by referring to a hadith as the source of her opinion. Bashiratul Hidayah's answer to a question about prenatal treatment for women carried out by a male doctor also indicates a message of reciprocity (*mubadalah*) in the sense that what applies to women also applies to men. For example, it was written in the text: "The provisions that apply to women also apply to men", therefore, men should not go to a female doctor if there is a male doctor in their area. If there is only a female doctor available, it is required for the man to invite another person to accompany in order to prevent *khalwat*.<sup>176</sup> Likewise, the message of equality between women and men is also shown by Badriyah Fayumi's answer responding to a question about a guardian who refuses to marry the questioner of. She emphasizes that as an adult, regardless of gender, women and men have the right and ability to make decisions for their respective lives including marriage. "You and your future husband are both adults and economically independent. Your marriage should not be prevented," Badriyah writes.

The progressive messages advanced by the Q&A sections confirm that these three magazines also mainstream progressive Islamic thought through print media, as has been done by female ulama of the Rahima and KUPI networks through their preaching and religious Q&A at *majelis taklim*. However, the progressive opinions are generally more complex and thus less easily explained compared to conservative messages. For instance, conservatives can just say that the age of marriage for girls starts with puberty, as marked by menstruation. So girls who start menstruating at the age of only twelve can already be married. Their message is simple and clear with only one option and reason and in that sense can be relatively easily understood

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176 *Khalwat* is a form of an Islamic moral order "that even deems it morally questionable if a woman is in a room alone together with a man unrelated to her, and as there are rigid regimentations of women in public, it is to be expected that women's scope of action will become further restricted" (Schröter 2013, 19).

by the audience. Meanwhile, progressive groups who apply more contextualist interpretations also take into account the complexity of everyday life, women's experiences, women's social situations, women's desires and ambitions, and women's relationships, not only to men but also to other women from other social classes, to arrive at the statement that child marriage is unlawful according to Islam. Presumably, this kind of message is more difficult to understand and thus accept.

While progressive opinions are thus more difficult to explain, at the same time the resource persons prefer to write in magazines that try to reach as many people as possible and in a mediated landscape. Traditionalist progressives want to draw on *fiqh* and local traditions in legal reasoning, such as the use of *aqwalul 'ulama* written in *kitab kuning* and so forth. This is important for them but they also cannot take into account that the readers understand all the terms and references. Furthermore, since the fatwas are published, the resource persons are not the only agents involved in the process of formulating the answer and legal reasoning. The answers of the three Q&A sections of the magazines show that moving from oral to written fatwas leads to a different situation. In the case of oral fatwas, female ulama speak, interpret, and formulate the answer on their own behalf by considering the condition and the nature of their *jamaah*, which they already know. However in written fatwas published in magazines, female ulama speak, interpret questions, and formulate answers not only on behalf of themselves but also in close interaction with the editors who play their own distinctive role. Thus, the practice of making written fatwas comes with its own particular challenges and tensions, raising the question of how female ulama approach these challenges and tensions.

The first challenge is dealing with the tension between reflecting the ideology of the magazine and making the fatwas readable and understood by the readers regardless their background. In the case of *Swara Rahima*, the editorial staff

adopts the principle of intervening as little as possible to ensure a direct communication between readers and the resource person. However, this principle turns out to be difficult in practice because they want to stay true to their ideological messages and the values of *Rahima* but at the same time, they have to be respectful of the resource person. For example, A.D. Eridani, the former director of *Rahima*, explained, “I have forgotten which edition, we saw that the answer was not in favour of the victim of violence. So I asked Neneng, the managing editor, could this be communicated to the resource person, asking for additional explanation on this issue.”<sup>177</sup> This review is important to ensure that the answers given by the resource person are in accordance with *Rahima*’s values and are easily understood by readers. Because from the start of *Swara Rahima*’s publication, the editorial board of *Rahima* intended to use crisp and popular language in the magazine, but Eridani said that apparently it turns out to be really hard to achieve this.

