



Religious Identity and Social Change in Urban Areas: A Study of the Dynamics of Urban Religious Communities

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the role of religious leaders, especially Habib, in the spiritual life of big cities by emphasizing the acceptance of moderate Islam and its traditions. The focus of the research is to understand how religion as a social force supports individual development in the midst of Indonesia's multicultural environment, as well as the challenges faced by kiai leadership in urban Islamic boarding schools in the face of modernization. The method used is a qualitative approach with literature studies, interviews, and observations in pesantren. Data analysis was carried out by triangulation for the validity of the findings. The findings show that religious leadership in urban Islamic boarding schools plays a role in advancing the socio-economy with flexibility in adopting traditional and contemporary technologies. This research highlights the importance of synergy between religion, media, and education to build a moderate religious identity and face the challenges of the evolving times.

Keywords: *Religious Identity, Social Change, Urban Religion*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran tokoh agama, khususnya Habib, dalam kehidupan spiritual kota besar dengan menekankan penerimaan Islam moderat dan tradisinya. Fokus penelitian adalah memahami bagaimana agama sebagai kekuatan sosial mendukung perkembangan individu di tengah lingkungan multikultural Indonesia, serta tantangan yang dihadapi kepemimpinan kiai di pesantren perkotaan dalam menghadapi modernisasi. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi pustaka, wawancara, dan observasi di pesantren. Analisis data dilakukan dengan triangulasi untuk validitas temuan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan agama di pesantren perkotaan berperan dalam memajukan sosial-ekonomi dengan fleksibilitas dalam mengadopsi teknologi tradisional dan kontemporer. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya sinergi agama, media, dan pendidikan untuk membangun identitas agama moderat serta menghadapi tantangan zaman yang terus berkembang.

Kata Kunci: *Identitas Agama, Perubahan Sosial, Agama Perkotaan*

INTRODUCTION

Social change is something that cannot be avoided as the times develop or better known as modernization. As we know, changes always occur in the life of human society, giving an infinite impact on humans. This change will occur once the old order, and life of the society is more similar to

the modern order. Urban society is a group of people who are aware of the important role of information media and technology in sustaining their lives. This is considered important for many things, such as studying and reflecting on the attitudes and religiosity of the group. The focus of this research is how the religious patterns of urban communities relate to the information they use in the modern era. Social change is defined as a change that alters the way of life of a society and takes place consistently due to the dynamic and changeable nature of society. The interrelationship between society and culture, as well as the dynamics of both, affect social change. Most prominent is the great influence of material and non-material elements of culture.(Adnan, 2021)

Considering the new problems that have arisen along with urbanization, it is quite complicated and surprising. Firstly, unemployment is increasing because the rapid urbanization has caused jobs and the number of people living in cities to be mismatched. In addition, people from the city are arriving in droves without having the necessary skills. Third, the increase in unemployment led to the rise of unauthorized settlements. People living in the cities cannot afford to live and settle in the settlement sites due to the high cost of living or boarding fees, with low or not even enough income to eat. In addition, many poor people from rural areas migrate to cities only to become urban poor without making any efforts to improve their lives.(Ulfah, 2021)

When religious and socio-cultural patterns change, researchers are interested in further investigation and understanding the reasons behind these changes. It is so fast, and at the same time seems slow to control. In addition, it is based on the fact that urban society has long experienced synergistic and leaping changes. As a result, many new phenomena have emerged in the lives of urban communities, especially with regard to religious, social and cultural changes. This has an impact on the pattern of community development that must be carried out to keep pace with these changes.(Ulfah, 2021)

Due to the availability of jobs and various kinds, urbanization is one of the problems faced by developing countries around the world. less favorable facilities for villagers who go to the city. Urbanization is a term that refers to the process of increasing the number of people living in cities. The rate of urbanization continues to increase every year. It is even projected that urbanization will reach 66.6 percent by 2035. If the government does not pay attention to this development, the burden on cities will increase due to the excessive arrival of foreigners, which will cause urban conditions to become more crowded and uncontrollable.

