

The Life of the Terrorist Convicts' Wives: Unequal Family Dynamics and Islamic Legal Frameworks

 **10.15408/ajis.v25i1.38150**

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Abstract

This article discussed the lives of the wives of terrorist convicts, including their everyday lives, and the relationship between the wives and their husbands in the terrorist offenders' families. This theme is important to be examined for the following reasons: Indonesia has experienced a series of bombing actions throughout the country, and the existing studies mainly describe the actors who are mostly men affiliated with radical groups. This article was written based on field research in six places in Indonesia, including Lamongan, Surabaya, Madiun, Bojonegoro (East Java), Surakarta (Central Java), and Yogyakarta. Data were collected using interviews, observations, and documentary studies. The results of this study revealed that the wives of terrorist offenders faced difficulties in their lives, such as economic difficulties as they became the main breadwinners for the family, and they faced stereotyping as the families of terrorist offenders. Furthermore, there were unequal relationships between the wives and the husbands; for instance, most of the wives did not know their husbands' activities related to terrorist actions. This belief is supported by interpretations of Islamic law, which assert that men are leaders with full authority to manage their families and oversee their wives and children.

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang kehidupan istri narapidana teroris, termasuk kehidupan sehari-harinya, serta bagaimana hubungan istri dan suami dalam keluarga pelaku teroris. Tema ini penting untuk dikaji karena beberapa alasan berikut; Indonesia pernah mengalami serangkaian aksi pengeboman yang tersebar di beberapa wilayah di tanah air, dan kajian yang pernah dilakukan, terutama menggambarkan pelaku terorisme yang sebagian besar adalah laki-laki yang berafiliasi dengan kelompok radikal. Artikel ini ditulis berdasarkan penelitian lapangan di enam wilayah di Indonesia meliputi, Lamongan, Surabaya, Madiun, Bojonegoro (Jawa Timur), Surakarta (Jawa Tengah), dan Yogyakarta. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan metode berikut ini; wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumenter. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa istri pelaku terorisme menghadapi kesulitan dalam hidupnya, seperti kesulitan ekonomi karena mereka menjadi pencari nafkah utama keluarga dan mendapat stereotip sebagai keluarga teroris. Selain itu, terdapat hubungan yang timpang antara istri dan suami, misalnya sebagian besar istri tidak mengetahui aktivitas suaminya terkait aksi teroris. Kondisi ini diperkuat dengan adanya justifikasi yang dirujuk dari ajaran Islam, yakni interpretasi terhadap hukum Islam yang menjelaskan laki-laki adalah pemimpin dan mempunyai otoritas penuh untuk mengelola keluarga dan mengontrol istri dan anak-anaknya.

Keywords:

Wives of terrorist convicts; Terrorism; Islamic family law

How to Cite:

Zakiyah., et.al., (2025). The Life of the Terrorist Convicts' Wives: Unequal Family Dynamics and Islamic Legal Frameworks. AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v25i1.38150>

Introduction

Indonesia has experienced terrorism for many years. Several bombing blasts have happened in various public places, such as hotels, embassies, churches, police stations, and mosques (Pusponegoro, 2003; Ramakrishna & Seng Tan, 2003; DW.com, 2009; Kompas.com 2016; 2011; Arfah, 2018; Damarjati, 2018; Hadi, 2018; Haryanto, 2018; Viva.news.id, 2011). Most of those bombing was conducted by men affiliated with radical groups like Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jamaah Ansyarud Daulah (JAD), and the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS). For instance, the terrorists of the first and the second Bali bombings were members of JI (Zakiah, 2016), and the actors of the Thamrin bombing were associated with ISIS. Meanwhile, the suicide bombers of the Surabaya and Makassar cases were members of JAD. Furthermore, in the recent bombing attacks in Surabaya and Makassar in 2018 and 2021, there were women, along with their husbands and their children, as the perpetrators. This indicated that women in the radical group were used as significant actors on the front line. This was different from the past, where women primarily played a supporting role, often assisting their husbands and performing domestic chores (Farida et al., 2020).

