
Metanarration of Islamophobia through Houellebecq's *Soumission*

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ABSTRACT

The persistent conflict resulting from distinctions in our diverse world are sustained by suspicion and fear in public life, yet cultural products offer insights into societal issues, highlighting the significance of mutual respect and authentic freedom. This study examined *Soumission* (2015) by Houellebecq as its main data source to trace Islam and deconstruct intertextually its misconceptions in the novel. This study uses qualitative research steps in literary studies, namely by reading many times data sources, making notes, grouping data thematically, and analyzing it inductively. Results showed that in this novel, Islam is portrayed as a threatening, frightening, ambiguous religion that favors a patriarchal system that places women in a subordinate position. Based on an examination of the Quran and Hadith of Islam reveals that Islam is a peaceful religion that respects its adherents and provides them with clear instructions on what is right and wrong, prohibited and permitted. Critical readers have the right to question the portrayal of Islam in this work if it aims to ridicule religious individuals, particularly Muslims, necessitating a prudent response to counter the author's deception.

Keywords: *déconstruction*, *laïcité*, metanarration, politique, satire

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INTRODUCTION

Islamophobia's rise deeply concerns Muslims, with verbal and physical attacks causing injuries and deaths worldwide. The Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research (SETA) reports increased Islamophobia in Europe since 2018, coinciding with the surge of far-right movements (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2018). France had the most Islamophobic incidents in Europe in 2018, the report said. Three percent (3%) were physically assaulted, eighty-four percent (84%) were prejudiced, and thirteen percent (13%) hated speech (Faytre, 2020). Various research on Islamophobia such as Azeez (2019), Berg-Sørensen (2017), Abubakar *et al.*, (2019a), Ågerup (2019), Coyne (2017), Morey (2018), Spieser-Landes (2017) proof that through *texte* is supported by irrefutable cultural products such as literature. So, Islamophobia is a term used to describe prejudice, negative sentiment, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims.

The long debate about the relationship between reality and works is another subject, as revealed (Wellek & Warren, 1961, 1984). Literature reflects and expresses the culture of the author. As a member of society, the author's work expresses his ideas. Literature reflects and expresses the culture of the author (Eagleton, 2005). As a thinking being, man questions his own existence and significance. Religion, belief, and the divinity of humans have been discussed since Roman and Greek times. A long line of famous philosophers such as Pythagoras (approximately 5th century BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Nietzsche (1844-1900), Max Weber (1864-1920), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Jacques Derrida (1930-2007) tried to understand human selfhood in the world related to religion.

Controversial literary works, both historical and contemporary, continue to spark scandals. Notable examples include Charles Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (1857) and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), which generated concerns in the 19th-century French society (Ågerup, 2019; Wellek & Warren, 1961), as well as the 2015 publication of *Soumission* by Michel Houellebecq. Houellebecq's controversial novel *Soumission* which sparked global debates on Islam, coinciding with the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks.

Some studies have been published on this novel. Williams and Sweeney (2019) examine Michel Houellebecq's novel, highlighting the fundamental tension between the yearning for freedom and the metaphysical comfort of religious ideas, suggesting that Houellebecq portrays individuality and autonomy, pillars of Western progress and freedom, as obsolete. Other research mentions that *Soumission* is part of the resistance and negotiation through simultaneous acceptance and rejection of Islamic law in France (Mustofa, 2020). Islam is described as a terrorist religion legalizing polygamy, dwarfing women's rights, and the fanaticism of its followers (Erwing *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, a reader response study involving some French people who live in Indonesia, research by (Udasmoro, 2020) demonstrates that subjects' perspectives are inverse to the author's opinion in *Soumission*. Their viewpoint is likely influenced by the sociopolitical environment in which they reside. As one of the most multicultural and multireligious countries in the world, Indonesians have been able to coexist peacefully despite their six official religions and numerous beliefs. An interview with *The Guardian* concludes that Houellebecq's ambiguity in *Soumission* is increasingly evident between provoking and Islamophobia (Chrisafis, 2015).