To prevent the rural population from urbanizing, the government must make changes by leveling development and supporting facilities as well as providing employment opportunities that can accommodate the rural

population. The characteristics of the city's social structure consist of several symptoms as described below (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2015).

METHOD

This study uses a literature study approach with the main focus on collecting primary data from various relevant literature studies, such as books, journals, and documents. In this approach, data is collected through an in-depth literature review. Data collection is carried out by identifying and collecting information from various sources that can provide insight into social changes, norms, customs, languages, and values that apply in community groups. Books that have theoretical and empirical relevance to this research topic, journal articles that examine similar phenomena, and documents related to social change in society are the main sources used to obtain the data needed. To analyze the data, the data triangulation technique was used. The analysis was carried out in an analytical descriptive manner, where the data obtained from the literature review was compiled, sorted, and analyzed to dig for deep meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interaction of Religious Identity and Local Culture

Cultural identity is a special attribute that distinguishes one society or group from another. Cultural identity is often part of individual and group identity. This includes religion, traditions, values, norms, customs, art, architecture, clothing, food, and more. Cultural identity can evolve over time as a result of migration, modernization, globalization, and intercultural interaction. It can also influence the way we think, act and interact with the world around us. Cultural identity can also affect our perception of ourselves, our relationships with others, and our understanding of our history and heritage. However, many groups continue to seek to maintain and celebrate their cultural identity as a way to strengthen social ties, maintain cultural heritage, and foster a sense of collective pride and identity.(Pebriani et al., 2024)

In the context of social transformation in cities, complex dynamics are created by the interaction between religious identity and local culture. Religious identity often serves as a binding symbol in heterogeneous societies, while local culture provides a context that enriches social experience. Traditional values often change as a result of social change, especially that caused by urbanization.

Shifting Values: Religion can be a powerful symbol of identity, but these values often change in cities. Once rigid religious practices can become more flexible to adapt to local culture. Cultural Hybridization: The interaction between local and international cultural elements results in a new identity that blends tradition and modernity. This happens often when cultural

identities become hybridized. Social Solidarity: Religious harmony and local culture can increase solidarity among community members. Mutual support of local religious and cultural identities can enhance a sense of community and ethnic identity. Social Dynamics: The social dynamics generated by these interactions also allow individuals to discover their identity within a broader context, which enhances their experience of living in urban society.

In the context of cultural identity, social change not only has many connections, but can also have an impact on such cultural change. In other words, where social change occurs cultural identity has elements, both accepted and ameliorated in social change, which can result in structural changes in that society. However, with social change, cultural identity can also have the same relationship or connection to social change. Moreover, these social changes can overlap with culture. For example, increased gender equality is a cultural change. Individual mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors will be affected by changes in societal structures, ranging from mechanical or community to organic or community. Changes in societal structures will also have an impact on changes in the functions and roles of society.(Pebriani et al., 2024)

Change: Systemic shifts cause very complex changes that impact social change. Soemardjan and Davis emphasize “social change” as changes in the institutional structure of society that affect its social system. This includes changes in values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as a shift in the social system from mechanical to organic. The shift of population from villages to cities is a symptom of social change, as described by Emile Durkheim or the shift from Community to Gessellschaft Ferdinand Tonnies. With the current cultural identity, social change occurs. Although these developments in communication technology have a positive impact on social life, there are also negative impacts. One of the negative impacts of this advancement in technology and information is the decline in people's sensitivity to the people around them.(Pebriani et al., 2024)

Impact of Urbanization on Religious Practice

In order to keep up with the accelerating flow of modernization, everyone faces problems that arise in the society. This condition brings them down, both physically and mentally. When the role of God begins to be replaced by technology, the perception of God's dominance as the All-Knowing One becomes narrower. In the end, religion as a formal institution or institutionalization of religious beliefs is automatically seen to decline.

