



JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC STUDIES

<https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/jiis/index>

Feminine Men and Gender-Fluid Identities on Social Media: A Thematic Exegesis of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30

Kafi Kadhafi Ahmad^{1✉}, Sulidar Ujang²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Article Information

History:

Received: March

Approved: April

Published: May

Keywords:

feminine men; gender-fluid identity; social media; thematic exegesis; human creation

Abstract

The growing use of social media has increased the visibility of feminine male expressions and gender-fluid identities while generating debate about their relationship to Islamic teachings. This study analyzes these phenomena through a thematic interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30. It employed qualitative library research and thematic exegesis (*tafsir mawdū'ī*). Primary data comprised the two Qur'anic verses and their interpretations in selected classical and contemporary commentaries, while secondary data were drawn from books and journal articles on gender and social media. The data were analyzed by examining the concepts of human creation, common origin, *fitrah*, equal dignity, and moral responsibility; comparing exegetical perspectives; and relating the resulting synthesis to identity construction in digital spaces. The findings show that Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 emphasizes humanity's common origin and equal dignity, whereas Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 presents *fitrah* primarily as an innate orientation toward divine truth and moral values. Although neither verse directly addresses contemporary categories of gender identity, their interpretations offer an ethical framework for responding to gender expression on social media. This framework combines respect for human dignity and rejection of ridicule and violence with critical attention to the roles of social environment, popular culture, digital communities, and media platforms in identity formation. The study contributes to contemporary thematic Qur'anic studies by connecting classical and modern exegesis with gender-related phenomena in digital society.

✉ Corresponding Email:

kafi.kadafi@gmail.com

Copyright © The Author(s)

Introduction

The development of digital technology has transformed social media from a mere means of communication into a space in which identities are formed and performed. Through TikTok, Instagram, X, and other platforms, individuals can upload photographs, videos, opinions, and personal experiences to present themselves to a wider audience. Digital environments also enable users to receive immediate responses through comments, likes, follower counts, and content sharing. Consequently, identity is shaped not only within families and local communities but also through engagement with online communities, cultural trends, and platform mechanisms. Increasingly visible expressions include femininity among men and gender-fluid identities, in which gender identity or expression is not necessarily experienced or presented as fixed within the conventional categories of masculinity and femininity.

Social media provides individuals with broader opportunities to explore and communicate their gender identities. On the one hand, digital spaces can offer support, foster self-confidence, and facilitate connections with communities whose members share similar experiences. On the other hand, continuous exposure to diverse content may influence how users understand themselves and determine the forms of expression they wish to present. Research involving young people indicates that social media use is associated with the formation of gender identity and psychosocial values through peer influence, social support, self-esteem, and digital interaction (Bakhyt et al., 2025). A similar phenomenon is evident on TikTok, where users communicate both affirming and distressing experiences associated with gender identity and expression through widely accessible audiovisual narratives (Dillon et al., 2023).

The openness of social media also creates space for groups that have historically received limited social recognition. Such spaces may be used to manage self-presentation, develop social relationships, obtain emotional support, and articulate experiences that are difficult to express in conventional settings. For gender-diverse groups facing restriction or exclusion, social media engagement may support self-presentation and the development of supportive networks, although it does not necessarily eliminate the discrimination they encounter (Hossain et al., 2024). Within Indonesia's digital environment, gender identity is likewise constructed through photographs, profile descriptions, communication patterns, and presentation strategies adapted to platform features and other users' responses (Andreas et al., 2025).

These developments demonstrate that social media is not neutral in identity formation. Algorithms, popular culture, public figures, digital communities, and audience responses influence both the content individuals consume and the material they produce. Users do not merely receive information; they select, imitate, modify, and disseminate forms of expression that they perceive as representative of themselves. Movements promoting equality and gender sensitivity also employ social media to circulate ideas, build solidarity, and encourage more gender-responsive understandings (Nurjanah & Nur, 2022). Social media has therefore become an arena in which freedom of expression, the pursuit of social recognition, cultural change, and prevailing social values intersect.

