Religion and Ethics: Building Civilization in the Contemporary Era

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Abstract

This research discusses that it is important to examine the relationship between religion and technological developments today. Literature studies from reliable primary and secondary sources are used. Findings show that religion is a belief system that has existed since the beginning of human life in the world and continues to survive with the times. Although religion has an eternal role in human life, the rapid development of technology in the modern era has brought the two together in complex social dynamics. Technology, as a product of the progress of the times, has provided profound innovations in human life, even encouraging the creation of the modern era. This research shows that religion does not hinder technological progress, but rather serves as a guideline that guides humans to adhere to moral and ethical values in the face of these various developments. Thus, religion provides direction in thinking and acting, so that humans do not lose their guidelines in living life.

Keywords: *Religion; Ethics; Civilization; Contemporary*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini membahas bahwa penting untuk mengkaji hubungan antara agama dan perkembangan teknologi di masa kini. Digunakan studi pustaka dari sumber primer dan sekunder terpercaya. Temuan menunjukan agama merupakan suatu sistem kepercayaan yang telah ada sejak awal kehidupan manusia di dunia dan tetap bertahan seiring perkembangan zaman. Meskipun agama memiliki peran yang abadi dalam kehidupan manusia, perkembangan teknologi yang pesat di era modern telah mempertemukan keduanya dalam dinamika sosial yang kompleks. Teknologi, sebagai produk dari kemajuan zaman, telah memberikan inovasi yang mendalam dalam kehidupan manusia, bahkan mendorong terciptanya era modern. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa agama tidak menghambat kemajuan teknologi, melainkan berfungsi sebagai pedoman yang membimbing manusia agar tetap berpegang pada nilai-nilai moral dan etika dalam menghadapi berbagai perkembangan tersebut. Dengan demikian, agama memberikan arah dalam berfikir dan bertindak, sehingga manusia tidak kehilangan pedoman dalam menjalani kehidupan.

Kata Kunci: *Agama; Etika; Peradaban; Kontemporer*

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a belief system that has existed since the beginning of human existence in the world. As time goes by and the times develop, religion continues to exist and plays an important role in human life. This happens because religion is part of human nature that cannot be avoided (Andriyani,

2015). This nature is inherent in each individual, although some people reject or do not believe in religion. Nevertheless, religion still has a vital role in life, because through religion, humans can live more orderly, harmoniously, and peacefully in their daily lives. The importance of religion can be seen from how religion provides direction to humans to live with good and correct principles, and is an obstacle to actions that can harm themselves or others (Saifuddin, 2008).

However, rapid technological advances in the modern era have brought religion together with new dynamics. Technological developments continue to experience significant improvements, bringing great changes in human life. This modern era raises questions about how religion and technology can coexist and interact in shaping contemporary life (Manasikana & Noviani, 2021). An in-depth study of religion and technological developments in the modern era is indispensable because both have a strategic role in human life. The interaction between religion and technology affects various aspects of life, especially in daily social life.

In a study, a theoretical framework is very important as a logical basis for thinking. Religion has a very vital role in human life, with a great influence that shapes their way of life (Ali et al., 2024). Religion not only regulates man's relationship with God, but also influences various aspects of human life, including in the daily social context. Along with the changing times, many aspects of human life have undergone significant developments (Doren, 2019). One of the impacts of this change is the rapid advancement of technology. With these advancements, almost all human needs can be met through technology. Technology, although it brings convenience, also deeply affects human social and religious behavior (Rahman, 2019).

Several previous studies have been conducted by experts in this field. One of them is a research entitled "*Islam as the Basis of Science and Technology*". This research examines the development of science and technology with an Islamic religious approach, as well as discusses the relationship between religion and science in general. However, the main focus of this research is the relationship between Islamic teachings and the advancement of science and technology, with an emphasis on Islamic faith as the basis for the development of the field (Rahman, 2019). Another research, entitled *Reflection on Technology in the Religious Dimension*, is a literature review that reviews the relationship of religious epistemology to technology. This research highlights how technology is viewed from the perspective of religion, especially Islam, and how Islamic aqidah is used to standardize the development of science and technology. In this context, every scientific and technological advancement must be in line with the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. The harmony between science, technology, and religious teachings is an important guideline for Muslims in learning and applying science and technology in their daily lives (Majid, 2020).