Urban life develops and changes rapidly, leading to uncertainty, obscurity and distortion of society. Many city dwellers in such situations seek to find meaning in their religion and spirituality to discover or escape from the uncertain state of society due to pressures of various kinds, leading to

religious conflict. Various groups are motivated to create adaptation strategies as a result of the consequences of this situation.(Saepudin, 2018)

Various forms of mutual respect and appreciation of other religions will emerge in the lives of urban communities that have religious diversity (inclusive side). This will have an impact on the pattern of interaction in urban life. There are two types of impacts of religious diversity on urban life: positive impacts and negative impacts. Almost everyone has a religion, which is a universal component of human life. The religious life of people in cities affects their behavior patterns. Religion serves as a reference in people's interactions, which are influenced by people's mindsets. So, the diversity of religions (Islam, Christianity, Buddah, Catholicism and Confucianism) will greatly affect the way people interact with each other, especially in cities.(Said Ahmad et al., 2023)

The urbanization of people to make a living, study, and other reasons leads to this diversity. There is evidence of how religious diversity affects the way people interact with each other in Makassar city. The impact of religious diversity on the way people interact with each other in Makassar city is the result of their work, such as cooperation, conflict, accommodation, and competition. In Makassar, religious diversity has both positive and negative impacts on people's social interactions. The positive impact of religious diversity teaches people to be more tolerant and open to others, while the negative impact causes religious conflict and discrimination.(Said Ahmad et al., 2023)

Shifting Social Values in Religious Communities

In the socio-cultural life of society, people tend to make changes because they believe that fulfillment will become more difficult without advances in technology and science. the level of life needs that continue to increase. As a result, humans pursue advances in science and technology without considering religious principles and idealistic cultural traditions. In reality, humans prioritize rationalism, pragmatism and hedonism. As a result, the values of human life are based more on the usefulness of materialism, secularity and hedonism rather than the ethical aspects of religiosity, morality and humanism.(Yusuf & Ondeng, 2024)

The development of the times faces many challenges due to the shift in religious and social values that occurs in society. There are two things that need to be considered among them: First, if science and technology continue to face challenges, the nature of human life will be trapped in a complex system of "business science", with the aim of producing more products with less work, without considering emotional and spiritual aspects. (Yusuf & Ondeng, 2024)

Second, as a victim of life in materialist modernization, religious ethical challenges cause people's will to change from natural will to rational

will. The emotional life of man is damaged during this process of change, leading to spiritual destruction. In developed countries, there is a distinction between man and his God. In developing countries, there is a discrepancy between religious orientation and worldly needs. Spiritual life becomes pseudo and gray, unclear. This is also true for Muslims.(Yusuf & Ondeng, 2024)

A shift in cultural values is when the values of a culture change, which is noticeable in the behavior of members of a particular culture. Shift in cultural values is usually the definition of change. Everyone is affected by cultural change, and cultural change indirectly affects the social change of society as a whole. Social change is defined as any change that occurs in the social institutions of a society, which affects its social system, including the values, attitudes and patterns of behavior adopted by groups in society. In addition, social change has to do with aspects of the life of the individual and society, and does not occur randomly (Yusuf & Ondeng, 2024)

Globalization and other cultural influences led to a shift in people's values. The development of cyberspace, the internet, and electronic and digital information often occurs regardless of the value system and culture. In During the era of globalization, many things have changed rapidly. The world has become more transparent and narrow, communication has become easier and faster, and time seems to have no limits. The values of a changing society are affected by this global change. Cultural values change from bad to better or vice versa. It depends on our perspective of the shifting spirit.