Among the studies that have been done, this research deconstructs Houellebecq's *Soumission* by analyzing its intertextual connections with the Quran and Hadiths, and other authentic sources aiming to uncover misconceptions and reconstruct the ambiguous meaning of the text. Using hermeneutics and deconstruction, the study recognizes the contextual nature of interpretation, echoing Derrida's notion of the text as a perpetually delayed game.

The concept of deconstruction is always related to Jacques Derrida (1930-2007), one of the French authors and philosophers who influenced many thinkers in his era until today. This means that], in Derrida's view, it is a chain that is continuously delayed and amplified (Derrida, 1967, 2005, 2019). In contrast to the structuralist approaches, as pointed out by Jacques Derrida, deconstruction offers a new perspective to find ways to reconstruct a thought represented by language or text, which is then rewritten (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2018). Language is not the stable concept of a signifier and signified system, but it is a means of expressing thoughts that shows the distinction (Derrida, 1967). *La différence* or a deferral, the difference is one of the critical concepts for Derrida (1967, 2005, 2019) in which meaning will be produced. At the center of the deconstruction is the liberation from oppression and jargon, which was dominated by Western minds for a long time. Deconstruction seeks to understand language and releases meaning by looking at the possibilities or things behind what is seen, and it is an open-ended history (Derrida, 1972). The end of the book is the beginning of another text, which is one of the reasons for this research (Derrida, 1967, 2016).

METHOD

The present study is descriptive qualitative research which uses deconstructive-interpretive analysis techniques. The collected data is categorized, analyzed, reflected, and then interpreted to be presented. The tool to collect data in this study is data tables used to compile emerging new topics. These data tables are used to make it easier to collect and categorize a range of data. The words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission*, published by Flammarion Paris in the 2015 edition of *J'ai lu*, are used as the primary data sources. By applying the qualitative data analysis techniques, namely interpretive and inductive data analyses, seven necessary steps are conducted; these steps are (1) reading many times the collected data, (2) making initial notes, (3) determining emergent themes from data collection through data tabling, (4) formulating superordinate themes, (5) making patterns of submission text relationships with other texts, (6) analyzing the relationships of these texts, and (7) inferencing the data for reporting results of the analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The summary of the research results can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Islamophobia in Houellebecq's *Soumission*

No	Description	Fiction	Fact
1	Prejudice	Islam <i>provoque radicalisme</i> ; Women cant work and be successful	Western imagination
2	Negative sentiment	Poligamy and women as objects of sex.	With conditions that must be met
3	Hostility	Islam as scary religion, unfriendly	Peaceful religion

Discussion

Houellebecq's *Soumission* is a novel in 315 pages, containing five chapters, and published in 2015 by Flammarion, Paris. In the novel, Houellebecq tells the story of a young professor of French literature at the Sorbonne University named François who has just finished his dissertation entitled *Joris-Karl Huysmans ou la sortie du tunnel*. He is a pessimist and desperate for the social and economic conditions in the West, which he describes as individualistic, materialistic, and capitalistic. Education, in his opinion, is described as only serving to pursue as much wealth as possible. Houellebecq's *Soumission* illustrates that completing an apprenticeship generally follows a career to earn a higher salary; man becomes a commodity of capitals. Life in Europe, particularly France, is often described as miserable, dull, and empty. François leads a carefree life without family or religious ties. He frequently changes partners, indulges in pornography, and engages in sexual activities with students, prostitutes, or at brothels. Since its emergence in 2017, the Muslim Party in France has brought about a dramatic political transformation. In 2022, Mohammed Ben Abbas, leading the party, became the first Muslim President of the Fraternité Musulmane Party after winning the general election, defeating the Nationalist Party as depicted in Houellebecq's 2015 work.

