



## Middle-class Muslims piety festival in Indonesia Islamic contemporary

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**Abstract:** The public sphere in Indonesia features prominent piety demonstrations among middle-class Muslims, showcasing religious performances like al-Quran recitation competitions, Islamic films, and the selection of Muslim ambassadors, which collectively color the Islamic public sphere. Previous studies of middle-class Muslims and their religious practices have closely related to a perspective of the commodification of religion. Therefore, this study aims to provide another perspective on the practice of festival piety as a part of efforts to standardize their piety. This research focused on Putri Muslimah, Muslimah Preneur, and Duta Santri events. This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a live-online observation method at the three festivals. The obtained data were analyzed and interpreted using a festival piety concept. It found three findings. First, Puteri Muslimah Indonesia, Duta Santri, and Muslimah Preneur are the locus for forming and demonstrating the piety of middle-class Muslims. Second, piety in the three festivals is a form of cultivation in which one is defined through a compromise of Islamic normativity and class composition. Third, practicing festival piety in the three festivals revives Islamic norms in dressing and class intervention through public spectacles. These findings demonstrate a new explanation of the standardization of Islamic ethics through the operation of Islamic normativity in class ideology.

**Keywords:** Islamic ethics; middle-class Muslims, cultivation; piety festival

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## A. Introduction

The public sphere is full of piety demonstrations among Indonesian middle-class Muslims. Religious performances driven by middle-class Muslims have become a fascinating public spectacle. Al-Quran recitation competitions (Jannah, 2016), Islamic films (Supriansyah, 2019), and the selection of Muslim ambassadors, which are held in stages from regional to national levels (Sunesti, 2014), are enough to color the Islamic public sphere in Indonesia. The presence of PMI, MP, and DS, which are broadcast live on national TV, indicates that Islam is presented all the time in the public spaces of this country. These events explore many Muslims' abilities related to reading Islamic holy texts, fashion, and Muslim's morality in public spaces. These festivals are inseparable from the ideology of middle-class Muslims, which seeks to define and standardize the piety of Muslims in the public sphere.

In particular, the festival of piety has not become the focus of scholarly study. However, issues related to broader religious festivals have become a factual and critical concern of scholars at the international and Indonesian levels. The study of this topic continues to be discussed in the discourse of interdisciplinary scholars. Along with developing phenomena of religious festivals in the public sphere, scholars have studied them from various angles and trends that are pretty diverse. First, they look at general cultural festivals, explore the relationship between local and global culture and between community and identity, and inquire about the mobilization of cultural cementation as a popular means of consuming and experiencing culture (Taylor, 2016). Second, They focus on seeing religious festivals as an effort to reframe local religions as cultural heritage and commodified tourist attractions (Hackett, 2022). Third, they pay much attention to festivals in terms of contests for religious skills such as religious arts (Wimbrayardi, 2019), religious missions (Baydura, 2020), and festivals of reading scriptures (Jannah, 2016). The three trends mentioned above it implies that the festival piety driven by middle-class Muslims as a part of the socialization of Islamic morality in the public sphere has not received much attention from researchers.

Based on the discussion above, completing the previous studies' shortcomings, this study focuses on festival piety among middle-class Muslims to standardize Islamic morality in the Indonesian public sphere. In particular, this paper aims to explore the ideology of middle-class Muslims behind the three Islamic festivals of *Puteri Muslimah Indonesia* (PMI), *Muslimah Preneur* (MP), and *Duta Santri* (DS), which have attracted much attention from the Indonesian public. Thus, later on, the researchers investigate the construction of class piety at the selection event for *Puteri Muslimah Indonesia* (Indonesian Muslimah Princess), *MP*, and *Duta Santri*

(religious student ambassadors). Also, this paper depicts not only the forms of festival piety but also the efforts of middle-class Muslims to standardize their Islamic morality in the public sphere.