Despite providing opportunities for expression, social media can also facilitate labeling, ridicule, rejection, and symbolic violence. Research on Indonesian social-media comments shows that nonbinary gender identities are frequently targeted through

discriminatory discursive strategies, including delegitimation, stereotyping, negative evaluation, and demeaning language (Sartini & Adrian, 2023). Men who display feminine traits or expressions may similarly experience verbal aggression through labeling, mockery, and negative stereotypes. Such responses are shaped by individual understanding, family background, social environment, religious views, and exposure to social media (Maula et al., 2024). These findings indicate that feminine men and gender-fluid identities cannot be understood solely as matters of appearance; they must be situated within the broader relationships among personal identity, social construction, digital culture, religious understanding, and social acceptance.

In Muslim societies, the growing visibility of gender expression on social media also raises questions about its relationship to Qur'anic teachings. Some responses move directly toward normative judgment, whereas others emphasize individual freedom in constructing and presenting identity. Both tendencies often develop without adequately distinguishing biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Conflating these concepts may generate oversimplified conclusions about phenomena with diverse social and psychological backgrounds. A study firmly grounded in the Qur'anic text while carefully attending to the complexity of digital social realities is therefore necessary.

The Qur'an addresses human creation in verses that articulate the principles of humanity's common origin, relations between men and women, human dignity, and the *fitrah* established by Allah. Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 explains that humankind was created from a single soul, from which Allah created its mate, and that from the two He dispersed many men and women. This verse provides an important basis for understanding humanity's shared origin and the relationship between men and women. Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30, meanwhile, describes the *fitrah* of Allah as fundamental to human creation and as directing human beings toward upright religion. Both verses must be read carefully so that the concepts of creation and *fitrah* are not equated uncritically with contemporary categories of gender identity, which arise from a different conceptual background.

Previous studies of gender in the Qur'an demonstrate that verses concerning men and women should be interpreted thematically rather than in isolation from the Qur'an's broader message. This approach shows that the Qur'an situates men and women within a common origin of creation and shared religious responsibility, while recognizing particular biological characteristics (Mosiba, 2019). Other studies emphasize that gender interpretation cannot be separated from the methods, assumptions, and social contexts informing an exegete's reading. Muslim feminist exegesis, for example, re-examines interpretations considered to have been shaped by patriarchal social structures and foregrounds Qur'anic principles of equality and justice (Napsiyah & Romlah, 2025).

Nevertheless, earlier studies remain divided among several distinct tendencies. Social-media research primarily examines identity construction, self-presentation, community acceptance, and discrimination against gender expression. Qur'anic and gender studies, by contrast, generally address equality between men and women, critiques of patriarchal interpretation, or gender as a broad concept. Although these studies provide an important foundation, few specifically connect the phenomena of feminine men and gender-fluid identities on social media with a thematic interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30. This limitation leaves room to investigate how the concepts of

humanity's common origin and *fitrah* may serve as normative and ethical frameworks for understanding gender-related phenomena in digital spaces.

A further gap lies in the tendency to establish a direct relationship between *fitrah* and gender identity without first clarifying the verse's meaning according to Qur'anic exegetes. Within the exegetical tradition, *fitrah* in Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 is understood primarily as the innate human disposition to recognize Allah, affirm divine unity, and follow the true religion. Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1, meanwhile, emphasizes a common origin, kinship, God-consciousness, and social responsibility. Because neither verse directly addresses the terms feminine men or gender-fluid identity, their relevance to contemporary phenomena must be established through systematic interpretation rather than simple terminological equivalence. Thematic exegesis is required to relate the verses' normative messages to social realities without disregarding the context, purpose, and semantic boundaries of each verse.

Against this background, the study addresses three principal questions: how feminine men and gender-fluid identities are constructed on social media; how Qur'anic exegetes explain human creation and *fitrah* in Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30; and how the interpretations of these verses are relevant to emerging forms of gender expression in digital spaces. The study analyzes these phenomena through thematic exegesis by bringing classical and contemporary interpretations into dialogue with research on gender and social media. Its novelty lies in constructing a conceptual relationship among humanity's common origin, *fitrah*, human dignity, and moral responsibility in relation to identity construction on social media. Rather than positioning the Qur'an solely as a source of normative judgment, the study employs it as an ethical foundation for responses that are critical, proportionate, and respectful of the dignity of every human being.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design to conduct a conceptual analysis of feminine men and gender-fluid identities on social media through thematic exegesis. Its material objects were Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30, while its formal objects comprised the concepts of humanity's common origin, human unity, *fitrah*, human dignity, and moral responsibility. The study did not directly observe social-media accounts or users; digital phenomena were examined through previous studies of self-presentation, identity formation, social acceptance, and discrimination against gender expression in digital environments.