The setting of *Soumission* (2015) is fantastic French State as an Islamic state. However, the mention of the names that exist in real world e.g. the countries of France, Europe, Paris, Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Germany, Spain, the Sorbonne University, the city of Paris, and names of people e.g. French President François Hollande, Front National Party Leader Marine Le Pen, 8th French prime minister Manuel Valls, politician Jean-François Copé, and François Bayrou who do exist in the real world, confuses the readers which, symbolically, promote fear due to the emergence and victory of the Islamic party Fraternité Musulmane (Spieser-Landes, 2017). In this case, Baudrillard (1994) stated that the representations of the real and fiction are becoming distortion. They bear no relation to any reality whatever, or is explained as simulacrum. This hyperemesis image is one of the ways the author brings fiction closer to reality. Unfortunately, the scent of implicit hatred towards Islam has been smelled and read from the beginning. In several interviews, Houellebecq openly criticized Islam and considered that Islamic ideology is a dangerous ideology (Aïssaoui, 2014).

As a secular republic, France used to separate the concepts of state and religion. The state does not interfere in the religious affairs of any single French citizen. Likewise, religion is not used as a basis for implementing the principle of statehood. However, the term *laïc* was changed by Michel Houellebecq in his *Soumission* (Houellebecq, 2015). In doing so, it also aims to place the debate around Islamophobia in France in the broader context of the "religious crisis" that contemporary France is experiencing, a crisis revealed by the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack (Spieser-Landes, 2017).

Religion has always been a subject of interest for writers and thinkers throughout history, from Ibn Khaldun to Max Weber, as it reflects the struggle of ideas and societal behaviors. Despite being an atheist, Houellebecq addresses religion, specifically Islam, in his work "Soumission" (2015) to convey a satirical critique. The provocative cover of the J'ai Lu edition (pic.1) further emphasizes his intention.



Picture 1. Cover of the Novel *Soumission*

In *Soumission* (2015), the Eiffel Tower is depicted with a floating appearance, crowned by a crescent moon symbol. This imagery challenges France's secularism, suggesting a transformation into a monotheistic state, primarily associated with Islam. The crescent moon symbol holds political significance rather than solely representing Islam. The crescent moon symbol, commonly associated with Islam in the West, initially appeared as the emblem of the Ottoman Empire in the 9th to 13th centuries. Its adoption was unrelated to religion and may have been influenced by symbols in conquered

East Asian regions, while also having connections to Byzantine culture (Ridgeway, 2014). Islamic scholars have different views on the crescent moon symbol. While some consider it a religious sign, others believe it has no religious significance and is a more recent addition unrelated to Islam or religious doctrine (Baits, n.d.). Many Muslims reject the crescent moon as an Islamic symbol, considering it to be an ancient pagan icon due to the absence of specific symbols in Islamic traditions (Andreev *et al.*, 2013; Huda, 2018). If so, the moon emblem on top of Gustave Eiffel's tower in 1889 that towered and became the tallest building in the city of Paris in the novel *Soumission* (2015) seemed very forced and contained an element of prejudice towards Islam.

However, had the pace of victory of the Islamic army in European territory not stopped in Tours and Poitiers, France, under General Charles Martel in 732, it would have become Muslim territories (Lewis, 1957, 2014; Moa, 1988). Some writers mention that the city of Narbonne (southeastern France) was the last city conquered by the Arabs in the land of the Franks in 759 (Lewis, 2014) which can be seen through the inscription monument that reads, "Turn back, sons of Ishmael, this is as far as you go. If you question me, I shall answer you, and if you do not go back, you will smite each other until the Day of Resurrection" (Lewis, 2014, p. 18).

The decline of the Arabs in Tours and Poitiers (western Arabia) was not due to the greatness of Charles Martel but precisely by the Arab defeat in Constantinople, which then shifted its expansion eastward to India, China, and Asia (Lewis, 2014). The defeat is a blessing for Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, because *Allah SWT* made Islam so prevalent that it became the majority religion. *Subhanallah*. Indonesia, with a large Muslim population, faces ongoing challenges due to historical wars and colonialism. Despite its geographical distance, the country plays a vital role in promoting peace.