Although there were women involved in terrorist actions (Debangana, 2016; Farida et al., 2020; Margolin, 2019; Zakiah et al., 2023). Previous scholars had hardly ever examined the existence of the wives of terrorist convicts. The discussion of terrorism mainly talks about the actors who are mostly male terrorists, in contrast to how the lives of the terrorists' wives are being neglected. Some studies mentioned that women or wives have different roles in terrorist groups, such as the supporters of their husbands, the victims, and even the front-line actors (Asiyah et al., 2020; Kasanah, 2021; Margolin, 2019; Mulia, 2020). Other studies mentioned that the wives and children of the terrorists had experienced difficulties in their lives due to their husbands/fathers being arrested by Densus 88 (Special Detachment of Police 88 squad). For instance, the wife becomes a "single" mother and the primary breadwinner. Further studies mentioned that terrorist actions have affected the lives of the terrorist's family members, as they received stigmatization, the terrorist's families have tried to be tough and strong to increase their resiliency in the communities (Akbar & Fujiati, 2021a). In this case, the wives will be the most affected by their husbands' actions, since some of them were forced to support their husbands' activities (Taskarina, 2020). Meanwhile, some of the terrorists' wives have exclusive religious views, and they ignore their husbands' activities. Meanwhile, within the family, the wife was placed as their husband's subordinate and complementary element (Maghfur & Muniroh, 2013).

Furthermore, the terrorists' wives faced significant challenges because of their husbands' actions related to terrorism, such as social isolation (Guru 2012; Rufaedah & Putra 2018a) and psychological trauma (Rufaedah & Putra, 2018a). They also often become victims of various forms of victimization, including pressure, intimidation, and symbolic violence (Taskarina, 2020). The wives seek social support from family, friends, and religious communities (Yingling et al., 2015; Zara, 2020). They also seek instrumental help, advocacy, and religious support (Zara, 2020). Other studies mentioned that not all of the terrorist wives agree with their husbands' actions. Some wives of convicted terrorists hold inclusive and tolerant religious beliefs. The wives and their families have made efforts to discourage their husbands from joining specific extremist groups. However, despite their attempts, the husbands were ultimately arrested by Densus 88 (Maghfur & Muniroh, 2013). Similarly, there is the wife of a convicted terrorist who claimed her interpretation of Islam followed the Quran and Hadith, focusing on the Prophet Muhammad's actions, but she rejected violent jihad (*jihād qitāl*). She urged her husband against engaging in it, but he was firm in his convictions and was subsequently arrested by Densus 88. While in prison, she visited him often, expressing her view that his interpretation was wrong (Fikriyati, 2017).

In line with this issue, the everyday life of terrorists' wives, especially those who are not involved in terrorism, is far from the highlight. They become invisible in the global discourse of terrorism. These issues are important to be discussed, as several studies mentioned that families become an important part of recruiting new members of terrorist networks. For instance, Waskiewicz (2012) explained that friendship relationships were used to recruit new members of the terrorist group (Waskiewicz, 2012). Other studies have also described kinship as a significant element in the development of radical groups (Magouirk et al., 2008). Marriage and families are important places to introduce violent ideology to be used in the conflict zones. In addition, the husband's affiliation with the terrorist group will affect their wife in supporting his actions (Toyibah, 2022). Besides, children are also significantly affected by their fathers' acts of terrorism. A concerning trend is the increasing involvement of women and children in terrorist activities, as demonstrated during the 2018 bombings in Surabaya and Sidoarjo (Farida et al., 2020). When discussing the children of convicted terrorists, there are two main points of focus: the risk of them being influenced by radicalism and their safety as they grow and develop in society (Cook & Schneider, 2024). This underscores the important role of mothers in supporting their children. Research by Fikriyati (2017) indicates that the wives of convicted terrorists face challenges in restoring their children's mental health while also managing daily needs and encouraging their husbands to refrain from returning to jihad in harmful ways (Fikriyati, 2017).

Different from the previous studies, this article will emphasize the discussion of the wives of terrorist convicts who are not involved in terrorist action and networks. The objectives of this study include these aspects: firstly, how the wives of terrorist convicts struggle during their day-to-day lives to nurture their children and continue their lives while their husbands are in prison. Secondly, this article will look at how the relationship between the wife and husband in terrorist families is viewed using Islamic family law perspectives, since some of the wife terrorist offenders did not know their husbands' activities related to terrorist actions, leading to unequal relationships between them within the family.