The data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included the Qur'an and classical and contemporary commentaries on the two selected verses, particularly *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah*, and *Tafsīr Al-Munir*. Secondary sources comprised journal articles, books, and scholarly studies concerning thematic exegesis, gender, feminine men, gender-fluid identities, and social media. Sources were selected on the basis of thematic relevance, clear publication identity, traceability, and recency, especially for scholarly articles published within the preceding ten years. Classical commentaries were retained as principal sources for tracing the development of the verses' meanings, whereas contemporary commentaries were used to identify interpretive extensions in modern social contexts. The thematic approach

enabled verses associated with a single problem to be analyzed in an integrated manner and thus supported a more comprehensive understanding (Mosiba, 2019).

Data were collected through documentation by locating, reading, recording, classifying, and comparing sources relevant to the research focus. Analysis proceeded through five stages. First, the research theme was established and the concepts of feminine men, gender-fluid identity, human creation, and *fitrah* were delimited. Second, the lexical meanings, verse contexts, and principal interpretations of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 were identified. Third, classical and contemporary exegetical views were compared to determine their similarities, differences, and interpretive tendencies. Fourth, a thematic synthesis was developed concerning humanity's common origin, equal dignity, *fitrah*, and moral responsibility. Fifth, this synthesis was related to research findings on identity formation and gender expression on social media. Analytical trustworthiness was maintained through cross-checking among exegetical works, scholarly articles, and traceable bibliographic sources. The analysis was presented descriptively, comparatively, and interpretively, with a clear distinction between the verses' direct meanings and the contextual relevance formulated in this study.

Results

Feminine Men and Gender-Fluid Identities on Social Media

The literature review indicates that feminine men and gender-fluid identities are related concepts in discussions of gender expression, but they are not synonymous. The term feminine men refers to men who display traits, behaviors, communication styles, bodily gestures, clothing preferences, or interests that are socially associated with femininity. Such feminine expression does not in itself indicate a change in gender identity or biological sex. Gender-fluid identity, by contrast, refers to an experience of gender identity or expression that is not necessarily felt or presented as fixed within masculine or feminine categories.

Feminine expression among men may be evident in clothing choices, accessories, hairstyles, body language, vocal intonation, emotional openness, and interests that particular social constructions associate with women. Appearance may also constitute a form of consumption through which individuals construct an image and communicate identity in public. Choices involving fashion products, cosmetics, colors, and lifestyles not only satisfy personal needs but also function as signs communicating how individuals wish to be recognized in their social environment (Oktaviana & Ardi, 2024).

The literature further demonstrates that self-recognition and self-acceptance among feminine men are complex processes. Individuals first engage in intrapersonal communication to understand the distinction between personal identity and social expectations that men should appear masculine. This process involves developing a self-concept, accepting personal characteristics, and determining to whom these aspects of identity may safely be disclosed. Self-disclosure generally occurs gradually and is more readily extended to people perceived as accepting of difference and unlikely to stigmatize it (Ching & Azeharie, 2021).

Social media expands the space available for such self-disclosure. TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube allow users to produce and circulate photographs, videos, experiences, opinions, and creative works to wider audiences. Users do not merely receive information;

they actively create content through which they construct representations of themselves. Posts, comments, livestreams, likes, and follower counts provide immediate responses to the identities presented. Social media has consequently become an important arena in the formation of Generation Z's digital social identities (Pramudya et al., 2025).

The reviewed studies show that feminine men's self-presentation on social media involves managing appearance, language, content type, and the boundaries of personal disclosure. Social media is used to construct a self-image, assert presence, obtain recognition, and introduce expressions that differ from dominant constructions of masculinity. The identity presented to a public audience may differ from an individual's private life because users adapt their conduct to audience characteristics and communicative objectives (Bachdar et al., 2024).

