

WOMEN'S RESISTANCE IN AMIN SALAMAH'S SHORT STORY “DAWLAT AZH-ZHULM SA'AH”: A LITERARY FEMINIST ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study is based on an effort to identify forms of female resistance found in the short story “*Dawlat azh-Zhulm Sa'ah*” by Amin Salamah. This short story depicts the social reality of a society still influenced by a patriarchal system, which gives rise to gender inequality, manipulative seduction, social pressure, and slander against women. These conditions drive women to resist in an effort to uphold their dignity and moral values, as well as to protect themselves and their families. This study employs a qualitative approach using text content analysis. The research data consist of narrative excerpts and dialogues that illustrate the attitudes and actions of female characters in confronting social pressure. The analysis is conducted through the lens of Naomi Wolf's power feminism, which emphasizes the concepts of personal power and agency, and is enriched by the integration of Islamic values as a moral and spiritual foundation for understanding women's resistance. The results indicate that women's resistance is represented through rejection of gender stereotypes, firmness in safeguarding their self-respect from men's desires, resistance to slander through spiritual strength in the form of prayer, and efforts to protect their families from harmful social influences. These findings affirm that female characters are not portrayed as passive victims but rather as subjects possessing the awareness and strength to resist behaviors that contradict Islamic moral values and teachings, with the aim of preserving their dignity and self-respect. This study contributes to enriching the field of Arab literary feminism by integrating the perspectives of power feminism and Islamic values in understanding women's agency.

Keywords: Women's resistance; stereotypes; patriarchy; Arabic short stories; power feminism; Islamic values.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of casual relationships today indicates that interactions between men and women often occur without clear boundaries. This phenomenon manifests in various forms, such as the trend of dating relationships or “*situationships*” relationships without a defined status which are becoming increasingly common among young people. Interaction patterns that begin with excessive closeness and even extend to the practice of *khalwat* are often regarded as normal in modern social life (Dewi et al., 2020).

In reality, however, this situation places women in a more vulnerable position within unequal relationships, particularly within a context where patriarchy remains strong. Women often become the victims, whether through harassment or violence; this is highly likely to occur, especially among adolescents who are still in the process of self-discovery. In such situations, many women are influenced by the manipulative advances of men who appear trustworthy, which gradually make it difficult for women to distinguish between their own desires and the emotional pressure exerted by their partners (Lotulung, 2024). In such situations, women's resistance begins to emerge as a form of self-awareness to protect themselves from various harmful relationships such as rejecting invitations that violate religious boundaries, maintaining distance from non-mahram men, and avoiding unhealthy relationships.

This has long been a taboo subject, as it has persisted for a very long time; looking back at the pre-Islamic history of the Arab region, women's status at that time was extremely vulnerable they were not even considered to possess full human dignity. They were often treated as objects, subjected to forced marriages, denied inheritance rights, and even subjected to cruel practices such as the live burial of female infants (Al-Samurai, 2020). These conditions demonstrate that male dominance over women is not a new phenomenon but has persisted for a long time in various forms.

The advent of Islam brought about significant and profound changes by upholding the principle of justice and elevating the status of women in various aspects of life (Tahir, 2024). Islamic teachings helped eradicate inhumane practices and began to create space for women to exercise their rights in education, employment, and social life. This marked a crucial shift toward a system that places greater value on women's dignity.

Although women have gained these various rights, patriarchal social norms continue to limit their freedom and roles in daily life such as pursuing careers and higher education because of the gender-based expectation that women belong solely in the home (Swari, 2023). Men are still often positioned as the dominant party in decision-making, so women have not yet fully experienced ideal equality. This situation indicates that changes in values have not been fully accompanied by changes in social practices. In patriarchal societies, women are often placed in subordinate positions, both in the domestic and public spheres (Syafe'i, 2015). This means that women are still viewed as the weaker sex and dependent on men, thereby limiting their scope of action. This perspective reinforces the imbalance of roles between men and women in various aspects of life.

As a result of these conditions, various forms of discrimination and structural injustice have emerged, broadly affecting women's lives (Yuli et al., 2015). This power imbalance occurs not only in personal relationships but also within larger social systems, such as in the freedom of expression in the public sphere. This demonstrates that the issues faced by women are complex and interrelated. Therefore, women's resistance plays a crucial role in efforts to combat unjust domination. Women are beginning to recognize that they have the right to make their own choices and protect themselves from various forms of oppression (Gulo, 2024). In this context, resistance is not merely understood as an effort to uphold dignity and live in accordance with the values they hold dear.

According to Scott (1985), resistance does not always have to be overt or carried out directly. It can also manifest in subtle forms, such as shifts in attitude or seemingly ordinary actions. This approach is chosen when the situation does not allow for open resistance, enabling individuals to still express their refusal and defend themselves in a safer manner.

Previously, the concept of resistance first gained prominence due to the frequent wars in June 1967; this was later incorporated into literature, leading to the term “resistance literature” coined by Najm, (2009), as cited in a study by Khalil Parvini (2016). This perspective is used to describe how literary works reveal forms of injustice, oppose direct domination, expose oppressive power structures, and inspire a spirit of struggle within society.

It is within these literary works that a representation of social reality is created, playing a crucial role in reflecting the dynamics of injustice in the face of resistance. Here, literary works not only depict external conflicts but also reveal the inner struggles of characters as they uphold moral values and self-respect within an Islamic literary context (Ahyyar Anwar, 2024). Literary works come in various forms; one of them is the short story, which can reflect social reality through a single narrative arc focused on a single main event and is structured concisely to create a singular impression for the reader (Widayati, 2020). According to Haslinda (2021), a short story is a work of fiction with a limited word count but possessing depth of meaning and strong emotional impact. Consequently, women in various literary works are often portrayed as being in unequal positions due to the strength of the patriarchal system.