According to Islamic law, marriage is an equal relationship between a husband and a wife. In Islam, there is equity between men and women in these aspects: (a) equality to determine or select their husband/wife, (b) wife and husband have respective roles and responsibilities, (c) the husband has to provide daily needs and welfare for his family members (Ahmadi & Bolghan-Abadi, 2016). Islam influences marital relationships, unites families, and protects women from harassment and oppression (Alghafli et al., 2014). However, this is not the case in terrorist families, in which the wife becomes a victim of her husband's actions. Besides, they are subordinated to and sometimes exploited by their husband to support their radical actions. Their husband also determined the wife's behavior for religious reasons (Taskarina & Haryani, 2017). It can be seen that there is an unequal relationship in the terrorist family, in which the wives are often marginalized and expected to be obedient to their husbands. Thus, this inequality might cause problems faced by the terrorist wives.

Method

This research used a qualitative approach, especially a case study on the lives of the wives of terrorist convicts. The fieldwork was conducted in six locations, namely: Madiun, Lamongan, Bojonegoro, Surabaya (East Java), Surakarta (Central Java), and Yogyakarta. Data was collected through the following methods: *firstly*, Interviews were conducted with terrorist wives selected as informants based on their geographical locations: one from Central Java, four from East Java, and three from Yogyakarta. Some of these informants were terrorist wives whose husbands were serving prison sentences ranging from five years to life sentences at the time of the interviews. Additionally, the study included wives of former terrorists who had left

the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network and were actively collaborating with the government on deradicalization efforts. The interviews aimed to gather information directly from these women about how they managed to survive while their husbands were in prison. To obtain more comprehensive data, the study also involved interviews with the families of terrorist prisoners, police officers who supported these families, officials from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and members of Densus 88 (a special Indonesian Police Squad). These informants were chosen based on their close relationships with the terrorist prisoners and their wives, which allowed for in-depth insights into the struggles faced by the wives and the dynamics of their family relationships.

Secondly, observation; in this stage, researchers observed the house of terrorist convicts and their neighborhood. During the interview and observation process, the researcher engaged with the informants authentically to foster a comfortable and familiar atmosphere, which facilitated the collection of authentic data. A personal approach was effectively employed through friendly and empathetic communication, helping to build trust between the researcher and the informants. Additionally, the researcher actively addressed potential bias by critically reflecting on personal positions and perceptions that could influence data interpretation. The power dynamics between the researcher and the participants were explicitly discussed to ensure a balanced relationship, allowing participants to express their views freely without pressure.

Thirdly, a documentary study was employed to gather data related to the topic under study from written documents, including previous research reports, academic journal articles, monographs, book chapters, and online news sources. This approach enables researchers to understand the context, theoretical framework, and prior findings that support primary data analysis. It also enhances the discussion surrounding the research. The data analysis in this study combines the results from interviews, observations, and documentary studies to offer a comprehensive understanding of the lives of the wives of terrorist prisoners, their survival strategies, and the unequal dynamics within their families.

The Wives of the Terrorist Convicts and Their Everyday Lives

This section will describe the lives of the wives of terrorist offenders, providing insight into their daily routines after their husbands are imprisoned and the strategies they use to meet their needs. During the field research, the wives who were interviewed were considered "single mothers," as most of their husbands were still in prison. Only three of them had been released from jail. Here are the details of their situations:

Firstly, UZ is the wife of FT, a terrorist offender who was sentenced to life imprisonment for his role as an intellectual actor in planning the attack on the Villa Karaoke Club in Ambon in February 2005 ([Joint Committee Print, 2008](#)). UZ and FT were married through an arranged marriage organized by their parents. At the time of her marriage, UZ was not aware that her husband was a convicted terrorist who had received a life sentence. Despite this, UZ and FT had a son raised solely by UZ. She and her son live in a rented room near the prison where FT serves his sentence. The monthly rent for their room is IDR 350,000.

UZ struggled to fulfill her daily needs as she had become the sole breadwinner for herself and her son. She supplied kerosene to her husband to earn money, which he would then sell in prison. She usually bought the kerosene from a nearby stall or agent and brought it to the prison. Additionally, she sometimes received orders to cook vegetables for the prisoners. Through these jobs, she was able to pay for their daily expenses. However, for the monthly room rent, she received help from her family, especially her brother.

Secondly, UR is the wife of a terrorist offender named UP, a member of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) who has expertise in assembling bombs and shooting. UR and UP have been

married since 1998, and they have no children. She stayed alone at a small rented house near her husband's prison. She sold essential food items and daily products such as instant noodles, frozen chicken meat, sugar, and drinks to support herself. She purchased all that stuff at the nearby market, and then her husband sold it in prison.