Such identity management is also evident on TikTok. Users may select particular aspects of their lives for presentation as a public identity while retaining experiences considered private within more restricted spaces. This strategy reflects a distinction between public self-presentation and private life. At the same time, social media enables individuals to locate users with similar experiences and thereby obtain support, information, and a sense of acceptance within digital communities (Lolita & Isnaini, 2023).

Social media performs two simultaneous functions. First, it facilitates identity exploration, self-disclosure, information seeking, and relationship building. Second, it can become a site of discrimination, bullying, rejection, and hostile commentary. Users with diverse gender expressions employ social media to seek self-relevant information, connect with communities, and present identities that may be difficult to disclose in face-to-face environments. However, this use may also expose them to cyberbullying and demeaning responses (Herrmann et al., 2024).

The benefits of social media extend beyond identity visibility to emotional support, personal development, access to specialized information, and connections with communities sharing similar experiences. Digital environments allow users to regulate the degree of identity disclosure according to their personal safety and readiness. Community support may reduce feelings of isolation and provide users with the vocabulary needed to articulate their experiences (Craig et al., 2021).

Community is a significant element in the formation of feminine men's social presence. Relationships among members are built through relatively similar social experiences, mutual assistance, support, cooperation, and opportunities to develop individual capacities. Such solidarity may emerge in face-to-face communities or develop through social-media networks. Communities provide a sense of belonging and a comparatively safer space in which individuals can interact without continually concealing their personal characteristics (Ikhsan et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the openness of digital spaces does not entirely remove stigma. Feminine men continue to encounter the assumption that gentleness, particular appearance choices, and emotional openness are incompatible with social expectations of men. Under these circumstances, social media may offer a relatively open space for self-disclosure and support seeking, yet it may also amplify stereotypes and discrimination through user comments (Hidayah & Gumelar, 2024).

Gender representation on social media is also shaped by popular culture and globalization. Content concerning soft masculinity, gender-neutral fashion, male beauty,

and gender-fluid expression can circulate rapidly through platform algorithms. Korean, Japanese, American, and other forms of global popular culture introduce models of masculinity more diverse than the conventional image of men as invariably assertive, strong, and dominant. TikTok not only reproduces existing gender stereotypes but also generates new representations through which users may present identities and styles that differ from dominant norms (Fadillah et al., 2026).

The literature synthesis identified four interrelated factors associated with the increasing visibility of feminine men and gender-fluid identities on social media. The first is the social environment, including family, peers, education, and the wider community. The second is global popular culture, which circulates diverse forms of masculine and feminine expression. The third is digital community, which provides support, recognition, and belonging. The fourth is the psychological need for self-understanding, self-actualization, and social acceptance. Rather than operating independently, these factors interact in the formation and presentation of identity in digital spaces.

A Thematic Interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 on Human Creation and Fitrah

The examination of Qur'anic commentaries indicates that Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 address two complementary dimensions of human creation. Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 explains humanity's common origin, the relationship between men and women, and the responsibility to maintain human relations. Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 presents *fitrah* as a divinely established disposition directing human beings toward upright religion and recognition of divine unity.

Allah the Exalted states in Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

Meaning: "O humankind! Be mindful of your Lord, Who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and through both spread countless men and women. And be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and honor family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you." (Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1).

Classical exegetical accounts interpret the phrase *nafs wāḥidah* as referring to the Prophet Adam and *wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā* as referring to the creation of Adam's mate, Eve. The human population subsequently developed from the two, positioning Adam and Eve as the genealogical origin of humankind (Al-Tabari, 2008). A similar reading appears in Ibn Kathir's commentary, which emphasizes that all people share a single created origin. This common origin indicates that differences in ancestry, ethnicity, skin color, and sex cannot justify the degradation of another person's dignity (Ibn Kathir, 2008).

Contemporary exegesis devotes greater attention to the verse's social purposes. The phrase *nafs wāḥidah* affirms that all human beings belong to a single human family. The word *minhā* in *wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā* need not be understood exclusively as the creation of woman from a part of man's body; it may also indicate that the mate was

created from the same kind and human essence. On this interpretation, men and women possess equal human dignity despite their biological differences (Shihab, 2002).

The findings also show that Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 extends beyond the biological origin of humankind. Its commands to remain mindful of Allah, preserve kinship, and recognize divine oversight connect human creation with social responsibility. The common origin of humanity therefore grounds human solidarity, respect for family relations, fulfillment of social rights, and protection of vulnerable groups (Az-Zuhaili, 2013).