To analyze these representations, a literary feminist approach is relevant for interpretation. Conceptually, feminism is a movement and framework of thought that advocates for equal rights between men and women and critiques social structures that perpetuate women’s subordination (Olifia, 2016). Feminism has evolved into various schools of thought, such as liberal feminism, which emphasizes equal rights in the legal and educational spheres; radical feminism, which critiques patriarchy as a system of structural domination; socialist feminism, which examines the connection between the oppression of women and the economic system; and cultural feminism, which emphasizes values and experiences unique to women (Pratami, 2024). In literary studies, feminism serves to identify representations of women in texts, deconstruct patriarchal ideology, and interpret forms of resistance against gender injustice. In this context, feminism seeks to explore, analyze, and evaluate the roles of women in literary works, thereby fostering an awareness rooted in women’s own experiences regarding power, knowledge, and truth (Raisha Nissa Fitri, Siti M’wah Auliya, 2026).

This study specifically employs the perspective of *power feminism* as articulated by Naomi Wolf in her book “*Fire with Fire*”. This perspective emphasizes the importance of personal power that is, the inner strength derived from within, comprising the moral, mental, and emotional resources each individual possesses to maintain autonomy, cultivate self-awareness, and demonstrate the courage to take a stand against situations that threaten their dignity. Wolf (1993) also asserts that women are not passive beings who are merely victims of patriarchal structures, but rather active agents with the capacity to determine their own choices and life paths. This is closely related to the concept of agency that is, an individual’s ability to act. Women’s active role in defending their rights, speaking out for the truth, and resisting oppression.

This concept of agency is reflected in the aspects of independence, altruism, persistence, revolutionary spirit, and resilience. Independence demonstrates women’s autonomy in making life choices; altruism illustrates care and sacrifice to protect others; persistence reflects steadfastness in upholding principles; revolutionary spirit demonstrates the courage to fight against injustice; and resilience is evident in women’s ability to endure suffering and pressure. Thus, these aspects embody the strength of women within Naomi Wolf’s power feminism (Maghfiroh & Zawawi 2020).

Naomi Wolf also explains that power feminism is grounded in five core principles: equality of roles between women and men; bodily autonomy; recognition of the value of women's experiences; freedom to speak the truth; and the right to be respected in all spheres of life (Ramadani, 2024). These principles affirm that women's life experiences hold not only personal value but can also serve as a source of moral strength and a foundation for meaningful decision-making. On this basis, women have the legitimacy to reject any form of treatment that demeans their dignity.

In the context of this study, these principles serve as the foundation for identifying forms of women's resistance to a man's manipulative behavior that leads to sexual harassment. Although feminism serves as a theoretical framework advocating for gender equality, at its core, feminist thought originates from Western liberal thought just as this "power feminism" is secular in nature and emphasizes individual autonomy as the primary source of women's strength (Asia, M., Ridwan, 2025).

On the other hand, within the context of Muslim society, women's actions and attitudes are not determined solely by personal consciousness but are also guided by religious values rooted in Islamic teachings. This difference in foundations indicates the potential for conceptual tension between secular feminism and Islamic values in interpreting women's resistance. From the perspective of Islamic law, women's resistance is understood as a form of moral and spiritual awareness to reject harmful practices, both within the family and in society (Hariani et al., 2025). Therefore, this study not only applies the power feminism perspective but also engages in a critical dialogue with Islamic values to examine how women's resistance is represented not merely as an expression of individual freedom but also as a form of moral and spiritual responsibility such as safeguarding honor (*hifz al 'ird*), upholding justice (*al-'adl*), and the moral responsibility of a person of faith as a source of inner strength that drives women to take a firm stance against all forms of oppression.

This is because the integration of power feminism and an Islamic perspective demonstrates that women's resistance is rooted not only in individual autonomy and personal awareness but also in religious conviction, which provides a solid moral and spiritual foundation. Faith serves as a crucial factor in strengthening personal power, enabling women not only to reject oppression but also to assert their dignity and honor as part of their moral responsibility before God (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Therefore, women's resistance is understood not merely as a form of physical defiance, but as an affirmation of personal strength reflected in moral and spiritual attitudes, such as the courage to speak the truth, maintaining personal boundaries, and upholding honor with full awareness and conviction.

A number of previous studies have examined women's resistance from the perspective of Naomi Wolf's power feminism across various media. Maghfiroh's (2020) study of the film "*For Sama*" found that women's resistance is manifested through independence, resilience, and the courage to face wartime conflict. These findings affirm that women possess the ability to endure and fight back in extreme situations through tangible actions that are directly observable. However, this study still focuses on resistance that is tangible and directly observable, such as the courage to survive in the midst of war and to take an active role in critical situations. Yet, this study has not delved deeply into the inner processes, self-awareness, and psychological or subtle resistance strategies that female characters might experience when facing such pressures. In this regard, this study aims to broaden that understanding by viewing resistance not only as physical action but also as an internal process that shapes women's courage in the face of domination.

Furthermore, in their study, Latifa et al. (2023), through an analysis of the film “*Ash-Shafaqah*”, highlight the social and political resistance reflected in firm stances, the courage to face challenges, and demands for gender equality. This research demonstrates that women are capable of asserting their position in the social sphere through overt forms of resistance. Nevertheless, the focus of this study remains limited to resistance that emerges directly within the social and political spheres; thus, it has not yet explored in depth how women build inner strength before engaging in resistance, particularly in shaping their awareness and personal choices. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by emphasizing that resistance does not occur solely in the public sphere but also originates from women’s awareness and their ability to respond strategically to pressure.

Meanwhile, Berliana Fiardi Annatasya (2021), in the film “*Nur Eine Frau*”, demonstrates that women’s resistance is reflected in their courage to make life choices, voice their opinions, and achieve financial independence in the face of domestic violence, as well as in their struggle to gain autonomy within an immigrant family rife with pressure. This study reinforces the notion that women’s resistance can emerge in the domestic sphere through efforts to achieve personal autonomy. However, existing research still frames resistance as an end result manifesting in actions such as independence and the courage to make decisions without detailing the psychological processes and individual awareness that shape this resistance. In this context, this study aims to fill this gap by examining how resistance is not only understood as an outcome but also as a process involving women’s consciousness, experiences, and strategies in confronting domination, as well as how such resistance can be understood as part of their efforts to reclaim control over themselves.