Thirdly, UAJ is AJ's wife. AJ was a jihadist activist who became the head of "Mujahidin KOMPAK" in the 2000s, a militant organization that supplied weapons to Muslims in eastern Indonesia's conflict zones (Chalmers, 2017). UAJ resides in a humble house with her parents, younger brother, and three children. To make ends meet, she sold fruit juice and mixed ice at a stall on the side of the highway, which she rented for IDR 7,500,000 per year. However, this small business venture failed, and she had to stop doing it. Subsequently, she began selling daily necessities, including rice, soap, oil, sugar, and other staple foods, from her home. Additionally, she helps her mother sell food at the nearby market every morning. Furthermore, she attended a sewing course to hone her sewing skills and purchased a sewing machine to enhance her abilities further. At the time of the interview, she had not yet received any orders for sewing since she lacked confidence in her abilities.

Fourthly, USI is JP's wife, a former member of Jemaah Islamiyah from 1992 to 2009. JP was arrested by Detachment 88 as he was suspected of being a recruiter for terrorist groups for training in Aceh (Pakpahan, 2010). USI was initially widowed after her first husband died in an accident. Later, she married JP in Aceh in 2003. Due to the 2004 Aceh Tsunami disaster, she and her family, including her husband and children, returned to Java and now reside in Sukoharjo, Central Java. In her everyday life, she actively participates in several Islamic teaching assemblies (female *majlis taklim*) in her neighborhood, either as a member or a teacher. Apart from being a housewife, she sells frozen food such as nuggets, sausages, meatballs, and other frozen foods. The revenue from her small business activities is utilized to provide for her family's daily necessities.

Fifthly, UB is KI's wife. KI was arrested in Bekasi on charges of planning a bombing at the Myanmar embassy office. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment by the South Jakarta District Court (detikNews, 2015). UB married KI at 19, one year after graduating from high school. She is an ordinary Muslim woman who wears ordinary-sized clothes and a *hijāb*. At the beginning of her husband's arrest, the surrounding neighbors gossiped that her husband was a terrorist convict. This caused her and her mother to feel burdened, and made her mother sick, and then she passed away. During her husband's jail term, she lived in her parents' modest house in Madiun, East Java, with her father, brother, and three children (two boys and one girl). Her first child experienced trauma because of his father's arrest; he became reluctant to talk with his father during their visit to the correctional institution. On the other hand, his two siblings are willing to communicate with their father by phone and during their visit to the prison. Furthermore, she sells food and snacks at a nearby school's canteen to earn an income. She also works as a housemaid for one of her relatives, cleaning their house and assisting them with household chores.

Sixthly, NA is LG's wife. LG was arrested for a terrorism case as he was affiliated with the Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD). In her everyday life, NA was a housewife and did not know much about her husband's attendance at the Islamic teaching assembly associated with the JAD. She is an ordinary woman living in a modest house with her daughter, granddaughter, and son-in-law in the densely populated area of Yogyakarta. During her husband's time in prison, she received stigmatization from some of her neighbors as a terrorist family. At the same time, she got support from her extended family, some of her neighbors, the village staff, and the police officers. For her daily needs, she was supported by her daughter, who earned money from her work at the nearby factory.

Seventhly, YN is the wife of DS. Her husband was arrested in Semarang, Central Java, because of his affiliation with Jamaah Islamiyah. YL is an ordinary woman who appears to be

like any other Muslim female. She attended an Islamic teaching in her village affiliated with Muhammadiyah, one of the largest Muslim organizations in the country. The couple has seven children, with their eldest son and the third working outside town. In comparison, the other five children attended university, senior high school, junior high school, and elementary school, respectively. When her husband was arrested, YN was shocked and traumatized. She received psychological services and companionship offered by the police officer. She and her three children live in a shelter in Yogyakarta that is provided by a police officer. In the shelter, she shares a house with another wife of a terrorist offender and their children. YN works as an online seller, selling clothes and other products. During her stay in the shelter, she participated in the activities offered by the shelter board members, but has not yet participated in any community activities.

Eighthly, YL is the wife of NN, who was arrested for his affiliation with Jamaah Islamiyah. YL is an alumna of an Islamic boarding school in Lamongan, East Java, and she has memorized all the verses of the Quran, making her a hafiz. She dresses like other female Muslims, wearing colorful clothes and a veil. She and her son live in a shelter in Yogyakarta owned and managed by a police officer. The shelter provides for their daily needs, but YL also works as an online seller to earn additional income. She shares the house with YN and her children.