Another research entitled "*The Relationship between Religion and Science*" also examines the role of Islamic faith as the main guideline in the development of science, focusing on the compatibility between science and the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. This research focuses on the relationship between religion and science, as well as how science, especially science, can be harmonized with Islamic principles to ensure that its application provides benefits and does not cause harm, especially for Muslims. In it, the integration paradigm between religion and science is discussed through several models, namely the integrative model, the integralistic model, and the dialogical model (Yahya et al., 2018). This research is different from previous research, such as that conducted by (Doren, 2019), which emphasizes more on standardizing science and technology in accordance with the Islamic creed, so that it can be accepted and used properly by Muslims in daily life. Meanwhile, the main difference between this study and previous research is its focus on technological developments in the modern era. This research aims to understand the relationship between religion and technology which is rapidly developing, as well as how religion plays a role in facing these challenges, especially in meeting almost all human needs through technological advancements. Therefore, it is important to conduct further studies on the relationship between religion and technology in the modern context.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the role of religion in addressing ethical changes resulting from the advancement of modern technology. The research utilizes the literature study method, supported by both primary and secondary data obtained from books, journal articles, news, and websites available on Google Scholar. The data analysis is conducted through a systematic process, including data triangulation, to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. By adopting this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how religious values can offer moral guidance in responding to the ethical challenges posed by technological progress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religion plays an important role in providing values that affect human life, both in personal and social aspects. The influence of religion is not only visible in the spiritual aspect, but also in daily life. Psychologically, religion can function as a motivation that comes from within (intrinsic) and also from outside (extrinsic). Beliefs that grow out of religion give a very powerful impetus, which cannot be compared to secular doctrines or non-religious beliefs, because of their deeper and universal nature. Therefore, religion gives freedom to each individual to determine their own beliefs, because in religion, one can find a view of life that inspires and serves as the basis for human

values, respect for dignity, and character building. Religion is a guideline for individual behavior, including in terms of norms that govern daily life. These religious norms provide a clear framework for actions that conform to one's beliefs. As a value system, religion has a deep meaning for personal life and is cultivated to form a good character (Sari, 2019).

In Emile Durkheim's view, religion has a very large social role, one of which is to unite society. Durkheim sees religion as a collective force that transcends the individual, where each individual represents society by following religious teachings, such as performing religious rituals. In this way, religion becomes a bridge that connects different individuals in society, because religion as a collective force has a greater influence than the power of the individual itself. In addition, religion also provides answers to various problems of personal life, as well as meeting the spiritual and social needs of each individual (Faculty et al., 2016).

Transformation in the field of technology is expected to pay attention to all aspects of the social order of society, especially in creating a harmonious coexistence to achieve common progress and the public interest. Social changes that occur due to technological advances can cross social boundaries in society. This is because every religious individual comes from a variety of backgrounds, such as social class, profession, education, and so on (Lesilolo, 2012). Religion itself has been an inseparable part of human life since ancient times. As part of his nature, man needs a belief that is considered to have greater power than himself, which is believed to be God. Man's relationship with God is an eternal and unbreakable bond. In the context of life, religion not only includes aspects of belief and confidence in God as well as metaphysical things such as angels, but also relates to various aspects of daily life. Therefore, religion has a very important role in the life of mankind. Essentially, every religion recognizes the need for change in human life. "Religion" and "change" are two concepts that are interrelated and do not necessarily contradict each other. Instead, the two can complement each other and interact in an exclusive way. In this view, change can be considered as a core part of religious teachings themselves (Faculty et al., 2016).

Along with the rapid development of science and technology, religion is faced with the challenge of providing relevant intellectual insights for modern society. Understanding religion is not only limited to theological doctrines or laws that direct people to life after death, but must also be able to provide guidance in interpreting and reflecting on real life experiences in this world. In the midst of a modern spirit that prioritizes human reasoning and optimism, religion must be able to adapt to cultural dynamics and embrace all aspects of human life, not just focus on spiritual aspects or the afterlife. Religion must be a means to understand and respond to worldly realities, which can encourage change and development in human life (Suryanti, 2010). Rapid progress in various areas of life, including social, economic, cultural, political, and

religious, forces individuals to quickly adapt and believe in themselves in the face of change. Unfortunately, not everyone can overcome this challenge, and many individuals and communities face various problems (Radiansyah, 2020). In the 18th century, the era of the rise of modern science began to bring great changes with various innovations emerging. These innovations have had a huge impact on the lives of mankind, creating changes unprecedented in history (Gusmian, 2009). This rapid development of technology has allowed various advancements to be carried out in a much easier and more efficient way.