Although these studies have made important contributions to understanding women’s resistance from a feminist power perspective demonstrating that women are capable of challenging patriarchal domination through independent, assertive, and courageous attitudes in the face of various forms of domination, whether in the contexts of war, society, politics, or the domestic sphere. However, all three studies still tend to emphasize forms of resistance that are visible only on the surface of their attitudes. Consequently, there remains a research gap in the form of a lack of discussion regarding the internal dimensions of women’s resistance, such as self-awareness, internal power dynamics, and the formation of resistance that is subtle and not always immediately apparent.

Based on this research gap, this study offers a scientific innovation by examining women’s resistance in Amin Salamah’s short story “*Dawlah azh-Zhulm Sa’ah*” through the lens of Naomi Wolf’s power feminism. This short story depicts female characters who confront the reprehensible behavior of a man whose immoral actions threaten women’s dignity within a community that upholds the moral values of Islam. In this situation, the female characters demonstrate various forms of resistance as an effort to protect themselves and their families from this manipulative and reprehensible behavior. These actions are also depicted with Islamic nuances, such as the attitude of *tawadhu’* (humility) in upholding the principle of honor, and devotion to worship expressed through the refusal to use prayer as a means of submission; thus, these serve as a strong foundation for a Muslim in the effort to avoid acts that violate moral values, as a way of preserving her own dignity and that of her family.

This study not only identifies the forms of women’s resistance but also analyzes how such resistance manifests through the rejection of manipulation, steadfastness in upholding the truth, and the awareness to preserve self-respect within unequal power dynamics. This study also expands the scope of analysis from film to literary works, while highlighting moral and spiritual resistance as a form of personal power rooted in ethical and religious

values. Furthermore, this research makes a theoretical contribution by integrating the concept of power feminism with cultural contexts and Islamic perspectives, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of women's agency in Arab society.

Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of women's resistance, not only as a form of opposition to patriarchy but also as an expression of consciousness in upholding values and self-respect. Consequently, the novelty of this study lies in its analysis of women's resistance as an effort to preserve dignity and self-worth in the face of manipulative power relations a perspective not specifically explored in previous research. This approach goes beyond the findings of prior studies and enriches feminist scholarship within the field of Arabic literature.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical research design through *content analysis*. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on understanding the meaning, messages, and social and cultural values of patriarchy in Amin Salamah's short story "*Dawlat azh-Zhulm Sa'ah*", particularly in examining forms of women's resistance to patriarchal domination. The qualitative approach yields data in the form of dialogue or speech, text excerpts, and narratives, thereby helping the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the literary work's content (Ifit Novita Sari, 2022). This study is grounded in the view that meaning in literary works is subjective and influenced by social and cultural contexts, thus requiring analysis through interpretation rather than through numbers or statistics. This approach is considered appropriate for literary works that contain many symbols, stylistic devices, and social messages that cannot be understood directly but require in-depth interpretation (Nurhaswinda, 2025). This method helps reveal how literature can serve as social criticism and a means of resistance against gender injustice.

The data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data consist of the text of the short story "*Dawlat azh-Zhulm Sa'ah*" by Amin Salamah, found in his anthology titled "*Aynun al-Hub La Tanam*". The secondary data were obtained from various books, and news articles relevant to the issues of patriarchy, gender, and the perspective of Islamic teachings. This secondary data was used as supporting data to strengthen the analysis and provide a broader context for the research findings.

Data collection was conducted using the data reduction method, whereby the researcher read the entire short story intensively and repeatedly, translating it from Arabic to Indonesian in stages to ensure the meaning remained accurate. Subsequently, the researcher highlighted and compiled important excerpts relevant to the research focus as data.

The data analysis technique employed systematic text content analysis through several stages. First, an intensive reading to comprehensively understand the story's context, including the plot, characters, setting, and conflict. Second, identifying units of analysis such as words, sentences, or paragraphs that contain forms of female resistance. Fourth, grouping the data according to the research focus. Fifth, the data is interpreted by linking the findings to the theory of feminist power proposed by Naomi Wolf and supported by various relevant sources, as this perspective emphasizes the concepts of personal power and agency as sources of women's strength in confronting patriarchal domination. However, given that the subject of study has Islamic nuances, the analysis is also enriched with Islamic values as a moral and spiritual foundation, with the aim of deepening the analysis of the findings. The final stage is to draw conclusions systematically based on the results of the

analysis.

To ensure the data used is accurate and appropriate, the researcher cross-referenced the meaning of the data with the context within the text. Additionally, the consistency of the analysis was maintained by using the same categories and rereading the text repeatedly to ensure stable results. In this study, the researcher served as the primary instrument; therefore, precision and sensitivity in understanding the text were crucial factors in producing an in-depth and scientifically sound analysis.

Results and Discussion

Findings from the study of the short story “*Dawlat azh-Zhulm Sa’ah*” in the anthology “*Aynun al-Hub La Tanam*” by Amin Salamah indicate that the female characters engage in two forms of resistance: open and closed resistance. Open resistance refers to direct and visible forms of defiance, such as verbal refusal or physical actions. Covert resistance, on the other hand, involves symbolic or hidden forms of defiance, such as silence, prayer, or internal refusal facilitated through others.

However, within the framework of Naomi Wolf’s feminist power perspective which emphasizes personal power as the source of strength rooted in self-awareness agency emerges as concrete action to safeguard one’s self-authority and the family’s dignity from harmful relationships. Thus, in the short story, this category of resistance is evident in Fatimah’s efforts to reject gender stereotypes; her opposition to immoral behavior; and prayer as a form of spiritual strength. Furthermore, resistance is also evident in a mother’s stance as she protects her child from someone’s negative influence; in her response to sexual harassment; and in her protective attitude, which underscores the strength of the maternal role in safeguarding her child’s honor and future.

Resistance to Gender Stereotypes in the Character of Fatimah

Resistance to stereotypes can be understood as a critical act of discarding cognitive assumptions formed through psychological mechanisms such as the way people perceive and judge others based solely on their physical appearance, as explained by Murdianto (2018). This aligns with the findings of a study by Fitriani et al. (2024), who argues that this resistance to stereotypes is evident when women are labeled solely as weak characters and men are portrayed as arrogant, masculine figures; in such cases, women can challenge these attitudes.