Being a member of a terrorist family had made the wife and children cope with social effects and psychological trauma. A study indicated that the psychological consequences of a terrorist attack can impact emotions, behavior, and cognition, potentially leading to mental health disorders such as trauma, PTSD, and severe depression ([Committee on Responding to the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism Board on Neuroscience & Behavioral Health, 2003](#)). These effects extend beyond the direct victims of the attacks; they also impact the families of the terrorists involved. Interviews with eight wives of imprisoned terrorists reveal several psychological and social consequences they experience due to their husbands' actions. Firstly, these women often face a significant change in their roles, needing to transition from being solely a maternal figure to assuming both maternal and paternal responsibilities. Secondly, they face challenges in securing income to meet their families' needs as they become the primary breadwinners.

Third, psychological pressure arises from the negative stigma imposed by society. As reported by informant NA, some of her neighbors attached a negative label to her. This feeling of being ostracized can linger, causing the family of the terrorist perpetrator to redefine their identity to cope and interact with society, and to overcome the negative stigma associated with them ([Akbar & Fujiati, 2021b](#); [Asiyah et al., 2014](#); [Hendarto, 2023](#); [Rufaedah & Putra, 2018b](#); [Sri, 2021](#); [Ulfiyatin, 2015](#)). The psychological and social impacts of this stigma can be alleviated with strong support from extended family members, officials at the shelter or protection services, and the surrounding community, provided they do not reinforce the negative stigma against the terrorist offenders' wives.

Women's Position within the Family: Islamic Legal Framework

Previous scholars have initiated the discussion on women's position within the family by examining gender relations in various societies. Some studies have examined the conservative religious tradition, which emphasises traditional gender relations and family ideals, including the division of roles and responsibilities between men and women ([Jeffery & Qureshi, 2022](#); [Goldman, 2004](#); [Gallagher & Smith 1999](#)). Another study said that marriage in Islam has a firm contract that binds a man and a woman in an important partnership, and this leads to responsibility and rights among both of them. In this case, women have the right to get respect, dignity, honor, and good treatment from their husbands ([Khan, 2011](#)). Aside from their

roles in the domestic sphere, wives have the right to participate in public activities, including social and economic endeavors. Women are permitted to work outside their homes and have the right to participate in political matters (Maula, 2016; Aspinall et al., 2021; Blackburn, 2008; Galloway, 2023). Even some women have challenged their potential to engage in the workforce and other activities, including pursuing opportunities in political leadership (Maula, 2016; Aspinall et al., 2021; Blackburn, 2008; Galloway, 2023; Ghafournia, 2022).

Javed Mia (2015) discusses the position of women in Islamic family law, explaining that women have rights in Islam. He argues that men and women are equal human beings and must be treated with the same respect and equal human rights. Additionally, both men and women will receive rewards and punishments based on their actions, whether good or bad (Javed Mia, 2015). Furthermore, several Muslim scholars have challenged the traditional notions of men's and women's roles in domestic and public spaces. They maintain equality between men and women in Islam, as both are recognized equally as human beings, despite the distinction in their roles. This perspective serves as a foundation for ensuring that women have equal access to education, economic opportunities, political participation, and other public resources (Riesebrodt, 1993; Ahmed & Ali, 2021; Hasan, 2012; Wadud, 2018; Muliadi, 2017; 2007).

Moreover, further scholars have made more progressive interpretations of Quran verses regarding women in Islam. For instance, Al-Dossari (2009) mentioned that the Quran (verse al-Ḥajj-5) indicates no distinction in the initial stages of development for all humans. In verse, al-Mu'minūn, the Quran provides a second example that means there are no differences between the sexes in the origin of the human creation (Al-Dossari, 2009; Omran, 2020). Additionally, Engineer (1992) explains that the Quran gives equal status to men and women because they are created from one *nafs* (living entity), as he refers to verse al-Nisā' (4:1) and al-Isrā' (17:70). Therefore, neither gender holds an advantage over the other (Engineer, 1992).