The French Republic upholds secularism as a core principle since the French Revolution. Article 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen since August 26th, 1789, guarantees freedom of opinion, including religious beliefs, as long as public order is not disrupted (*La Déclaration Des Droits de l'Homme et Du Citoyen*, n.d.). Since the era of the Third Republic (1870-1940), the principle of *laïcité* has been firmly established in France. It began with the French Education Act of Jules Ferry on March 28th, 1882, which separated religion from the school system. This was followed by the separation of religion and the state through the Law of December 9th, 1905. *Laïcité* was later enshrined as a constitutional principle during the Fourth Republic (1946-1958) in Article 1, stating that France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic. This principle was reconfirmed in the constitution on October 4th, 1958, with the added commitment to ensuring equality before the law for all citizens, regardless of their origin, race, or religion. The French state respects all faiths (Baubérot, 2013). Through the *Soumission* (2015), Houellebecq mocks the spirit *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* by playing words using religious issues, especially Islam.

In *Soumission* (2015), conflicts between religious believers are portrayed, reflecting different perspectives on the nature of conflict. Some theorists see conflicts as negative, disrupting harmony and stability, while others view it as a positive force that drives social growth and problem-solving (Jamaludin, 2015). The authors play conflicts by using words through their characters (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019b; Afzal *et al.*, 2021; Majid & Jalaluddin, 2018).

In relation to the conflict that Houellebecq feared, as described in *Soumission* (2015), which he said was based on religious opposition, that was actually a long time ago; no need to wait for the emergence of Islamic parties in France, and no need to wait for 2022 or 2027 religious' conflicts, in fact, to continue to reappear. France was one of the countries that massacred Muslims during the crusades and the 100-year interfaith war. France has many religiously motivated conflicts. France massacred 100,000 Algerian Muslims during the Algerian War (Onion *et al.*, 2019). Religious-based sentiment and bullying are prevalent in France, evident in incidents such as the Molotov cocktail attack on a mosque congregation in Bayonne, the shooting at a mosque in Brittany, and attacks on churches. The tragic attack on a teacher discussing Charlie Hebdo's satirical criticism also underscores the existing conflicts within the French society.

Soumission portrays the political climate of fear that emerged in 2015 in France, characterized by heightened concerns regarding terrorism, migration, and Islam. This coincided with the rise of the populist right, and Houellebecq's novel served as a political tool, influencing government sympathizers and serving as a practical instrument for critics who positioned themselves as defenders of migration policies. This perspective is supported by Ågerup's study (2019) on the political reception of Michel

Houellebecq's *Submission*. The book touches on the issue of Islamophobia and the experiences of discrimination faced by those perceived as Muslim, as discussed by Najib (2021; 2020a) and Najib & Teeple Hopkins (2020b). In addition, through this novel, Houellebecq shows a culturally destroyed nation of the near future, with women and Jews as the victims—sacrificed by the secular elite (Armus, 2017).

The conflict that arises in France is like an iceberg phenomenon, in which Emmanuel Macron, the current President of France, is muted with a military approach. Currently, France is doubling security at EU borders and intends to review the freedom of free passage in the European-Schengen area in various mosques pointed out as extremists; imams are required to have certificates (BBC, 2020). The French Interior Minister's plan, as reported by *Le Figaro* Darmanin sent a circular to the country governor about the inspection of mosques. Following the killing of teacher Samuel Paty on the outskirts of Paris in October, raids and pressure on Muslim gatherings and places of worship in France intensified, coupled with a subsequent incident at the Notre Dame Basilica in Nice (AFP, 2020; Cornevin *et al.*, 2020)

Islam unequivocally rejects violence and terrorism, as affirmed by Sheikh Al Azhar's Muslim representative, Imam Al Tayeb (Abueish, 2020). The tragic beheading of Samuel Paty, a teacher who showed a satirical cartoon of Prophet Muhammad, October 16th, 2020, sparked controversy. However, instead of addressing concerns and condemning terrorism, the French government's response, led by Macron, provoked anger and resulted in a global boycott of French products by Muslims.

The fact that Islam is becoming a fast-growing religion and occupies the second largest religion after Catholicism in France should be regarded with wisdom rather than suspicion. Hopefully, France can get out of the identity crisis that is happening soon. The fact that France has become so multicultural with a growing wave of immigrants, especially after World War II, that it is historically impossible for France to simply deny, given all sorts of deeds in the areas immigrants come from, it seems that France must gradually adapt to the various possibilities that could happen. Hopefully, the changes that are taking place in France are not what Houellebecq described or imagined in his *Soumission* (2015).