This article is based on three arguments. First, in addition to explaining religious festivals in the public sphere, there are many aspects of religious commodification (Faiz, 2020). Although it is unavoidable, on the one hand, it has not been highlighted how middle-class Muslims are active in holding various public Islamic activities—oriented toward efforts to define pious Muslims in the public sphere. Second, they actively differentiate their self from others. One difference they make is celebrating Islam by holding festival piety. Third, the festivals are designed to influence, socialize, and attract the public. It implies that the festivals are social mobility that sets off middle-class Muslims as a popular means for socializing their piety. Therefore, the three arguments attempt to describe and identify the standards of Islamic morality in the festivals they hold in the public sphere.

## **B. Methods**

The phenomena of the festival piety can be observed in various selection events of Muslim ambassadors in Indonesia. Therefore, to obtain data, this paper focused on three major events: PMI, MP, and DS. The three selection events of ambassadors were observed for several reasons. First, they are major national-level festivals carried out in stages from regional to international levels. Second, although they are almost the same as the selection events of other ambassadors with a secular pattern, such as Putri Indonesia and Miss Indonesia, the three events maintain Islam as a primary branding, different criteria, and fashion styles. In addition, in terms of standards, the three events use criteria closely related to Islam, such as reciting the Qur'an and performing in the public sphere.

Data from this study was collected by watching the live broadcast of the events; PMI was watched by television, MP was via YouTube, and the DS was directly watched in Yogyakarta. However, to confirm a lot of data, the researchers re-watched the live broadcasts of the three events on YouTube. Data collection at the events was conducted from 2019 to 2022. This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach. It provided a direction for describing and interpreting the data (Martono, 2015) from the three Muslim ambassador selection events. Particularly, this applied a live-online observational method (Soehadha, 2018) at live events (directly observing the DS event and observing the live broadcast of PMI on television) and online videos. Thus, the researchers observed directly by watching, describing, and interpreting the three events.

Data analysis began when the data collection process started by sorting out the events and videos that were the subject of this research. Then the existing data was reduced by identifying the data according to the needs of this study analysis (Soehadha, 2018). Next, the data were displayed by organizing the data in a schema and then connecting the data with other data. The next step was data verification; in this process, the data had a dialogue with the scientific concept, namely the festival piety, so the existing data had meaning and scientific significance. Finally, the analysis concluded the data by abstracting them and formulating them in strong statements.

### **Festival Piety and Religious Celebration**

Theoretically, there are several key terms related to festivals regarding religious beliefs. In general, in some literature, the concept of festivals is used in various aspects such as cultural festivals (Taylor, 2016), music (Maftuchin, 2016), tourism, and so forth (Emmanuel, 2014) (Wu & Ai, 2016). Meanwhile, when this term is associated with religion, the concept of religious festivals (Younger, 2002), ritual festivals (Rahmadani, 2018), and sacred festivals (Hackett, 2022) emerge. Compared to the existing concept, festival piety seems to have not been widely used in socio-religious studies. Hackett, for example, considers religious festivals as a space for the state's political presence to reframe the beliefs of Osun Osogbo in Africa and Calabar in Nigeria (Hackett, 2022). The belief reframing is in the context of commoditizing local beliefs to attract tourists through festivals and carnivals, which later is drawn into public religion. The discourse on religious festivals is quite mature in the discussion of scholars at the international level.

The term festival is also used in direct conjunction with the name of certain religions, such as Buddhist festivals (Indika, 2021). This term is to describe the ideological background of the Kanchuka Puja festival. The festival concept in this context is operated to reveal the process of reinterpreting and rediscovering the process of glorifying the old heritage. In addition, it is also used to determine the religious experience of Hindus and Non-Hindus during the Navaratri festival in England (Logan, 1988). The concept of religious festivals at the international level study is widely used to reveal religious celebrations and their aspects, such as performances, rituals, and commodification that work in each of these festivals. In such a context, the festival piety exists and is still within the scope of religious festivals, although its focus is quite different.

Another concept that is almost the same and quite developed is performing piety. The term festival piety is close to the concept of performing piety (Nieuwkerk,

2013) or the performance of piety. Scholars widely use the concept of performing piety in viewing religious intentions in various behaviors of a community, in spiritual-economic aspects (Hart, 2007), in fashion (Peterson, 2016), or in practices of religious culture (Yardley, 2006). This concept is also used to explain processes of reconstructing meaning and efforts to build perceptions in ways that have the potential to revive collective memory and identity in Athenian Processions (Warford, 2019). If religious festivals focus more on the celebration process with all aspects of the rituals in the festivals, performing piety focuses more on religious intentions in the behaviors of a community.