This is reflected in the following excerpt from a short story, as seen in the narrative below:

“Muhsin thought Fatimah was an easy target (to influence), someone who would submit to his wishes and fulfill his desires; above all, he considered Fatimah naive and lacking in life experience.” (Salamah, 2023, p. 16)

Based on the excerpt above, the researcher argues that Fatimah’s resistance actually stems from the stereotypes or assumptions constructed by Muhsin. He viewed Fatimah as naive and easily influenced, so he was confident that his future flattery and persuasion would succeed in deceiving her. This perspective reflects a patriarchal construct that positions women as weak and passive. However, it is precisely from this perceived weakness that resistance emerges. Fatimah does not allow herself to be trapped by these assumptions. She demonstrates the ability to control herself and set boundaries against the pressure coming from Muhsin.

At first, when Muhsin came to see Fatimah, he wanted to capture her attention by pretending to like Murad and joining them in their play; this is depicted in the following

narrative:

"Muhsin pretended to love his nephew Murad dearly, but his true goal was to win Fatimah's heart whom he considered the ideal target to become a lover who could fulfill his desires." (Salamah, 2023, p. 16)

In his effort to attract Fatimah's attention, Muhsin tried to project a positive image in front of her by pretending to like the little boy, even though he wasn't actually close to Murad. Eventually, Murad's mother noticed his strange behavior he would often enter their home without greeting anyone, muttering to himself and grew suspicious, as shown in the following excerpt:

"Murad's mother began to suspect her younger son, Muhsin, whose behavior seemed restless whenever Fatimah was present. She noticed that Muhsin often went to Murad's room under the pretext of wanting to play with him, when in fact he was using the opportunity to woo Fatimah with sweet words and empty promises. However, Fatimah knew full well that Muhsin harbored evil and despicable intentions. She realized that Muhsin was merely a college student who was not on the same level as her socially, in terms of family background, or culturally, and she had no romantic feelings for him. She also knew that all of Muhsin's sweet words were nothing but lies that would never touch her heart." (Salamah, 2023, p. 16)

At first, Murad's mother began to suspect Muhsin's behavior, as he had been coming to the house more frequently since Fatimah's arrival. However, she did not investigate further to uncover the real reason. In fact, Muhsin came with the intention of finding an opportunity to get close to Fatimah. Meanwhile, Fatimah was aware of the difference in their social backgrounds and understood that Muhsin's intentions were not sincere but rather manipulative.

From Naomi Wolf's perspective, Fatimah's stance reflects the concept of "personal power" that is, a woman's internal capacity to make choices, maintain her autonomy, and resist patriarchal domination (Wolf, 1993). Thus, Fatimah's resistance is not merely moral in nature but also a form of self-awareness as an empowered subject. Additionally, there is another quote that illustrates women's resistance to Muhsin's domination, as seen in the following excerpt:

"However, her hopes were in vain. Although Fatimah lived in poverty and lacked basic necessities, she remained steadfast in her purity and religious principles. For her, as a poet once said: 'A woman is a garden, and her purity is like the water that sustains it.' (Salamah, 2023, p. 16)

The quote above illustrates a strong form of resistance against male dominance. Fatimah did not succumb to Muhsin's assumptions; even though she was in a materially vulnerable position, she remained steadfast in her convictions. Here it becomes evident that women's power, as explained by Wolf (1993), lies in their agency specifically, their ability to set boundaries and uphold their principles as a form of *persistence* that remains steadfast in adhering to those principles.

Thus, Fatimah's form of resistance falls under "covert resistance," as evidenced by her subtle discomfort in response to Muhsin's gaze. Psychologically, she does not allow Muhsin's demeaning gaze to undermine her self-worth. From a moral and religious perspective, she makes the principle of chastity (*iffah*) her unshakable fortress, adhering to religious teachings not only outwardly but also with full awareness (Marcelino &

Masykuroh, 2025).

This is implied by her evoking a positive image through a verse from “*Bahithat al-Badiya*” a poem by the classical-modern poet Malak Hifni Nasif, a fragment of which appears in the short story :”Her Modesty and the Girl’s Garden“ ” Her modesty flows over him abundantlylikewater ,” a line that affirms that “*this woman is likened to a beautiful garden whose beauty is sustained by the water of purity.*” The word “garden” symbolizes beauty and life, while “water” symbolizes modesty and morality (Nasif, n.d.).

This poem reflects that a woman’s true value lies not in physical beauty, but in faith, character, and loyalty qualities embodied in the inner image of a woman who is always graceful, educated, and dignified, serving as a symbol of moral strength in society. All of this is reinforced by strong self-control, which, according to Naomi Wolf, is the most fundamental form of power women possess over their bodies and their own choices.

This aligns with the current social context, in which Fatimah an eighteen-year-old teenager who has just graduated from high school is likened to a “*blooming flower*” whose fragrance draws the attention of men who see her. However, this allure does not automatically make her an easy prey for men to deceive. Men may think they can easily influence her, but a woman with self-awareness, moral principles, and strong faith like Fatimah, who possesses the *personal* control to manage situations and manage her emotional impulses effectively (Hapsari & Yuliasari, 2025) will be able to reject advances that violate social norms by ignoring Muhsin. This is a tangible form of resistance against the stereotype of women as the weaker sex a form of resistance that requires no weapons but relies on courage, principles, and unwavering faith.

This narrative demonstrates a form of resistance that can be understood through the concept of personal agency in Naomi Wolf’s power feminism that is, a woman’s ability to make choices regarding her own body and self. In this context, Fatimah’s stance of maintaining her personal boundaries constitutes a form of agency, as she retains control over her decisions despite being in a socially vulnerable position. However, when viewed through an Islamic lens, this action is not only interpreted as a form of resistance against patriarchy but also as an effort to uphold moral values and preserve one’s dignity.

Herein lies both the difference and the common ground between the two; power feminism emphasizes individual freedom as a source of strength, whereas Islam places these choices within a framework of moral values and rules. Thus, Fatimah’s resistance can be understood as a form of resistance that is not overt but still draws its strength from Islamic teachings, as she uses that strength as a means to confront existing pressures.

