



## **Islamic Responses to People Living with HIV and AIDS in Indonesia; Negotiating Discourse of Power and Resistance**

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Islam and the 'Islamic ethos' that increasingly predominates in Indonesia's popular culture has continuously confirmed about a 'common interpretation' of AIDS which considers 'the disease' as merely a religious moral issue or a behavior related problem. Indeed, HIV-AIDS is perceived by a majority of Indonesian Muslims, as a form of divine retribution, family disgrace, homosexual punishment, or God's heavenly chastisement. These identifications are clearer given the findings of my earlier investigation on Islamic legal decrees (fatwa) concerning HIV-AIDS, issued by Islamic authorities in Indonesia; which are NU, Muhammadiyah and MUI (The Council of Indonesian Ulama). I found that while—in general—these fatwa tended to exclude PLWHA from the territory of 'religious piety', they also constituted a form of power, oppression and marginalization of PLWHA by placing these individuals in a specific category of 'others'.

This paper is—therefore—intended to first address a question of how these Islamic authorities in Indonesia construct their power by placing HIV-positive Muslim and non HIV-positive Muslim in such an organized and systemic 'order', together with a set of rules. It will also explain how these authorities have attempted to control PLWHA by imposing 'rules' related to their way of behaving, their understanding of HIV-status and their self-conduct in relation with others. Second, this paper is to report on a preliminary investigation of the reactions of PLWHA toward the fatwa by questioning whether they can accept these fatwa. If they accept the provisions of these decrees, how do they reconcile and adjust their status of being PLWHA to the judgments of these authorities? If they do not accept, how do they react and resist? All in all, this paper will present a scenario of power, exclusion and resistance associated with the phenomena of HIV-AIDS and its religious-based stigma in Indonesia.