True peace cannot be achieved without open and respectful dialogues, where both sides seek mutual understanding and respect for each other's beliefs. Ridicule and innuendo only complicate human relationships and hinder peace. Houellebecq's portrayal of Islam in *Soumission* (2015) adds to the skewed assessment of the religion. The imagined Islamic state in the novel brings trouble and hardship to the French society, including threats to Jews and Christians. However, history shows that mass killings and wars existed long before Islam, and the involvement of politics and religion in conflicts predates Islam as well. Houellebecq's concerns in the novel remain untested by time. It is through understanding and learning from history that we can work towards a more peaceful future. History proves that the massacre of Jews was not carried out by an Islamic-based government, nor did the Crusades in Europe commit mass and brutal killings to eliminate Muslims. Had Hitler known God, perhaps such a terrible massacre of Jews in the Holocaust would not have occurred. What needs to be underlined is that history has proven that human wars and massacres occurred long before Islam was born, and the involvement of churches under the guise of politics or politics under the guise of religion has long occurred long before the emergence of Islam. So, Houellebecq's concerns through *Soumission* (2015) are untested by time.

Houellebecq's novel portrays a distorted view of Islam, where the imagined ideology contradicts the true teachings of the religion. Living in a diverse Muslim-majority country like Indonesia can provide a different perspective, where peaceful coexistence and acceptance of differences are practiced based on Pancasila philosophy. The fear and stereotypes about Islam depicted in Houellebecq's work are unfounded and can lead to biased assumptions. His claim that "when the Islamic Party is in power, it will not be good for the Jews" (Houellebecq, 2015, pp. 103–04) is incorrect and does not reflect the true nature of Islam. In fact, Islam is a religion that can accept differences and not impose. Houellebecq mistakenly equated Islam with the ideology embraced by Hitler, who slaughtered Jews so heinous. For Islam, the guidance of life on how to behave towards people of different faiths is very clear, "For you your religion to me my religion." (Quran, 109th Surah, 6th verse).

For Muslims, no one can forbid anyone to submit and believe in what is believed to be true and vice versa because everything is His will. No one should ever impose the will for religion or irreligiousness; all are responsible for their own life choices. Islam believes that whatever our choice will be accountable to other human beings and to their God. All kinds of differences are understood as

something that becomes His command as a human being that is created variously. Thus, *Allah* the Almighty created peoples and tribes with various languages and customs, as quoted in the Qur'an, the 49th Surah of the 13th verse, as follows, "O, people! Indeed, We created you from a man and a woman, and We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the most glorious of you in the sight of *Allah* is the one who is the most afraid. Indeed, *Allah* is all-knowing, All-knowing" (*Syaamil Al Qur'an Terjemah Per-Kata.*, 2007).

Islam teaches its people to know one another and love one another, not to make enmity and vice versa as a peacemaker from the beginning. We need to look back; Islam, since its first appearance, is set against the backdrop of the struggle for inter-tribal power regions with the spice of differences of beliefs, namely the endless 7th-century conflict between the Roman Empire and the Sasanian in Iran who competed to conquer the world (Cole, 2018). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) spread Islam peacefully in the major cities of Western Arabia, Mecca; even the Qur'an clearly gave instructions on how to treat the return of those who do evil with good, one of which is contained in Surah Fushilat, verse 34, "Reject (the evil) in a better way, then suddenly the person between you and between him there is hostility as if he has become a very loyal friend."

Houellebecq's novel *Soumission* (2015) portrays the concept of polygamy in Islam inaccurately. In Islam, polygamy is strictly regulated (An-Nisa/4:3), allowing a maximum of four wives under specific conditions. These conditions include financial and psychological capability, permission from the first wife, and the ability to treat all wives fairly. Islam emphasizes justice and equal treatment between spouses, rather than unrestricted freedom to marry multiple women. If or in the condition that man is financially and psychologically unable to do so, if they are not able to be fair to his wife, then one wife will be better for him. On the principle of justice, Islam accords equal dignity to men and women. Stereotypes about radical Islam (as shown on Tabel 1) emerged and spread quickly through media and cultural products that were easily applied and trusted without critical thinking. That is why it is important to approach media representations with a critical mindset to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam.