Comparison of classical and contemporary commentaries yielded three central meanings in Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1. First, all human beings originate from a single source of creation. Second, men and women share the same human essence and dignity. Third, this common origin entails responsibility to remain mindful of Allah, maintain kinship, and treat others with dignity. Although the verse does not directly address gender-fluid identity or feminine male expression, it establishes a foundation for understanding human origin and dignity.

The second verse examined in this study is Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Meaning: "So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in all people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know." (Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30).

The exegetical analysis indicates that *fitrah* in this verse primarily concerns the innate human disposition to accept divine unity and the true religion. Human beings are created with the capacity to recognize Allah, accept truth, and follow divine guidance. In classical exegesis, Allah's *fitrah* is understood as Islam or as humanity's fundamental inclination toward divine unity. Departures arising in human life are not attributed to Allah's creation but may be influenced by education, family, social environment, and individual choice (Al-Tabari, 2008).

This interpretation is reinforced by the hadith stating that every child is born in a state of *fitrah*, after which the family environment influences the development of the child's beliefs and life. The use of this hadith in exegetical works indicates that *fitrah* is understood as an original condition that remains open to educational and environmental influence. Such influence does not negate the premise that human beings are initially endowed with a readiness to accept truth and recognize their Lord.

Ibn Kathir likewise interprets *fitrah* as the human inclination to recognize Allah, affirm divine unity, and accept the true religion. The phrase *lā tabdīlā li khalqillāh* affirms that the religion and fundamental order created by Allah remain unchanged. Human beings nevertheless retain the capacity to choose; consequently, the realization of *fitrah* may be fostered or obstructed by social circumstances and personal choices (Ibn Kathir, 2008).

Contemporary interpretations indicate that *fitrah* describes not only a formal religious condition but also a psychological potential that orients human beings toward truth, justice, and divine values. *Fitrah* does not eliminate human freedom, because individuals retain the capacity to make choices. A distinction must therefore be maintained between *fitrah* as a

divinely bestowed disposition and human conduct, which may change through choice, education, culture, and social environment (Shihab, 2002).

The analysis of *Tafsir Al-Azhar* further shows that *fitrah* is understood as an original sensibility and pure awareness implanted by Allah within human beings. It encompasses intellectual readiness, conscience, moral awareness, and receptivity to divine guidance. Social environments, personal desires, and education may distance individuals from the realization of their *fitrah*, whereas religion functions to preserve and redirect this disposition toward divine values (AN et al., 2022).

The synthesis of the two verses produced four principal findings. First, Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 affirms humanity's common origin. Second, men and women possess equal dignity as creations of Allah. Third, Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 presents *fitrah* primarily as the human disposition to accept divine unity, truth, and upright religion. Fourth, human behavior and expression are shaped through the interaction of innate potential, freedom of choice, education, culture, and social environment.

Neither verse directly mentions contemporary categories such as feminine men or gender-fluid identity. The results in this section are therefore limited to mapping the meanings of creation, human unity, *fitrah*, and moral responsibility in classical and contemporary exegesis. The relationship between these exegetical findings and gender expression on social media is examined in the Discussion section.

Discussion

Social Media and the Construction of Feminine Male and Gender-Fluid Identities

Social media has become a significant arena in which individuals construct, present, and seek recognition for their identities. Feminine men and gender-fluid identities have become increasingly visible because TikTok, Instagram, X, and other platforms allow personal experiences to reach broad audiences. Digital spaces may provide greater expressive freedom than immediate social settings, although this openness is not necessarily accompanied by acceptance from families, communities, or religious groups.

Feminine expression among men must be distinguished from gender-fluid identity. A man may display gentleness, emotional openness, particular clothing preferences, or interests socially associated with women without changing his identity as a man. Gender-fluid identity, by contrast, refers to an experience or expression of gender that is not necessarily felt as fixed. Distinguishing biological sex, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation is essential to prevent conceptual conflation from reinforcing stereotypes about feminine men.

Social-media appearance forms part of self-image construction. Clothing, cosmetics, hairstyles, body language, and consumer products may function as signs through which users communicate identity to others (Oktaviana & Ardi, 2024). Users may also select particular aspects of their lives for presentation through photographs, videos, and personal narratives. Comments, likes, follower counts, and content sharing then operate as forms of social recognition that may reinforce a person's digital identity (Pramudya et al., 2025).