At first Bashirotul Hidayah, the resource person of *AuleeA*, found it difficult to write her answers to readers’ questions because she has to incorporate the richness of traditional references, but the editor helped her in editing and making her writing readable by using popular terms. Hikmah Bafakih explained, “I am the one who always edits. Yes, it means that all the manuscripts up to forty-one published editions went through my hands.”<sup>178</sup> Indeed, through Hikmah, the editorial staff of *AuleeA* intervened in the answers, but her concern was how to relate them to the context and the needs of the readers. She sometimes found an answer from a resource person that was less contextual. For example, there was a question about the law of praying when not wearing a *mukena* (a special women’s cloth for praying) but wearing clothes that cover all of the body except the palms and face instead. Hikmah explained, “The answer actually had something to do with different interpretations in

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177 Author’s interview with A.D. Eridani, 8 December 2017.

178 Author’s interview with Hikmah Bafaqih, 6 November 2017.

Islam. However, the resource person did not answer it in that direction, even though this reader's question may relate to an experience of seeing a woman who prayed using only a robe, not using a *mukena*. If we did not mention it, it's wrong because it could be divisive. Because actually the aspect of covering one's *aurat* doesn't mean that you have to wear *mukena*, right?"<sup>179</sup> With regard to this intervention, both Hikmah and Ida understand and accept each other's responsibility. "Mbak Hikmah edited a part that was not significant. She didn't change the content of the answer. So she added one or two paragraphs in the conclusion. But she did not change my original language or references," Bashirotul Hidayah said.<sup>180</sup>

Easily understandable language is also a concern of the editorial staff of *NooR*, even more so than in the other magazines because it is a commercial outlet. When Badriyah Fayumi first wrote for *NooR*, her language was still hard to understand because it was thick with classical *pesantren* terms. Therefore, during an editorial meeting she received suggestions regarding her language. "Bu Badriyah, please don't write like this, it's too heavy," said Jetty.<sup>181</sup> After some time, Badriyah became aware of the use of popular language in her writing. But she realizes that the answers she gave to *Worship to Allah*, even though they are articulated in popular and light language, might be relatively heavy compared to the other popular women's magazines that only cover popular lifestyle topics such as *Femina* magazine. She cannot avoid using Islamic terms such as *syirkah* (the bond between husband and wife), *muzakki* (*zakat* payer), *mustahiq* (person who is entitled to *zakat*), and *ghorim* (person who is in debt). But the terms are relatively well known by ordinary Muslims compared to some words found in *Swara Rahima* or *AuleeA*. Jetty claimed that since the readers do not complain or send rejections to the editorial staff, this means that the answers

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179 Ibid.

180 Author's interview with Bashirotul Hidayah, 19 January 2018.

181 Author's interview with Jetty Rosalia Hadi, 9 December 2017.

of the Q&A section are seen as positive and can be understood by readers.

The second challenge is dealing with the tension on how to make the fatwas legitimate but at the same time acceptable to all readers no matter their group, religious affiliations and educational background. This challenge concerns the legal sources of fatwas and how to deliver them in a language and style that are appealing to the readers. The use of sources, I argue, is closely related to the composition of the audience. Because the readers of *Swara Rahima* are female ulama from Rahima's network and readers with a solid Islamic educational background, Hindun Anisah does not only use the Qur'an and hadith, but also *aqwalul 'ulama* (opinions of Muslim scholars), *al-qawa'id al-fiqhiyyah* (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence), fatwas from established ulama or fatwa institutions, for example a fatwa from a mufti in Egypt, and Indonesian legislation such as the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. Thus, her opinion can be considered legitimate by the readers. Meanwhile, for writing techniques, editors have the authority to edit texts and to make sure that the answers can be easily accepted by readers. Bashirotul Hidayah uses references from the *kitab kuning* as she believes that knowledge does not just spring from the Qur'an and hadith, but rather there is a *jumhur ulama*.<sup>182</sup> Among the books she refers to are *Fathul Wahab*, *Fathul Mu'in*, and *Fathul Qorib*, which are *fiqh* books. Because her answer is written in the form of an essay, she understands that having good writing skills and the ability to articulate formal religious language in a popular language is a must. But she is assisted by the editor of *AuleeA*.