Islam clearly regulates the Islamic attitudes that are expected of its *ummah* (male or female), both about divinity, the universe, and life. Houellebecq (2015, p. 315) does mention that in order to become a Muslim, one simply says, "Ashadu alla ilaaha illallah Muhammadarosalullah." "I testify that there is no God but *Allah*, and the Prophet Muhammad is *Allah's* messenger." But that was the entrance to becoming a Muslim. It's not enough to just say it without believing it. For Houellebecq, an atheist who does not believe in the Existence of God, it is natural for there to be rejections. It takes true faith in God the Almighty with all the perfect God-nature and including the day of resurrection after death where every human being will be reckoned with his deeds while on earth. This faith is the main factor that can guide man on the right path and distance himself from bad deeds and unjust and heinous acts, including harming fellow human beings and committing actions that are against the nature of humanity. Strictly speaking, Islam gives instructions on what is right and what is wrong, which is *haq* and which is vanity; there is no ambivalence and dualism.

Faith for a Muslim includes (1) believing in *Allah SWT*, (2) His angels, (3) His scriptures, (4) the Prophets and His *rosul*, (5) the last day, (6) and faith in *Allah's Tadir*. The first pillar of faith is the basis for the other pillars. Islam has the meaning of complete surrender to *Allah*, the one and only God. Monotheism is Islam, the religion brought by the prophets ranging from Prophet Adam, Noah, Ibrahim, Moses, Jesus, and the prophets before the closing Prophet Muhammad (Masri, 1998). If accepting the oneness of God as the Most Singular is still difficult, full of doubts and innuendo, Houellebecq may need to reread, understand, and explore the Qur'an so that the value of obedience or submission is more meaningful and not dry.

It should be emphasized once again that what Houellebecq wrote about union relations or living together without a marriage bond is not a Muslim rule of life. The law of marriage in Islam is to protect the rights and duties of a man and a woman and protect children born from the outcome of the marriage. Marriage in Islam is sacred and part of worship. The habit of living with freedom is not the Islamic way of life.

The novel *Soumission* portrays Western culture as being centered around indulgence and lust, where individuals can freely engage in relationships without any commitment. However, this depiction does not align with the principles of Islam. In Islam, there are clear guidelines and restrictions regarding relationships and marriage, aiming to promote modesty and protect individuals. Through the institution

of marriage, Muslims can focus on their worship and fulfill their responsibilities within a family unit. Islam emphasizes the temporary nature of worldly pleasures and the importance of seeking God's pleasure. It encourages believers to reflect, think, and believe in the messages conveyed through the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him).

Houellebecq's *Soumission* (2015) puts women's degrees lower than men. The dominance of Islamic law described by the author is a patriarchal system in which men assume they are in a superior position. At the same time, women submit and obey the supremacy of male power. Groups of men under the rule of the Islamic regime in this novel are presented as groups that can control various aspects of women's lives. The women's group seemed powerless to oppose men's power.

"Under the Islamic regime, women – well, those who were pretty enough to arouse the desire of a rich husband – basically had the opportunity to remain children for most of their lives. Shortly after coming out of childhood, they became mothers themselves and plunged back into the childish universe [...] Obviously, they were losing autonomy." (Houellebecq, 2015, pp. 238-239).

France, under the rule of the Islamic regime in Houellebecq's *Soumission* (2015), placed women as second-class members in the imaginative Islamic society à la Houellebecq. Women are creatures that must be 'hidden' and only occupy domestic territories that have the duty to care for children and homes. Again, the assumptions presented by Houellebecq are not based on a deep knowledge of Islam. In the Qur'an, it is mentioned that the position of man is not determined by his gender (male or female), rich or poor, but by the degree of his faith.