Muhsin represents the typical male figure in a patriarchal society that views women as objects to be exploited for personal gratification. By regarding Fatimah as “*easy prey*” (as indicated in the excerpt “صيدا سهلا”), this fuels the assumption of a domination strategy that claims the poor and innocent Fatimah lacks the ability to refuse or resist Muhsin’s desires. However, Fatimah’s indifference to his attempts to deceive her serves as her form of resistance, proving that women’s power can manifest in different forms such as by restraining her own desires.

This illustrates that women can resist without having to do so openly. This strength arises from self-awareness, steadfastness, and faith in religious values. Within the framework of power feminism, this is understood as personal agency that is, a woman’s awareness to act in accordance with her own will and the principles she believes in. Meanwhile, in Islam, such actions are part of efforts to preserve dignity and uphold moral

values. Although they have different foundations, both perspectives affirm that women have control over themselves. Thus, this resistance not only preserves self-respect but also gradually undermines patriarchal assumptions from within.

Resistance to Immoral Behavior

Fatimah's courage in facing Muhsin's advances is clearly depicted as a symbol of women's resistance to his seduction and immoral behavior. From the beginning of the story, she is portrayed not as a weak figure, but as resolute in upholding her dignity. This is evident in the following excerpt from the short story:

"However, Muhsin continued to pursue her. He would often wait for Fatimah to leave her older sister's house after finishing her work (where she helped her mother and younger siblings), and then head home to her own house. Whenever she encountered Muhsin trying to seduce her, she always firmly rejected his advances, even going so far as to threaten to report him to the police if he continued to harass her." (Salamah, 2023, p. 17)

Muhsin's behavior grew increasingly out of control until he became a stalker of Fatimah, to the point where one day Muhsin recklessly attempted to commit an indecent act, as described in the following excerpt:

"On several occasions, Muhsin tried to force himself on Fatimah hugging and kissing her while she was playing with Murad in a separate room away from the rest of the house. With all her courage, Fatimah immediately slapped him and walked away from him." (Salamah, 2023, p. 19)

Even after being seduced time and again, Fatimah remained steadfast in her refusal because she held firm to her principles as a true Muslim woman, as depicted in the following excerpt from a short story:

"Muhsin's attempts to seduce Fatimah continued, hoping that one day she would give in. But he discovered that Fatimah was a firm, serious, and principled young woman not the type easily tempted. Finally, Fatimah threatened to report Muhsin's (bad) behavior to her older sister (Murad's mother) so that he would stop harassing her." (Salamah, 2023, p. 20)

The three excerpts above consistently demonstrate how Fatimah's response not only rejected every form of harassment but also involved daring to engage in physical and social threats to defend her honor. This stance portrays Fatimah not as a passive victim, but as an active agent fully aware of her self-respect and honor, thereby setting an example of a woman who is sovereign over herself. Thus, Fatimah's response reflects open resistance, as she openly defies Muhsin with her firm principles.

Her consistent stance aligns with Islamic values that emphasize the importance of *Syaja'ah* (courage) in defending the truth and safeguarding one's honor. In this excerpt from the short story, the character's courage is evident when she firmly refuses to be hugged or kissed. This stance represents a form of open resistance, as Fatimah dares to say "no" and take concrete action despite being in a high-pressure situation. Such actions reflect self-awareness, steadfastness in principles, and the courage to uphold personal boundaries in accordance with the values she holds dear. Thus, courage in this context is not merely passive but also active, manifested through direct refusal of inappropriate treatment (Ankhafiyaa, 2021). This carries a relevant moral message for Muslims including Muslim women who are called upon to courageously reject all forms of injustice and harassment.

Indeed, the Quran also emphasizes, “*Save yourselves and your families from the Fire of Hell.*” (Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6).

This implies an active obligation to protect oneself from reprehensible acts. Furthermore, Islam commands its followers to enjoin what *is good* and forbid what *is evil* a principle that demands courage in social resistance. Thus, the attitude of the character Fatimah in this short story rejecting Muhsin’s advances by slapping him when she was coerced and even threatened with being reported is a concrete manifestation of Islamic teachings: preserving chastity (*iffah*), rejecting falsehood, and upholding dignity as the image of a believing woman (Suci Rahma Sari, et al., 2024).

This principle resonates with Naomi Wolf’s concept of “power feminism,” which similarly emphasizes that women possess the strength to resist domination and maintain autonomy over themselves. Naomi Wolf rejects the view that women lack the personal strength to determine the course of their lives in the face of male domination. Fatimah clearly embodies this; she does not succumb to seduction or coercion but instead demonstrates active resistance born of self-awareness and moral integrity a form of *revolutionary agency*.

Her actions constitute a form of resistance that aligns with both the spirit of Islam and the ideas of power feminism, as both emphasize women’s independence, steadfastness, and courage in upholding their honor and rejecting oppression. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two. Feminism, particularly power feminism, places greater emphasis on individual freedom and personal awareness (personal power and agency) as the primary sources of women’s strength in determining their life choices. Meanwhile, from an Islamic perspective, such courage and independence do not stem solely from within the individual but are also grounded in the values of faith, moral responsibility, and obedience to religious teachings. Thus, resistance in Islam is not aimed solely at individual freedom but also at preserving one’s dignity in accordance with the principles of Sharia.

With this understanding, the characters’ religiosity, awareness of personal power, and capacity for agency transform resistance not merely into a spontaneous reaction to pressure, but into a purposeful ideological stance. This stance affirms that women are entitled to dignity, freedom, and a future, yet remain within the framework of the values they hold dear. Therefore, Fatimah’s story serves as evidence that women’s strength is not merely a theoretical concept, but rather a tangible, contextual, and relevant reality in both social and spiritual life.

Prayer as a Form of Spiritual Resistance

Stemming from Muhsin’s frustration with Fatimah, whom he found difficult to control, Muhsin eventually hatched a vicious plan to retaliate against her rejection through slander a tactic that is often the most effective tool for bringing women down. In this story, Fatimah is framed by Muhsin with a false accusation of theft.