The experience of Hindun Anisah and Bashirotul Hidayah in writing their answers for Q&A sections exemplifies the significant role of editors in making legitimate and acceptable answers. Thus, it can be argued that the construction of the media fatwa

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182 *Jumhur ulama* means the majority of ulama of four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, namely Shafi'i, Hambali, Hanafi, and Malik. Author's interview with Bashirotul Hidayah, 19 January 2018.



is a matter of shared authority between the religious scholar and the expert editor; both bringing to the table a specific form of expertise. Editors can even claim the authority as an editor by making rules regarding the answers, for example on what should be taken into account, as explained by Badriyah Fayumi through her experience. As an expert editor of *NooR*, Badriyah Rayumi has the authority to make rules in the construction of answers to questions in the *Worship to Allah* section. The rules are that the answers should be in the frame of inclusive Islam, taken Indonesia's experience into account, and incorporating women's perspective. "So the three perspectives are integrated. Because we are pluralistic [by looking at something from different perspectives], and we don't judge a single truth," Badriyah explained.<sup>183</sup> For example, there was a question about the use of perfume containing alcohol. She delivered different opinions on it and ended up with a statement of her own religious opinion, namely that it is better for *al-khuru'j min al-khilaf mustahabbun* (Arabic: escaping from controversy is [more] recommended), which means not using alcoholic perfume. This is the style of *NooR* magazine, which adopts the principle of providing choices and the principle of convenience in practicing Islam. However, she does use the Qur'an and hadith the most as references so that readers from various backgrounds are more receptive.

In these published fatwas, the conversation between audience and religious authority is mediated through the use of language and style and the involvement of a third agent, the editor. This indirect method cannot ensure whether the fatwas and their Islamic messages are received, recognized, and followed by the audience. Therefore, the magazines attempt to make the conversation between audience and ulama as direct as possible by minimizing the intervention of the editor, although this turns out to be difficult. They also use direct methods by reaching the respective audience directly in the *majelis taklim* and events that allow the involvement of female ulama and magazines.

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183 Author's interview with Badriyah Fayumi, 9 February 2018.

The initiative to form a reading group like Rahima does is also a form of a direct method for affirming and amplifying religious authority. Thus, written fatwas in the Q&A section are not stand-alone opinions; but they are part of a broader, multifaceted infrastructure or communication, as we have seen above.

In the case of *AuleeA*, the *Fiqhunnisa*' section is specifically managed by FORDAF (Forum of Preachers) of Fatayat NU in East Java. The resource persons of *Fiqhunnisa*' are members of FORDAF. Individually, apart from answering questions from senders, they also actively play a role as a religious authority in their respective communities, such as Bashirotul Hidayah in Jombang, East Java. Institutionally, FORDAF also has a community base of *pengajian* and beneficiaries for the programmes implemented, one of which was the inclusive *da'wa* programme. "So FORDAF created a programme about inclusive *da'wa* on how our preaching can also talk about the environment, equality, and gender justice. We have produced a joint module and a collaborative project with *SILe*," Hikmah Bafaqih explained.<sup>184</sup> Another programme was to build the capacity of *daiyah* as agents against radicalism and intolerance.<sup>185</sup> In an event themed "Knitting Interfaith Togetherness", Hikmah as the chair of Fatayat emphasized Fatayat NU East Java's willingness to join Perempuan Antarumat Beragama (the Interfaith Women's Forum) in East Java.<sup>186</sup>

"We have questions and answers like this in the media, but we also have *pengajian* (Islamic learning group) of *NooR* from mosque to mosque every month," said Jeti. The purpose of this off-road activity is not only to help the mosques financially, but also to bring *NooR* closer to its public of readers. However, in this programme, Badriyah experienced objections from the *pengajian*, who considered her ideas to be "liberal". "For example, in one place of *pengajian*, maybe because the people are more conservative, they said, Bu Badriyah tends to be 'liberal',"

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184 *SILe* is Supporting Islamic Leadership programme, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency.