The shift in values in society is caused by some factors and there are positive impacts and negative impacts that can be caused by the shift as follows:

- a. the impact of globalization
- b. influence of modernization
- c. The response of the community as the recipient of change
- d. contact with other cultures
- e. advanced formal education system
- f. an attitude of appreciation for one's work and desires to progress
- g. tolerance for acts that deviate (deviation) it's not a delusion
- h. open system of layers of society to the spheres of life
- i. heterogeneous population
- j. dissatisfaction of society with areas of life

Religious Contestation In Urban Society

In Indonesia, religious contestation can be divided into three major groups because of the many religious groups that compete with each other. The first is religious contestation between Sunni groups within Sunni mansions; this developed in Indonesia as a result of the development of

various Sunni groups. Due to the large number of cases that occur, the discussion of this contestation also gets a more complete explanation.

Contestation occurs because of the discourse of "resistance" between Ahmadiyya, Shia, and sub-ordinate groups. Ahmadiyya. There is no Ahmadiyya teaching that deviates from the broad outline of Islamic theology. Although Ahmadis generally believe that the Prophet Muhammad was the last Shari'a-bearing prophet, they place Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet but not equal to the Prophet Muhammad. Instead, they created a more dynamic theological space called "nabi ghair tashri". In this theological space, it is possible that "holy men" will arrive and teach men about goodness. Thus, Ahmadis believe that they do not violate theological boundaries and therefore do not need to follow directions from others asking them to "quit Islam."

The audience has changed from mass to ideological due to the dominance of religion in digital media. There is differences in the way salaf and NU groups appear in digital media. The Salafists did not come from a strong ideological group. Limited recitation does not produce many congregations. They appear on social media with "no strong image" compared to the image of Islam. Their labels do not exist. These dai'as refused to be associated in many ways. They came with the aim of destroying the boundaries of hizbiyyah and building Islamic unity based on Salafi values.

This "identity without identity" reaches the general audience. Placing women as important agents is the hallmark of this urban Salafism movement. In Saudi Arabia. Before the modern cultural revolution founded by Muhammad bin Salman, which is said to be the birthplace of Salafist thought, women had no place in public spaces and discussions. It is not even important to discuss women's issues. Women Rule the public space. However, women have had a significant influence on the Salafism movement in Indonesia.

The resistance of Indadari, founder of Niqab Squad Indonesia, at TV One's Indonesia Lawyers Club over radicalism's stigmatization of the veil is one example of how urban Salafism has used gender issues that have been irrelevant to the conventional Salafism movement. Although not entirely, urban Salafism resembles the symptoms of post-Islamism Emergence of social activity that goes beyond and perhaps even criticizes Islamism. Salafism in these cities began to undergo changes and no longer followed strict standards.

Urban Salafism began to use terms taken from common cultural traditions such as the niqab challenge, gatherings, grand gatherings, Ramadan run, biker subuhan, and hijra festival. One of them is not allergic to using foreign terms as community names. The Niqab Squad does not gather in mosques. They have many meeting rooms outside the mosque. They strengthen themselves through social media networks. following religious

events in the hotel and often even meet in cafes like people in the city. On the other hand, they will choose a cafe that can represent their "identity" as a veiled woman. The cafe they chose was the place of business networking of Salafi groups. (Sapriillah et al., 2020)

CONCLUSIONS

Due to rapid urbanization, religious communities in large cities face new challenges and opportunities that affect the understanding and practice of their faith. First, the interaction between local religious and cultural identities enables acculturation and adaptation, which makes religious practices more flexible and inclusive. Second, changes in social values in religious communities suggest a response to modernization and pluralism, which often results in dialogue between religions and increased tolerance. However, differences in understanding and interpretation of religious teachings, reinforced by social media, also lead to religious conflicts. With its diverse background, urban society creates complex dynamics. This is where traditional and modern values interact with each other. Overall, the study confirms that an understanding of religious identity in the context of social change in urban areas is essential, and that a sensitive approach to the dynamics of diverse religious communities is needed. As a result, efforts to build social cohesion and interreligious discussion are becoming increasingly relevant in the face of the challenges faced by urban societies today.

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