According to Islamic law, women in a family have rights similar to those of men, such as the right to transfer or inherit property. Women in Islam are also entitled to receive *mahr* (dower) when they get married. This dower has to be paid by the husband before or after the wedding ceremony (Muslim & Ja'far, 2019; Sakinah & Rifa'i, 2021; Harahap, 2013). Furthermore, women have the right to select their husbands in marriage, so without their consent, there will be no marriage (Ansary, 2005; Sakinah & Rifa'i, 2021; Javed Mia, 2015). However, this does not always happen in practice, as parents sometimes force their daughters to marry a person of their choice. For instance, in the case of terrorist offender wives, one of them was getting married, which was arranged by their parents, and at first, she did not know about the status of her future husband, who is a life sentence prisoner. Although an argument suggests that parents have the right to *ibār*, or act as the marriage guardian, in which some claim they can determine their daughter's future husband, parents cannot force their daughter into marriage. This *ijbār* is a right exercised in consideration of the daughter's best interests (Harahap, 2013).

In Islam, both men and women have the right to file for divorce. If a wife is no longer compatible with her husband, she can file for a divorce in court. This type of divorce is known as *khulū*, which means "to let it go". The judge will then decide on the divorce. In Indonesia, the Kompilasi Hukum Islam (Compilation of Islamic Law) states that a judge can grant divorce based on certain factors, such as if one of them has received a five-year sentence of imprisonment or heavier punishment (Dahwadin et al., 2020; Azizah, 2012; Harahap, 2013). In the case of terrorist wives, although some of them have the option to file for divorce in court, none of them have chosen to do so. Instead, they chose to maintain their family and hoped their husband would return as a better person after his release from prison.

The relationship between husband and wife within a family in extremist groups mainly follows the classical interpretation of Islamic teaching. One of their references is Quran verse

al-Nisā' 34: "Men are the leaders of women because God has made some of them excel over others, and because men have spent part of their wealth. Righteous women are obedient and guard themselves according to God's rules when their husbands are away." It was interpreted that the husband was a leader and responsible for his wives and children. In this case, the husband has the authority to manage the family, and the wife must obey her husband (Muniroh & Ahmad, 2013; Maghfur & Muniroh, 2013; Ahmad, 2014). Moreover, women in this kind of group have no right to control their husbands outside the home. For instance, in Poso, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, women in radical families should not know their husbands' doings (Azca & Putri, 2021). This aligns with the study findings that indicate most of the terrorist convicts' wives did not understand their husbands' involvement in the radical groups. This lack of mutual communication has created an imbalance in their relationship. In addition, as said by the wives of terrorist offenders in this study, most of them did not accept the radical ideologies and they opposed extremism, but remained trapped in the patriarchal structures.

Further scholars, including female Muslim feminists such as Amina Wadud, Riffat Hassan, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and Fatima Mernissi, have debated the classical interpretations of Islamic teachings. For example, Riffat Hassan argues that the word "*qawwāmūn*" in verse an-Nisa 34 specifically relates to the husband's role within the household, rather than implying that men are leaders in a general sense. In this context, while a man is responsible for providing for his family, women still have the opportunity to work outside the home and contribute financially to support the family. She further explains that *qawāmmūn* does not mean "leader" or "ruler", rather, it signifies the protector or breadwinner of the family (Hakiki & Rohmatika, 2024; Tohir, 2018). Meanwhile, Amina Wadud explains that the term "*qawwāmūn*" means "a leader for women" based on at least these two conditions: *first*, they can prove their ability and superiority. *Second*, they support women using their wealth. If these two conditions are not met, then men are not leaders for women (Setyawan, 2017; Muliadi, 2017). Moreover, Fatima Mernissi and Ziba Mir-Hosseini emphasized that Islam recognizes equity between women and men, granting both the right to participate in the public sphere (Orr, 2020; Duderija, 2014; Pransisca, 2023; Setiawan, 2019; Robikah, 2019; Wijayanti, 2018; Sutrisno & Salsabela, 2023).