185 Author's interview with Hikmah Bafaqih, 6 November 2017.

186 *AuleeA*, No.40, October 2017.

Badriyah said.<sup>187</sup> Jeti added that Badriyah was once in a panel at an event together with Musdah Mulia to talk about LGBT. “We don’t want Bu Badriyah to come to our *pengajian* because she agrees with [LGBT],” said Jeti. The *pengajian* members refused her without clearly understanding the context of the problem, and they had only read the title of the panel. In response to the incident, *NooR* communicated and clarified the thoughts in question. “We also often discuss how to do checks and recaps in Islam and what is the good news that we have to convey. We discuss these topics frequently in the magazine issues,” Jeti explained.<sup>188</sup>

## Conclusion

The media fatwa production through Q&A sections by female ulama resembles the practice of traditional fatwa-making in the sense that it involves a conversation between lay Muslims and religious authorities. However, in the context of mass-mediated fatwas, the conversation between audience and religious authority is not a direct, face-to-face communication. It is mediated through the use of written language and style, and the involvement of another agent, namely the editor. Although editors do not change the actual legal judgement of the fatwa, the experience of the three resource persons in writing their answers for Q&A sections still exemplifies the significant role editors play in making legitimate and acceptable answers. Thus, it can be argued that the construction of the media fatwa is a matter of shared authority between the religious scholar and the expert editor; both bring to the table a specific form of expertise. Editors can even claim their authority as an editor by making rules regarding the answers and what should be taken into account.

In the mass-mediated fatwas, the fatwa is co-produced by three key agents, namely the audience (both the people who send in questions and the broader audience), resource persons

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187 Author’s interview with Badriyah Fayumi, 9 February 2018.

188 Author’s interview with Jeti Rosalia Hadi, 9 December 2017.

or female ulama who respond to the questions, and the editorial staff of the magazines. These three agents have an influential role in the production of media fatwas, and thus their relationship is constantly negotiated. The first agent, which is the audience, plays a role in asking a question that is related to everyday dilemmas and lived realities. It is notable that the more popular and broader the market of a magazine, the more “public” and “common” the religious questions and problems that are being asked, corresponding to the experiences of ordinary Muslims in general.

In the production of fatwa-making, the resource persons who are female ulama take into account the goal of the magazine, the nature of the audience, and the aspects of readability and acceptability of their answers with respect to the social and educational background of readers. Thus, it is different for the resource person of *Swara Rahima* in writing her answers compared to the other magazines, *AuleeA*, and *NooR*. *Swara Rahima* uses Arabic texts and some specific term about *fiqh* such as the rules of *fiqh adh-dhararu yuzalu*, and Arabic wording analysis, such as the meaning of the word “hatta” in the sentence; these are pieces of information that may be understood by *pesantren* graduates. Meanwhile, the readers of *AuleeA* and *NooR* come from a broader circle and wider range of backgrounds, and therefore the resource persons of the two magazines attempt to use simple language and a popular writing style.

Because the indirect method of conversation cannot ensure whether the fatwas and their Islamic messages are received, recognized, and followed by the audience, the magazines attempt to make the conversation between audience and ulama as direct as possible by minimizing the intervention of editor, although this turns out to be difficult. They also use direct methods by reaching the respective audience directly in the *majelis taklim* and events that allow the involvement of female ulama and magazines. Thus, written fatwas in the Q&A section cannot be stand-alone opinions; they are part of a broader, multifaceted

infrastructure or communication, which also includes more direct encounters between religious authorities and their followers. These communications reinforce each other.