Along with the passage of time and the rapid development of communication technology, interaction between communities can now be realized through various channels. Some examples of the most dominant communication tools today are the internet, mobile phones, social media such as *Twitter, Facebook*, and other platforms such as Kompasiana. In this modern era, the relationship between humans and technology has become very close, even difficult to separate. The rapid development of technology allows individuals to more easily and more enjoy their daily activities. Technology is now an integral part of every aspect of life, where there is hardly any activity that is not connected to technology. In other words, technology has become an equally important basic need, equivalent to basic needs such as food, clothing, and board (Radiansyah, 2020). Currently, we are in the midst of an information revolution, the main core of which is computers, often called the cyber revolution. With the advancement of computer technology, the Indonesian people feel the great impact of the internet. Although the cost of internet access in Indonesia is still quite high, the use of this technology continues to increase, both among individuals and institutions. Other communications infrastructure, such as telephones and radios, also show a significant upward trend. As recorded in the December 2, 1995 edition of Gatra Magazine, various media such as Harian Republika and other institutions have websites on the internet. Human civilization at the end of the 20th century marked an era of extraordinarily advanced information technology. John Naisbitt, in Chairil Anwar's work, reveals that "We will be able to transmit all forms of data, sound, text, and images at the speed of light, anywhere and to anyone." This communication speed exceeds the limitations that existed before, both in the form of written and visual data (Faculty et al., 2016).

Modern Society's Views on Religion

Changes in society, both through technological advances and lifestyle shifts, have affected people's perspectives and attitudes towards religion. The question of the role and function of religion is increasingly relevant, because often religion seems to have difficulty facing such rapid technological developments. With the advancement of technology, modern humans tend to feel optimistic and confident that all natural phenomena can be explained

scientifically and logically. In fact, technology, as an application of science, has made a great contribution to the progress and well-being of human life. However, religion is often considered a challenge in this context. Religion, which is supposed to be the guideline of life that guides mankind towards salvation, is now often a source of conflict, especially when religious teachings are considered contrary to the times. This happens because religion is now more of a symbol of group identity, rather than a practical guide in daily life. In many cases, the relationship between the individual and his or her religion tends to be more emotional, tied to certain symbols and names. Therefore, criticism of religious teachings is often a sensitive matter. Many religious believers remain attached to their traditional understanding, and have difficulty adjusting to social changes that cross the boundaries of their culture and society (Radiansyah, 2020).

Although some people still think that religion can be an obstacle to human progress and civilization, in reality religion actually provides space for its adherents to express ideas and innovations, including in the field of technology. Unfortunately, this view is often misunderstood, considering religion as a factor that hinders the development of the times. In fact, religion directs its people to act in accordance with the rules that have been set, as a guideline for life. Not without reason, religion gives limits to humans so that they do not lose their direction in thinking and acting. Without these limitations, humans can fall into uncontrolled behavior, which risks damaging the balance of life and the universe. Therefore, the role of religion remains very important and cannot be replaced by technological advances, even though the world is increasingly advanced and digitally connected. This phenomenon is especially noticeable in large cities, where competition and change occur so quickly, which forces individuals to adapt constantly. In this context, the values of spirituality and morality are the key to solving the increasingly complex challenges of modern life (Radiansyah, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of the role of religion in providing relevant ethical guidelines in dealing with the moral challenges posed by the development of modern technology. In this context, religion not only functions as a belief system, but also as a source of value that can guide humans in managing the impact of technology on social, economic, and cultural life. Modern technology, with all its advances and potential benefits, also poses ethical dilemmas related to privacy, social justice, influence on human relations, and power inequality. Therefore, a more in-depth and universal moral code is needed to deal with these issues. Religion with its universal values, can provide solutions to formulate ethics that are in accordance with the development of the times. Religious teachings teach about respect for life, justice, and common welfare, which are relevant in the context of technological advancements. Religion can

be the foundation for creating a balanced ethic, directing technology for the benefit of humanity fairly, and preventing the misuse or exploitation of harmful technology. As such, religion is considered a solution to ethical change in the modern technological world, as it offers a more holistic guide and is based on deeper moral values rather than a mere technical or pragmatic approach.

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