In the Indonesian context, despite Islam being practiced by most communities, the relationship between men and women remains unequal. Men are usually placed first in many aspects of life, including in the family, as it is a fact that society tends to follow a patriarchal system (Hidayah, 2019; Alfitri, 2014). Moghadam (2003) explains that in some conservative Muslim societies, women are constrained by patriarchal traditions, which can be described as a "patriarchal belt." In this environment, men have greater privileges in upholding family honor by exerting control over their female family members (Moghadam, 2003). In many Muslim countries, women are perceived as wives and mothers. In this sense, there will be gender segregation between men and women that is legally approved by shari'a; men are responsible for providing economic needs, working outside the home, and having rights in divorce. On the other hand, women can work and travel outside only with permission from their male guardians (Moghadam, 2003). Further study explained that in Indonesia, Islamic texts have been used to validate male dominance over females in various issues, such as polygyny and conjugal violence (Riyani, 2016; Riyani, 2020). Therefore, this needs a re-interpretation of several texts regarding the place of women in Islamic law (Alfitri, 2014; Qadri & Siregar, 2023; Taufiqurohman & Fauziah, 2023).

Furthermore, many studies mentioned that women in terrorist groups have different roles, such as sympathisers, supporters, mobilizers, preventers, and perpetrators (Mahardhika & Priyanto, 2023; Sahrasad et al., 2020; Kurnia B.P. & Sukabdi 2021). This can be seen in some of the groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and Hamas (Bhattacharya, 2019; Berko & Erez, 2007; Amusan et al., 2019; Kurnia B.P.

& Sukabdi, 2021; Jackson, 2021; Knop, 2007). In addition, the extremist groups used women to gain strategic benefits by recruiting them as facilitators and martyrs; at the same time, they get an advantage from their suppression (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019). A further study mentioned that women in the radical groups were victims of their movements, as they followed a patriarchal system. In this sense, women are placed as the second class and men as the first and leaders of the community and within the family (Mulia 2018; Bhattacharya, 2019; Mulia, 2018). Meanwhile, the wives of the terrorist convicts involved in this study tend to be victims and are placed as subordinates in the household. Conversely, within the majority of terrorist groups in Indonesia, men hold positions of leadership and engage in operational tasks, serving as recruiters, trainers, or fighters.

The Unequal Relationship of the Terrorist Convict Families

In families of terrorist convicts, relationship problems between husbands and wives were observed. The research showed that many wives were unaware of their husbands' involvement in terrorist organizations or their attendance at terrorist activities. This suggests a communication problem where husbands were not open with their wives. Additionally, some families had an unequal relationship dynamic where the husband was seen as superior to the wife, resulting in a power imbalance. Many wives were also unaware of their husbands' terrorist actions. Ideally, a family should be based on equal relationships between spouses. Companionship and a horizontal relationship should be the foundation of a family, fostering equal relationships between the partners.

Islamic family law regards marriage as a means to promote peace and love between husband, wife, and the wider family environment (Sulistiani, 2022). The Prophet Muhammad's family model serves as a reference for Islamic family law, which is based on three fundamental principles. First, each married couple has rights and responsibilities, and Islam views marriage as a 'strong covenant'. Second, each family member is considered a leader in their respective positions. Third, Islam teaches the principle of justice in building a family by placing family functions adequately within the foundation of religious functions (Nugraha et al., 2018).

In practice, Islamic family law has sometimes been interpreted in ways that favor men and discriminate against women. For instance, men are recognized as having full authority over their families, which, to some extent, will lead to the subordination of women (Abdullah, 2018; Rokhmad & Susilo, 2017). This is usually referred to in the Quran, verse an-Nisā 34, where men are leaders (*qawwāmūn*) over women. This interpretation is often supported by hadiths taken literally, leading to the idea that women should remain at home. Here is one of those hadiths; “Women should have their husband’s permission if they want to go out of their houses into the public space because women’s appropriate place is in the domestic domain” (Mas’udi, 1993). Moreover, verse an-Nisa 34 is also cited to justify the husband committing violence against his wife due to *nushūz*. This *nushūz* is defined as the wife’s disobedience to her husband.

Regarding those biased interpretations of Quran verses and hadiths, several scholars made more progressive explanations that women within the family have equal rights, as previously discussed (Wadud, 2018; Engineer, 1992). Even though Muslim marriage is frequently regarded as an unfair relationship for women, experts in Islamic studies clarify that the roles of spouses within Islam are viewed as complementary, highlighting their differing abilities and tendencies to align with the values of a traditional patriarchal society (Mohamed, 1996; Waines, 2014; Silvestri, 2008).