Such self-presentation does not necessarily represent a user's life in its entirety. Individuals may present selected aspects of themselves in public while retaining sensitive experiences within private spaces. This strategy enables users to seek acceptance while mitigating the risk of social rejection (Bachdar et al., 2024; Lolita & Isnaini, 2023). Self-

disclosure also unfolds gradually as individuals understand and accept themselves and evaluate how family members, friends, and the wider social environment may respond (Ching & Azeharie, 2021).

Digital communities provide emotional support, information, belonging, and greater self-confidence. Solidarity develops through shared experiences of stigma, information exchange, cooperation, and acceptance of difference (Ikhsan et al., 2019). Social media also provides access to identity-related knowledge, personal-development resources, and relationships with people who have similar experiences (Craig et al., 2021). Digital spaces therefore function not only as channels for trends but also as sites of learning, creativity, and reduced isolation.

At the same time, social media broadens the risk of discrimination and bullying. Users who display gender expressions that differ from dominant norms may receive ridicule, demeaning comments, threats, and rejection. Community support does not eliminate the psychological pressure that may result from cyberbullying (Herrmann et al., 2024). Feminine men continue to confront constructions of masculinity that demand that men be invariably strong, assertive, dominant, and emotionally restrained (Hidayah & Gumelar, 2024).

Global popular culture further diversifies representations of masculinity by presenting men as gentle, attentive to personal care, and willing to adopt fashion styles outside traditional masculinity. The transnational circulation of content through TikTok and Instagram enables young people to encounter and emulate such styles more readily. Social media thus not only preserves established stereotypes but also produces new forms of gender representation through visual language, communication, and consumption practices (Fadillah et al., 2026). Feminine men and gender-fluid identities should therefore be understood through the interaction of individual agency, social environment, popular culture, community, and digital technology.

The Relevance of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 to Gender-Related Phenomena on Social Media

Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 provides a foundation for understanding humanity's common origin and dignity. Classical exegetes interpret the phrase *nafs wāḥidah* as referring to the Prophet Adam and describe humankind as descending from Adam and Eve (Al-Tabari, 2008; Ibn Kathir, 2008). This common created origin indicates that differences in sex, ethnicity, race, and social status do not negate the fundamental equality of human beings as creations of Allah.

Contemporary interpretations extend this understanding by emphasizing that men and women share the same human essence. The phrase *wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā* may be understood as the creation of a mate from the same kind, such that both possess equal human dignity despite their biological differences (Shihab, 2002). The unity of creation also entails obligations to maintain family relationships, fulfill social rights, and protect vulnerable groups (Az-Zuhaili, 2013).

Applied to feminine men and gender-fluid identities, this principle indicates that differences in expression cannot justify humiliation, bullying, or violence. Evaluating a particular behavior must be distinguished from degrading the person who displays it. Q.S.

al-Nisā' [4]: 1 not only describes the origin of men and women but also emphasizes God-consciousness, social responsibility, and respect for the dignity of others.

Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30, meanwhile, articulates the concept of *fitrah*. Classical interpretations define *fitrah* as the fundamental human readiness to accept divine unity, recognize Allah, and follow upright religion. The concept does not directly explain contemporary categories of gender identity. The hadith stating that every child is born in a state of *fitrah* indicates that human beings possess an initial receptivity to truth, while family and environment may influence their subsequent development (Al-Tabari, 2008).

Contemporary exegesis presents *fitrah* as a potential that orients human beings toward truth, morality, and awareness of the divine. *Fitrah* does not eliminate human freedom, because individuals continue to make choices and remain subject to the influence of education, culture, and social environment (Shihab, 2002). *Fitrah* is also associated with reason, conscience, moral awareness, and receptivity to divine guidance, while religion functions to preserve and direct that potential (AN et al., 2022).

The concept of *fitrah* should therefore not be equated directly with every form of masculine or feminine appearance. Characteristics regarded as masculine or feminine—including clothing colors, hairstyles, occupations, communication styles, and personal-care practices—may vary across cultures and historical periods. Discussions of gender must distinguish biological givens, religious dispositions, moral values, and social constructions so that *fitrah* is not applied beyond its exegetical scope.