Allah also said in Al-Baqaraah: 21, "O people! Pray your Lord who created you and those before you, that you may fear" (Syaamil Al Qur'an Terjemah Per-Kata. Didistribusi, no date). Faith, piety, and surrender are certainly unquestionable as a Muslim unless it is as much as Houellebecq, who still laughs and mocks at and questions how the world can be equal, obedient, and obediently full of piety. God has appointed man as caliph on earth, but it is still easily man derailed by Satan, who will invite humans to argue with each other and to oppose *Allah SWT*, so too the devil who did not obey to submit to the Prophet Adam a.s. on His command, because of his pride and feel more dignified than Prophet Adam a.s. who was created from mud. This is the clear difference between the submissive and the opposed.

"For Muslim men and women, men and women of the believers, men and women who remain in obedience, righteous men and women, men and women who are patient, men and women who give alms, men and women who fast, men and women who maintain their honor, men and women who mention *Allah* a lot, Allah has prepared for them forgiveness of great rewards." (Al-Ahzab: 35).

Men and women have the same position before *Allah SWT*. The purpose of human creation is to worship, as mentioned in Adz-Zariat (56), "I (*Allah*) did not create man and the jinn but that they may worship Me." Thus, it is clear that man (male and female) is not distinguished based on men or women before God.

For Muslims, man's relationship with the One and Only God is very clear, based on his piety. The human relationship with the man in Islam is also arranged. God created man with nations and tribes, all of which are the gifts of *Allah SWT*. Physically different, there are creatures called men and women who have their respective roles. There are differences in the physicals and functions that are expected to provide benefits to others as long as humans are still alive in the world.

There is no prohibition for women to have a job to assist families/husbands and children in fulfilling their responsibilities. Equally, there is no prohibition either for women to choose to worship and focus on educating children and taking care of their households; it is her choice to worship. In Muslim families, men have an obligation to fulfill their responsibilities in meeting the needs of their families because it is one form of nature and worship and a means to draw closer to *Allah SWT*. In Islam, a man is an *imam* in his family, including in terms of the education of his son and wife. The difference in roles and responsibilities both as men and as women is not to be contested. God says in the 21st verse of Qur'an "And among His signs is the creation of heaven and earth, the difference in your language, and the color of your skin. Indeed, there are signs for those who know." Likewise, in Al-Hujuraat, 13:

"O people! Indeed, We created you from a man and a woman, and We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most glorious among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most afraid. *Allah* is all-knowing, All-Knowing."

Therefore, opposed to what Houellebecq stated in *Soumission* (2015), freedom (especially among women) in Islam can also develop professionally. Women (who are married) can be the subject who chooses between working and staying at home. If in *Soumission* (2015), the rules are made in such a way as to make women fully dependent on men, this is not the case in Islam. Women in this novel are suppressed and made incapable so that their autonomy as an individual is eliminated. Houellebecq, through *Soumission* (2015), clearly gives a perfunctory picture of Islamic women. According to Houellebecq, women are helpless human beings because the system regulates them. The system forces women to remain in domestic territories. Women are unable to develop careers. This is seen in the quote «Aucun poste d'enseignement ne pourrait. -- être occupé par une femme ». The citation shows that teaching posts in educational institutions cannot be filled by women's groups. Only men are entitled to a teaching vacancy. Of course that is not the case in the view of Islam.

CONCLUSION

Despite the hatred and slander against Islam, people are not deterred from embracing this refined religion. Research shows that even after the 9/11 attacks, many individuals were drawn to Islam because of its peaceful teachings and mercy. Islam, in its true essence, does not advocate brutality or violence as portrayed in Houellebecq's *Soumission* (2015); it is a religion of peace. If it is God's will for France to become an Islamic state, may the transition happen safely and peacefully. The future of France is envisioned as a diverse country, accommodating various cultures and religions. Time will reveal whether France will remain secular or embrace its diverse inhabitants. For those seeking purpose and guidance, studying the Qur'an and Hadith may provide the answers they seek. May God guide them and bring happiness to their lives.

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