This is described in the following excerpt from the short story:

“Muhsin, full of deceit, suggested to his older sister (Murad’s mother) that she search Fatimah’s bag. At first, Murad’s mother was hesitant, but eventually she searched Fatimah’s bag and found the watch inside. She immediately summoned Fatimah and accused her of stealing the watch, since it had been found in her bag. Fatimah wept bitterly, swearing by Allah that she was innocent and had no idea how the watch had ended up in her bag. However, no one believed her defense.” (Salamah, 2023, p. 22)

This excerpt illustrates how power dynamics operate by using manipulation and false narratives to oppress women. Fatimah found herself in the most cornered position: her defense, backed by her oath, was not believed; her tears were seen as a sign of weakness; and false evidence was used as the basis for the slander that she was guilty.

Nevertheless, Fatimah did not resign herself to her fate. She turned to prayer as a form of resistance. This is reflected in the following quote:

“That day became the worst day of her life. She returned with a broken and sorrowful heart, entered her room, and wept bitterly over the injustice that had befallen her. However, her faith in Allah and His justice inspired her to perform wudu, pray two rak’ahs, and supplicate to Allah, asking that the truth be revealed and that she be cleared of the theft accusation just as Prophet Yusuf, peace be upon him, had been cleared of false accusations in the past. She did so with full confidence in Divine justice.” (Salamah, 2023, p. 23)

Here, prayer is presented not merely as a private act of worship, but as a form of nonviolent and covert resistance. Fatimah strengthened her resolve with the conviction that the truth would be revealed by Allah SWT. As reflected in Surah Ghafir, verse 60, as follows:

Meaning: *“Your Lord says: ‘Pray to Me, and I will grant you (what you hope for). Indeed, those who are arrogant and refuse to worship Me will enter Hell in a state of humiliation.’”*

This surah conveys that Allah promises to answer a person’s prayer as a way out of oppression. Psychologically, this strengthens one’s resolve. As Komalasari (2019) noted, prayer has a significant effect in calming, soothing, and serving as a self-reminder that keeps a person focused on the goal for which they are praying. Thus, the prayer offered by Fatimah serves a dual purpose: it fortifies her inner resolve while also embodying an active faith that the truth will be revealed. Islamic tradition also positions prayer as a weapon for the faithful. This aligns with the study by Erismunandar et al. (2022), which states that prayer is a powerful weapon for facing difficulties, as it serves as a bridge connecting humanity to the Almighty God.

This appears to align with Fatimah’s experience, in which she used prayer as a form of resistance against the injustice she faced. When she felt crushed by slander and pressure, Fatimah did not succumb to resignation but turned to prayer with full conviction that only through divine power would the truth be revealed. This attitude demonstrates that prayer is not merely an expression of resignation but possesses a transformative power capable of turning seemingly impossible circumstances into a space for new hope.

This interpretation of prayer as a force of spiritual resistance also resonates with the story of Prophet Yusuf (as) in Surah Yusuf (12:33), which reads as follows: *“O my Lord, prison is more to my liking than yielding to their invitation; surely I would be inclined toward them, and surely I would be among the foolish.”*

This prayer reflects how Prophet Yusuf used prayer as a bulwark to remain steadfast in the face of temptation and slander, even choosing the hardships of prison over succumbing to sin. Misbahar (2020) emphasizes that Prophet Yusuf’s prayer carries this message for humanity that we are powerless without Allah’s help and that for those facing hardship, a way out exists through spiritual strength and complete surrender.

Ultimately, Fatimah's prayer was answered by Allah SWT through Murad's testimony, as depicted in the following excerpt from the short story:

"Murad said, 'No, Mother. Fatimah didn't steal that watch. The one who put it in Fatimah's bag was my uncle, Muhsin. I saw it with my own two eyes. He opened her bag and put the watch inside.'"

Murad's honest testimony in defense of Fatimah demonstrated his courage in standing up against the injustice committed by Muhsin. His action aligns with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said: "The best form of jihad is to speak the truth in the presence of an unjust ruler." (Fu'adi, 2022). Murad's statement startled his mother, prompting her to ask what had actually happened, as revealed in the following excerpt:

"His mother asked, 'Why did your uncle Muhsin put that watch in Fatimah's bag? And where was she when Muhsin opened her bag and put the watch inside?'" (Salamah, 2023, p. 24)

Murad's statement made his mother curious about Muhsin's motive why he could be so heartless as to do something so terrible to Fatimah. In response to this question, Murad sought to reassure his mother that Fatimah was innocent because she hadn't placed the watch there, as he explained in the following dialogue:

"Murad replied: 'My uncle (Muhsin) wanted to take revenge on Fatimah because he tried to kiss her by force, but Fatimah punched him in the chest and pushed him away right in front of me. So, he put the watch in her bag while Fatimah was preparing lunch for me. That's what really happened, Mom; Fatimah is innocent.'" (Salamah, 2023, p. 24)

Murad made this statement to convince his mother to trust Fatimah again. He sought to emphasize that the accusations against Fatimah were untrue and that she was, in fact, innocent. With this explanation, Murad hoped to dispel his mother's doubts and defend Fatimah against the suspicion that she had stolen the watch. And from Murad's statement, his mother began to realize the truth, as she had previously suspected Muhsin why had he been coming to their house so frequently ever since Fatimah started working there? So she reflected on Murad's statement with the following thought: *"Murad's mother reflected on her son's (Murad's) words and realized that Murad was telling the truth. She asked herself: Why has Muhsin been visiting us almost every day since Fatimah started working here, when he rarely came before? Why does he always come when my husband and I are working outside the house? Everything Murad said was true, but I hadn't realized it before and had instead believed Muhsin's accusations against this innocent girl."* (Salamah, 2023, p. 24)

When Murad's mother began to realize the true nature of Muhsin's despicable behavior, she felt guilty for having believed Muhsin's accusations that Fatimah had stolen his watch, and for failing to recognize the malicious motive behind Muhsin's

frequently visited her home so he could find an opportunity to get close to Fatimah. This made Mrs. Murad want to apologize and persuade Fatimah to return to work for her, as reflected in the following narrative:

Murad's mother went to Fatimah's house to apologize. She asked Fatimah to forgive her for accusing her of theft without a valid reason. She also told Fatimah that Allah, the All-Hearing and All-Knowing, had revealed the truth through Murad's words. As a gesture of apology and atonement, she said to Fatimah, "As a reward for your kindness, your honor,

and your purity, and to make amends for my mistake, please accept this money. I hope you will forgive me from the bottom of your heart." After saying that, he gave her a thousand pounds wholeheartedly, so that Fatimah realized this was a plan from the All-Hearing and All-Knowing to improve her situation." (Salamah, 2023, p. 24)

This event became a turning point that affirmed that Fatimah's prayer was not a form of resignation, but rather a form of tangible resistance albeit carried out indirectly. Through her prayer, she remained steadfast in rejecting the slander until the truth was finally revealed. Fatimah felt relieved when Murad's mother revealed the truth and apologized for the accusations she had made; she even asked Fatimah to return to work as Murad's nanny.