While in Indonesia itself, the concept of the festival is used side by side with contestation, such as *Musabaqoh Tilawatil Quran* (MTQ) (Jannah, 2016). This concept is then directed to clarify the aesthetic reception process in the scripture. Another term Indonesian scholars use is ritual festivals (Rahmadani, 2018). It is used to read certain ritual celebrations that have shifted from a sacred ritual procession to an ordinary cultural parade so that the ritual procession becomes a mere cultural commodity. The concept of ritual festivals is not much different from the studies of religious festivals that have developed internationally. Furthermore, the term festival is used in a general framework, such as a cultural festival, without being directly associated with a particular religious procession.

Peter Michael Burk uses festival piety in his dissertation, which is insufficient in defining the concept. However, this term is widely used by Burk to describe the pose of piety to the veneration of Greek figures adopted by Theocritus in Idylls for setting Hellenistic festivals (Burk, 2004). There are two keywords in Burk's dissertation: "performance" and "worship." Burk demonstrates festival piety in the first chapter of his dissertation. Festival piety can be constructed to see the piety festivals that exist in Indonesia. From the discussion of these scholars, festival piety can be defined as the intention of obedience to religion displayed in a public space. This discourse of religious obedience becomes the focus of the festival piety in the public sphere.

There seems to be a gap in the concepts that have developed regarding religious festivals, performing piety, and festival piety. Although festival piety is a concept that is very close to the religious festival and performing piety, it is rarely used by scholars. On the other hand, religious festivals are often used in the context of the commoditization of religious practices through various celebrations in public spaces (Hackett, 2022). It also rarely reveals dimensions of intention and obedience of people and communities in religion, which is the focal point of explaining the concept of performing piety. Another gap can be seen in the lack of studies by scholars that reveal the influence of class ideology in festival religious obedience. Therefore, the

concept of festival piety can be constructed from the two tendencies above, namely pious and religious thinking driven by certain social classes that differ from others and become a set of public spectacles.

The festival piety in this paper can be understood as the intention and practice of obedience in religion through various practices that appear publicly. In such a concept, piety, which emphasizes religious individuals' desire to foster themselves to be more obedient and pious in religion (Mahmood, 2011), is defined and standardized publicly through the festival concept. In the festival space of piety, religious obedience is performed, structured, imaged, and shaped as measures of general morality. When met with the concept of festivals, piety can be interpreted as religious obedience, demonstrated as a form of public spectacle.

## C. Results and Discussion

### Middle Class and Festival Piety Trends

Five beautiful, tall, and fashionable women in red dresses and hijabs stood on the majestic stage; the 2019 *PMI* participants graciously answered the jury's questions about social Islam. Beside them stood four hosts (three males and one female). The men were Irfan Hakim, Ramzi, and Gilang Dirga, and the woman was Uyaina Arshad, who won the 2018 *Puteri Muslimah Asia*. Uyaina is also listed as a model and Malaysian artist. The three men who are the hosts of *Puteri Muslimah* also often appear on national TV to host Islamic shows such as *Aksi Indosiar* (Baydura, 2020) and *Hafiz Indonesia* on RCTI (Apriliana & Nurrahmawati, 2019). The judges were Yenni Wahid (an Indonesian Islamic activist) and Dedi Mizwar (an Indonesian politician, actor, and producer of Islamic films). Next to him sat a national cleric, Oki Setiana Dewi, a well-known film actress and a lecturer with many fans. The other judges are Dude Herlino and Baim Wong, well-known actors in the country.