Building a family under Islamic law involves several important aspects that husbands and wives must understand well. These include building a strong foundation for marriage and family, fostering reciprocal relationships based on interaction, shared thoughts, and joint

activities, and recognizing the roles and responsibilities of spouses towards each other (Ahmadi & Bolghan-Abadi, 2016). By understanding these orientations, couples can develop a mutual understanding of their rights and obligations as husband and wife. In the case of wives of convicted terrorists, not all of them share a mutual understanding of their husbands' activities, as many were unaware of their involvement in terrorism. This lack of understanding left the wives and their families in shock when their husbands were arrested by Densus 88. The psychological burden has persisted, as they are often labelled as a "terrorist family." Meanwhile, the wife still hopes her husband will reform and become a better person upon returning home. During their visit to the prison, the wives suggested that their husbands change and be better individuals.

The Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI) guides how husbands should provide for their wives according to their abilities, fulfill household needs, teach their wives about religion, and protect their wives (Aswat & Rahman 2021). Meanwhile, the wife's responsibilities in the family include being dedicated to her husband and taking care of household needs (Nasution, 2015). In the terrorist offenders' families, husbands who served time in prison were not able to provide the household needs and necessities for their wives and children. Even the wife becomes a "temporary" single parent for their children, providing all their daily needs, comfort, education, and protection. Most of the wives of the terrorist convicts also provide economic support for their families by working as sellers, traders, housemaids, and in other jobs.

The wives of the terrorist offenders involved in this research did not take part in the terrorist organizations. Most of them were unaware of their husbands' actions. This differed from the previous research findings that mentioned the husband will influence the family members to join the terrorist group, such as the terrorist actors in the bombing attack in Makassar, South Sulawesi, and Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia (Farida et al., 2020; Zakiyah et al., 2023). Some of the wives said that they disagreed with their husbands' involvement in the terrorist activities and disbelieved in their husbands' ideological propaganda. In addition, their husbands sometimes opposed their family's religious practice, which they viewed as contrary to Islam. This sometimes led to conflict between the husband and the wife within the family.

"I had no idea that my husband had joined a terrorist group; I only knew he was participating in a religious study group at the mosque because he was diligent about attending those studies. I found out the truth after he was arrested by Densus 88 and discovered that the religious study group was involved in terrorism. Following his arrest, the police searched our home, with many officers coming in and thoroughly checking all our belongings." (NN, 2023)

"I found out that my husband was involved in terrorism when he was arrested by Densus 88, and I learned about it from the news on TV. Until then, I had no idea about his activities. He began to change after he started working out of town; his religious views underwent significant shifts. He often criticized our worship practices, claiming they were wrong and not following Islamic teachings. However, we did not want to comply with his demands. We hope that after his release, he will change and start a new life with a new economic venture. We also apply for leniency with the help of police officers." (UB, 2016)

Despite the conflict in their family, after their husbands were arrested, the wives still cared about them, as they regularly visited them in prison and communicated with them by phone. They even hoped their husband would be a better person after being released from jail and start a "new life" with the family. Moreover, the wives proposed reducing their husbands' sentences with the help of the police officers.

“My children and I occasionally visit my husband in prison. Since it is far away, we do not visit often. When we cannot visit, we call him to check in. My husband often asks about how the children’s education is progressing.” (UAJ, 2016)

“When my husband was in prison, we received help from the police and Densus 88. They assisted us when we visited him in prison, and we left in a Densus 88 car.” (NN, 2023)

Conclusion

The wives of the terrorist convicts were far from the spotlight in the terrorism discourse. The primary discussion of terrorism focuses on the male actor and his related cases. Therefore, this article examined this theme to fill the gap. The findings of this study depicted that the husbands were sentenced to imprisonment ranging from three and a half years to life sentences. They committed different terror actions and played various roles such as a bomb assembler, a member of the terrorist groups, and a bomber. Furthermore, the wives of terrorist convicts experienced multiple difficulties, including economic and psychological problems like stigmatisation and stereotyping. Additionally, their family had an unequal dynamic. According to Islamic family law, marriage or family should be based on equal relationships to build a harmonious family. However, the observed families of terrorist offenders have not reached this ideal condition.

To support the wives of terrorist prisoners in facing the challenges of their lives, various parties need to take real action. The government and social organizations should implement economic empowerment programs, such as skills training and access to business capital, to help these women achieve financial independence. Additionally, psychosocial support is crucial to reducing the stigma they experience from society and boosting their self-confidence. Furthermore, educational programs that promote a moderate understanding of religion need to be strengthened to counteract interpretations of Islamic teachings that contribute to inequality within households.

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