This aligns with Naomi Wolf's perspective on "power feminism." Fatimah's experience demonstrates that women cannot be viewed as passive victims. Wolf emphasizes the importance of "*personal power*" that is, the strength that originates from within a woman to confront domination. Fatimah's prayer is a form of "*Inner Power*" that affirms her as an empowered subject. She did not retaliate by exposing Muhsin's abusive behavior which had constantly made her feel uncomfortable while she worked but instead chose to remain silent and accept her immediate dismissal when Murad's mother did not believe her defense. She then sought inner peace by praying to maintain her composure, and through this, she succeeded in revealing the truth even if it was Murad who ultimately exposed Muhsin's slander against her. This reflects her resilience her agency or ability to endure difficult situations and withstand them alone as well as her independence.

As a tangible result, prayer in this story is not merely religious in nature but also has far-reaching benefits. Psychologically, prayer can soothe the soul and strengthen one's emotions. Ethically, prayer helps foster an attitude rooted in the values of goodness and truth. Meanwhile, prayer also serves as a subtle form of resistance against injustice. Thus, prayer is not merely a spiritual tool but also a symbol of feminist resistance, demonstrating that women are active agents in rejecting injustice.

Resistance Through Protection from Mrs. Murad

One form of resistance by the character Fatimah in order to preserve her dignity as a woman is the protection she receives from Mrs. Murad, a figure with more authority than Muhsin. She is protected by Mrs. Murad, who forbids Muhsin from entering her home again, so that Fatimah is not disturbed by Muhsin's immoral behavior. As a result, Fatimah was able to return to her work with a sense of comfort and peace of mind, caring for Murad without further interference from Muhsin. This is reflected in Mrs. Murad's willingness to scold Muhsin so severely that she ultimately severed ties with him. As illustrated in the following quote:

"When Muhsin came to his sister's (Mrs. Murad's) house to find out what had happened, his sister spat in his face and said, 'Get out of here, you lowly, filthy creature! ' Don't ever think of setting foot in this house again. You're not my brother, and I don't know you. You dared to accuse an honorable young woman and set a trap for her just because she rejected your evil intentions. You scoundrel! You even did it in front of a small child (Murad), making him witness that despicable act. Children imitate what adults do. Do you want to corrupt his morals from a young age? Because someone who grows up with bad habits will continue to do so into adulthood. Get out of here and never come to this house again." (Salamah, 2023, p. 26)

The quote above represents open resistance a firm and unambiguous stand against male dominance. This is exemplified by Murad's mother, who stands as an empowered female

figure blocking access, rejecting manipulation, and safeguarding the dignity of her fellow women. This resistance is not only intended to protect Fatimah as the direct victim but also to uphold moral values for her young son, Murad, out of concern that he might imitate Muhsin's bad behavior. This is illustrated in the following statement:

“Children imitate adults in everything... do you want to ruin his character from a young age? Bad habits are hard to change get out of here and don't come back to this house again.”

In addition to worrying about her son, she expelled him under the pretext of also wanting to protect Fatimah, who had returned to work in her home. Murad's mother's actions demonstrate that a woman's moral authority takes precedence over blood ties. For her, upholding honor is far more important than maintaining a strained family relationship.

This stance is an expression of power born of personal awareness namely, asserting boundaries and regulating who is allowed or not allowed to enter the domestic space. This is clearly evident when Murad's mother does not yield to fear or family loyalty, but instead uses her position to expel the source of threat to Fatimah so that she does not feel pressured by Muhsin's reprehensible behavior and also to protect her son Murad, for fear that he might imitate his behavior. She did not wait for outside parties to come to her defense, but stood on her own strength to safeguard a safe space for Fatimah and her son Murad.

This resistance is preventive in nature, as the ban on Muhsin ever setting foot in the house again ensures that the threat to Fatimah will not be repeated in the future. The conflict between Muhsin and his older sister (Murad's mother) is thus not merely a family quarrel, but an ideological clash between lust and honor, between patriarchal domination and women's power.

Naomi Wolf's perspective on power feminism in this context asserts that the inner strength of women as demonstrated by Muhsin's older sister's resistance shows that women's power can not only break the chains of oppression but also transform the domestic sphere into a moral stronghold and a place of protection. This action can be interpreted as ethical awareness and reflects an aspect of altruism through her concern for Fatimah and her son Murad. Harahap & Wahyuni (2021) emphasize that the gender approach in Islam rejects the subordination of women and emphasizes their position as those entitled to uphold dignity and enforce justice. In this regard, the concept of feminism aligns with the perspective of Islamic teachings, but there is a fundamental difference between the two: power-based feminism relies on individual autonomy, whereas in Islam, such actions are grounded in moral values and religious responsibility; thus, resistance is understood not only as defiance but also as an effort to preserve honor and reject wrongdoing.

In this context, the protection of women from a gender perspective can be understood as an effort to ensure equality, justice, and respect for women's rights in various aspects of life, because women should not be positioned as inferior but rather as individuals who possess rights, roles, and potential equal to those of men (Kharismawati, 2021). Therefore, the act of resistance carried out by the older sister cannot be viewed merely as an emotional reaction, but as a manifestation of moral consciousness in rejecting oppression while protecting the younger generation from harmful behavior.

Thus, this conflict underscores that the women in the story are not passive; rather, they are portrayed as empowered agents capable of refusing, resisting, and safeguarding their dignity against threats from men. Ultimately, the protection of women is not merely interpreted as a protective measure but also as an empowerment process that enables women

to have control over themselves, the courage to speak out, and the capacity to actively participate in social life in a fair and dignified manner.