Reading the two verses together establishes a balance between religious values and human responsibility. Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 affirms humanity's common origin and dignity, whereas Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 emphasizes the human orientation toward truth and upright religion. Neither verse directly mentions feminine men or gender-fluid identity. Their connection to social-media phenomena is therefore a contextual application of the verses' messages rather than a meaning explicitly stated in the texts.

This contextualization indicates that human identity is not shaped solely by social-media trends but encompasses biological, social, moral, and religious dimensions. Freedom to present an identity must be accompanied by responsibility for the effects of one's conduct and relationships with others. Conversely, the affirmation of religious values cannot be pursued through humiliation or violence, because every person possesses dignity that must be respected.

Qur'anic interpretation concerning gender must consider social context and the verses' broader message if it is to remain consistent with justice, human dignity, and moral responsibility (Mosiba, 2019). In digital contexts, social media may be used for education, solidarity building, and the circulation of more judicious understandings of gender-related issues. Such use nevertheless requires careful attention to the Qur'anic text, interpretive context, and the social realities underlying the phenomena. The thematic interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 thus provides a critical, proportionate, and dignity-centered ethical framework for responding to feminine men and gender-fluid identities in digital spaces.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that feminine men and gender-fluid identities on social media are shaped through the interaction of individual agency, social environment, popular culture, digital communities, and technological development. Social media enables individuals to present identities, obtain support, and connect with users who share similar experiences. Yet this openness may also generate labeling, discrimination, and bullying. Feminine expression among men must therefore be distinguished from gender-fluid identity, biological sex, and sexual orientation so that these phenomena are not reduced to stereotypes or conceptual oversimplification.

The thematic interpretation of Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 1 and Q.S. al-Rūm [30]: 30 affirms humanity's common origin, equal dignity, social responsibility, and a *fitrah* that orients human beings toward divine unity, truth, and moral values. Neither verse directly addresses feminine men or gender-fluid identities; applying them to digital phenomena therefore constitutes a contextualization of their messages. The study is limited to a library-based examination of two verses and selected commentaries and does not directly analyze social-media accounts or users. Future research may employ comparative exegesis, psychology, sociology, or digital ethnography to explain more comprehensively the relationship between religious understanding and individual experience on social media.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their gratitude to the Qur'anic Studies and Exegesis Program, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, for the academic support and facilities provided during the preparation of this article. The authors also thank all those who offered comments and suggestions that contributed to the refinement of the study.

References

- Al-Tabari, A. J. M. ibn J. (2008). *Tafsir Ath-Thabari: Jami' al-bayan fi ta'wil al-Qur'an* (Akhmad Affandi, Ed., Vol. 6). Pustaka Azzam.
- AN, A. N., Alfian, M. Y., Saifudin, S., & Akhyar, S. (2022). Implementasi metode tafsir tahlili terhadap QS. Ar-Rum ayat 30 tentang fitrah manusia dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar untuk membendung embrio paham atheis. *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 6(2), 425–436. <https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v6i02.2082>
- Andreas, R., Septiyanti, N. D., & Maulana, M. (2025). Gender Identity Construction in Cyberspace: A Netnographic Analysis of Tinder Users. *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender*, 20(1), 31–60. <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v20i1.25618>
- Az-Zuhaili, W. M. al-Z. atau W. M. (2013). *Tafsir Al-Munir: Akidah, syariah, dan manhaj*. Gema Insani.
- Bachdar, Z. A., Rusdi, M. P. P., & Sampoerna, M. I. P. (2024). Self presentation lelaki feminim di media sosial. *Nubuwwah: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, 2(01), 25–40. <https://doi.org/10.21093/nubuwwah.v2i01.8098>
- Bakhyt, T. S., Mambetalina, A. S., Almat Sabitovich, N., Lawrence, K. C., & Evlogieva Ilieva, S. (2025). The influence of social media on mediating gender identity and