Meanwhile, an IPEMI (*Ikatan Pengusaha Muslimah Indonesia* – Indonesian Muslimah Entrepreneur Association), initiated the *MP* in 2019 (Hamidah et al., 2021). The involvement of Muslim entrepreneurs in this event indicates an overview of the middle-class group designing Islamic celebrations in public spaces. They presented dozens of Muslim women from various regions on a luxurious stage. Often their events were held in malls, hotels, and places that attract enough public attention. In addition, this event's participants are Muslim entrepreneurs; they are imaged as Muslim businessmen based on Islamic principles (Hamidah et al., 2021). As a form of appreciation, IPEMI also awards Muslim women who can be examples for other women who want to work. In this event, one of the best Muslim women chosen is who will be an example for other women to be independent and to work.

This event is seen as effective in producing a Muslim businesswoman as a role model for the public.

In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, there was *DS* (*santri* ambassadors) event organized by activists, Islamic organizations, and academics. The Fatayat NU DIY and Garda Fatayat (Garfa), in collaboration with the Center for Pancasila Studies and State Defense at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Yogyakarta, Mardiyah Islamic Center UGM, Yogyakarta, Nahdatul Ulama University Yogyakarta, Bank Syariah Indonesia, and Creative Muslim were involved in organizing the DS event. If in PMI and Muslimah Preneur sit artists, business people, and celebrity lecturers, it is different for DS. There were academics such as Yudian Wahyudi, *Kyai* (a male religious leader of *pesantren* or Islamic boarding school), *Bu Nyai* (a female religious leader of *pesantren*), activists, and business people. The luxurious stage in this event, complete with beautiful lighting arrangements, was enough to present the power of mass dance. On the other hand, students from various Islamic boarding schools performed their skills in Arabic and English, public speaking, mastery of Islamic texts, and mastery of national issues.

Three middle-class groups are the main drivers of these three public piety festivals. They are Muslim celebrities from various fields, Muslim entrepreneurs, academics, and Islamic activists. The three middle-class groups that drive these three events have a pretty glowing reputation. They are national artists, Islamic activists, Islamic film producers, celebrity clerics, and *ustadzah* (female religious teachers in Islam). They are Muslim business people involved in presenting an Islamic celebration with their respective criteria and visions.

On the other hand, there are also groups of academics, *takmir* (mosque administrators), figures from mass organizations, and *Kyai* and *Bu Nyai*, who were also part of the new trend of Islamic festivals. The latter group is unique. They are from NU circles with an established Islamic tradition (Van Bruinessen, 1994), but they do not forget to wrap their traditions in new ways to color Islamic public spaces in urban areas.

The three middle-class groups have high economic capital, education, and business relationships (Jati, 2016). The presence of these three upper-middle-class groups in coloring togetherness in public spaces is a sign of the mobility of Islam-based classes (Dewi & Fata, 2021) and the stretching of the involvement of students into the urban middle-class (Amal, 2019) amid the development of Indonesian economy (Nizar, 2015). Their presence also signifies the growing middle-class to the upper class. Their social class can be measured by their level of education, income, saving patterns, ownership of various sources of basic needs, and so on (Faiz, 2020).

Another way to see these three middle-class groups is their royalty in producing and consuming religious-related things (Dewi & Fata, 2021). In their hands, Islam seems to be celebrated, displayed, and performed in public spaces. They can create Islamic trends that align with global trends (Triantoro, 2021). The networking pattern, Islamic militancy, and openness to economic access, present an Islamic festival. They combine religious dogma, rituals, information, habits of religious value (Rasmussen, 2010), and personal excellence to introduce Islamic praxis in the public sphere.

### **Celebration of Piety in the Three Festivals**

The piety festival was formatted in a competition. The competition can attract the public. This competition is also part of a strategy to attract the masses and sponsors, and it is also an effort to design an Islamic festival that brings experiences and impressions to the community. Islamic figures are displayed with strict criteria and standards. The selection process of nominees was conducted in various regions, in luxury places such as malls, hotels, or Islamic boarding schools, competed at the provincial level, and finally sent to the national level representing their regions and institutions. In this context, *PMI*, *MP*, and *DS* are a form of a festival designed by the middle-class. Table 1 demonstrates the three festivals and the membership process.

As shown in Table 1, *PMI* was held for the first time in 2014 and was broadcast on Indosiar, a private television. It has been held six times. The *MP* festival was organized by the Indonesian Muslimah Entrepreneurs Association (2019) and was ongoing last year. In particular, this program involves Muslim women entrepreneurs competing in the event. *PMI* and *MP* have structured mechanisms for screening for membership, starting from the local levels until the finalists are selected.