Protective Resistance Through the Role of Motherhood

Resistance in this short story is manifested not only by the character Fatimah as an individual but also by Su'ad's mother. She acts as her daughter's protector against Muhsin's advances. Although Su'ad herself actually likes Muhsin, she unwittingly finds herself entangled in his reprehensible behavior. When Su'ad began coming home late at night frequently, she gave her mother a false excuse, claiming she was studying with one of her friends. However, her mother did not fully believe her. This narrative is depicted in the following excerpt from the short story:

"Su'ad began coming home late at night frequently. When her mother asked about her tardiness, Su'ad lied, saying she was studying with one of her friends. Her mother pretended to believe her daughter's excuse, but suspicion arose in her heart." (Salamah, 2023, p. 27)

This excerpt illustrates how maternal instinct drives the mother to confront the possibility of a threat endangering her daughter. She did not simply accept Su'ad's answer but chose to investigate further. Here, the mother's resistance appears not as oppression toward her child but as a protective measure to prevent Su'ad from being further harmed by Muhsin.

Thus, the mother shared her concerns with her eldest son, Khalid, asking for his help in keeping an eye on her younger daughter, Su'ad. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

"Suspensions and doubts arose in her mind, so she told her older son about them and poured out her heart to him."

This confirms that Su'ad's mother's resistance was not direct, but rather a family strategy to work together with her daughter to monitor and control the situation. Then, her son Khalid devised a plan to monitor his younger sister with the help of one of Su'ad's classmates a student in the same college as Su'ad but in a different major, so Su'ad didn't know him. This is revealed in the following excerpt from the short story:

"Khalid asked one of his trusted friends whom Su'ad did not know to keep an eye on his younger sister's movements from the moment she left campus until she returned home that " (Salamah, 2023, p. 27) From this excerpt, Khalid's action asking one of his trusted friends, whom Su'ad did not know, to monitor his younger sister's activities from the moment she left campus until she returned home that evening shows that this surveillance was not merely intended as a protective measure but also framed Su'ad's mobility as a space where her behavior must be monitored and controlled. This pattern aligns with Wolf's concept of how power operates through the representation of women's bodies as vulnerable entities in need of control, thereby restricting women's freedom of movement and reinforcing unequal power structures.

Based on this, Su'ad is not only an object in her relationship with Muhsin but is also repositioned as a subject who must be controlled by her family. Thus, Khalid, as Su'ad's older brother, realized that it was his duty to protect his sister even if this meant acting through a friend because, as Su'ad's mahram brother, it was his responsibility to safeguard her honor from non-mahram men (Nelisari et al., 2024). And this yielded a very surprising result from his friend's surveillance report, as quoted below: *"The trusted friend carried out his task with great responsibility. He then met with Khalid, Su'ad's brother, and*

reported the results of his surveillance: Su'ad was seen leaving with a male student known for his questionable behavior. They both attended the same university. The two went to a public park and spent time together until nightfall. After that, they returned to their respective homes. He also said: 'This young man (Muhsin) lives near Khalid's neighborhood as well, so Khalid recognized him immediately.' He then relayed the results of his friend's surveillance to his mother. After discussing the matter together, Khalid and his mother decided to hire two thugs to teach that young man (Muhsin) a lesson." " (Salamah, 2023, p. 27)

Once the truth came to light, Su'ad's mother and Khalid decided to put a stop to Muhsin's behavior in a firm manner by hiring two thugs. From a feminist perspective, this action demonstrates a mother's courage and active role in protecting her daughter from a manipulative man. This decision was driven by intuition and emotional experience specifically, her suspicion of changes in Su'ad's behavior when she lied thus reflecting a woman's agency in guiding and safeguarding her daughter from falling into bad behavior. This demonstrates an aspect of *altruism*, as she sought to protect her daughter and showed concern for her child. Meanwhile, from an Islamic perspective, this effort can be understood as a means of preserving honor and preventing adultery, as emphasized in Surah Al-Isra' verse 32, which not only prohibits adultery but also any actions leading to it, such as *khalwat* (Fatihin et al., 2024). This is because dating is considered haram in Islam and can compromise a woman's honor.

Epistemologically, these two perspectives have fundamental differences. Feminism is rooted in secular rationality and women's social experiences, whereas Islam is grounded in Divine Revelation, which emphasizes the moral obligation to avoid evil deeds. Nevertheless, both share the same goal to protect women's dignity and safety even though they differ in their theoretical foundations and methods of achieving it.

Ibu Su'ad's act of resistance can be understood as a form of protective resistance a resistance intended to stop Muhsin's domination and sexual exploitation. Although it involved violence against Muhsin, this stance demonstrates that a woman in this case, a mother possesses significant power to resist, even covertly, by hiring thugs as intermediaries in her resistance a strategy designed to prevent her daughter from becoming a complete victim in this harmful relationship.

Conclusion

This study identifies various forms of resistance found in Amin Salamah's short story "Dawlat azh-Zhulm Sa'ah", which represents resistance against patriarchal domination. This resistance takes two forms: open resistance and covert resistance. The character Fatimah serves as the center of this resistance through her rejection of gender stereotypes, her firmness in the face of manipulative advances and harassment, and her patience in confronting the slander directed at her. Furthermore, the prayers she offers serve as a symbol of spiritual resistance, affirming the strength of faith as a source of moral resilience.

Resistance is also manifested through other female characters, such as Murad's mother, who firmly forbids Muhsin from entering her home to protect Fatimah and her child, and Su'ad's mother, who demonstrates protective resistance by shielding her daughter from Muhsin's negative influence. Taken together, these actions affirm that the women in this short story are not portrayed as passive victims, but rather as active agents who possess the awareness and ability to make choices and uphold their own dignity and that of their families.

From the perspective of Naomi Wolf's power feminism, the findings of this study show that the concepts of personal power and agency are reflected through the female characters' self-control, steadfastness, moral courage, and spiritual strength. The integration of Islamic values further reinforces the meaning of resistance as an effort to uphold honor and establish truth. Thus, this study contributes to enriching gender-themed Arab literary studies and demonstrates the relevance of the synergy between power feminism and Islamic values in positioning women as agents of resistance and catalysts for social change.

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