- psychosocial values in the student population of Kazakhstan. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1), 2525999. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2525999>
- Ching, A., & Azeharie, S. (2021). Studi Komunikasi Pengungkapan Diri Remaja Laki-Laki Feminin. *Koneksi*, 5(1), 200. <https://doi.org/10.24912/kn.v5i1.10247>
- Craig, S. L., Eaton, A. D., McInroy, L. B., Leung, V. W. Y., & Krishnan, S. (2021). Can Social Media Participation Enhance LGBTQ+ Youth Well-Being? Development of the Social Media Benefits Scale. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1), 2056305121988931. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988931>
- Dillon, S., Liang, Y., Bernard, H. R., & Shu, K. (2023). *Investigating Gender Euphoria and Dysphoria on TikTok: Characterization and Comparison* (Versi 2). arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2305.19552>
- Fadillah, W., Juanda, & Nensilanti. (2026). Representasi Gender dalam Media Sosial TikTok: Kajian Semiotika Visual Sosial Theo van Leeuwen dan Gunther Kress. *Dinamika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pembelajarannya*, 9(1), 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.35194/jd.v9i1.5889>
- Herrmann, L., Bindt, C., Hohmann, S., & Becker-Hebly, I. (2024). Social media use and experiences among transgender and gender diverse adolescents. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 25(1), 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2023.2252410>
- Hidayah, S. N., & Gumelar, R. G. (2024). Self disclosure dan kebebasan berekspresi laki-laki feminin di media sosial dalam stereotipe gender. *Jurnal Harkat: Media Komunikasi Gender*, 20(2), 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.15408/harkat.v20i2.36994>
- Hossain, M. A., Akter, S., Ahsan, Md. F., Ahmed, J. U., & Khan, S. (2024). From Caterpillar to Butterfly: Social Media Engagement of the Socially Excluded Third-Gender People in Bangladesh. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 26(4), 1475–1494. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-023-10422-5>
- Ibn Kathir, A. al-F. I. ibn 'Umar. (2008). *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azim* (Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Ishaq Alu Syaikh, Ed.). Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i.
- Ikhsan, R., Erianjoni, E., & Khaidir, A. (2019). Solidaritas Sosial di Kalangan Laki-laki Feminin: Studi Kasus pada Komunitas A+ Organizer. *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender*, 14(2), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v14i2.3612>
- Lolita, F. A., & Isnaini, M. (2023). Self-Disclosure and Management of Feminine Male Personas on The Tiktok Platform. *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities*, 2(2), 1784–1795. <https://doi.org/10.59888/ajosh.v2i2.185>
- Maula, I. I., Khoiriah, W. I. N., Erliana, E., & Laelasari, N. D. N. (2024). Analisis faktor-faktor pendorong mahasiswa dalam melakukan kekerasan verbal terhadap laki-laki feminin. *Jurnal Harkat: Media Komunikasi Gender*, 19(2), 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.15408/harkat.v19i2.36606>
- Mosiba, R. (2019). Wawasan Al-Qur'an tentang gender: Sebuah kajian dengan pendekatan tafsir tematik. *Inspiratif Pendidikan*, 8(1), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.24252/ip.v8i1.10225>
- Napsiyah, S., & Romlah, S. (2025). Metodologi tafsir dan gerakan gender: Pembacaan Al-Qur'an feminis Muslim menurut Asma Barlas. *Jurnal Harkat: Media Komunikasi Gender*, 21(1), 153–166. <https://doi.org/10.15408/harkat.v21i1.49208>

- Nurjanah, S., & Nur, I. (2022). Gender Fiqh: Mobilization of Gender-Responsive Movement on Social Media. *Ijtihad : Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan*, 22(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v22i1.1-18>
- Oktaviana, S., & Ardi, M. (2024). *Representasi Praktik Konsumsi Pria Feminin Dalam Prespektif Teori Konsumsi Jean Baudrillard*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.11215995>
- Pramudya, K., Sujarwo, & Safitri, D. (2025). Media sosial X dalam membentuk identitas sosial digital Generasi Z. *Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Mahasiswa*, 3(2), 178–183. <https://doi.org/10.61722/jipm.v3i2.807>
- Sartini, N. W., & Adrian, D. (2023). Symbolic violence and discrimination in a social media comment section: A study on discriminatory discursive strategies targeting non-binary gender identity in the context of Indonesia. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 10(2), 2270287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2270287>
- Shihab, M. Q. (2002). *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, kesan, dan keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Vol. 2–11). Lentera Hati.