In contrast, *DS* festival has been held by PW Fatayat NU since 2016. This festival provides explicit space for Islamic boarding schools to compete with the mission of promoting Islamic and Indonesian values. The scheme of participation is different from the previous two festivals. The participation scheme for *DS* is selected from Islamic education in Indonesia, such as Islamic boarding schools, *madrasah*, and *majelis taklim*. The participants will choose the fields provided by the committee.

These festivals have criteria that participants must meet. The *PMI* requirements are Muslim women, single, unmarried, aged 17-25 years, attractive appearance, and a minimum height of 165 cm. They also must have talent in acting, singing, modeling, presenting, reading Qur'an, and wearing *hijab*. The *MP* criteria are Muslim women, 18-30 years old, and 158 cm minimum height. They must also be fluent in foreign languages, at least English, Qur'an reading fluently, no drugs or smoking, and have



**Table 1**  
*Festival Profile and Its Membership Selection*

Festival Group	Festival Profile	Process and Membership
<i>Puteri Muslimah Indonesia (PMI)</i>	<i>PMI</i> is for Indonesian Muslim women who wear <i>hijab</i> . <i>Puteri Muslimah</i> is broadcast on Indosiar and has been held since 2014. The main emphasis is on character, talent, and beauty. This event has been held six times to date.	The selection process is carried out at the regional and provincial levels. Then one finalist from each province will be selected to be the regional representative for the grand final stage of <i>Puteri Muslimah Indonesia</i> .
<i>Muslimah Preneur (MP)</i>	<i>MP</i> is a competition for Muslim women in the field of entrepreneurship. <i>The IPEMI</i> has organized <i>MP</i> from 2019 - 2022.	The selection process is carried out at the provincial level. Furthermore, the selected finalists of each province will represent their regions to participate at the national level.
<i>Duta Santri (DS)</i>	<i>DS</i> is an embassy event organized by Fatayat NU since 2016. <i>DS</i> is to promote <i>pondok pesantren</i> as an Islamic boarding school that prioritizes Islamic and national values.	<i>DS</i> was selected from Islamic boarding schools, <i>Majelis Taklim</i> (Islamic Teaching Assembly), and <i>Madrasah Diniyah</i> (Islamic schools). They are grouped into several fields, such as students in the area of religion, students in the area of politics, social and society, students in the fields of culture, arts, sports, and technology, students in the area of health and the environment, students in the area of entrepreneurship, and students in the diaspora.

an attractive, entrepreneurial & business spirit. Meanwhile, *DS* has quite different criteria; they must be Indonesian Muslim male and female citizens, unmarried, 17-25 years old, having good religious knowledge and national insights, mastering Arabic and English, *santri* in Islamic boarding schools or *Madrasah Diniyah*, members of the *taklim* assembly, or student activists of campus da'wah institutions.

In *PMI*, after meeting the criteria and following the stages of the selection process, participants who pass will be quarantined. Participants were drilled with Islamic knowledge and specific skills in the quarantine. Islamic and other teachings are given intensively by their mentors, who are also from the middle-class. The doctrinal Islam is then translated into various forms of training. *PMI* has panel discussions, health and beauty care training, fashion, personality development, public speaking, social actions, audiences, and talent show training. In translating the

material and skill training, Islamic normativity is still presented. Therefore, in the grand final stage, broadcast live nationally, the judges could ask anything about talent and Islam, such as the importance of beauty for Muslim women.

They also received material about beauty classes and personality, personal branding, digital marketing, society and film, *syariah* marketing, and women and politics. Furthermore, at the peak of the grand final stage, witnessed by IPEMI members and invited present guests, the participants should be ready to be displayed and tested by the juries. Meanwhile, DS is more closely related to Islamic and national texts. They follow quarantine and receive intensive classes. The material is on building the spirit of nationalist students, developing humanist characters, *Manhaj Fikr* and NU methodology, the history of *pesantren* in building the nation, public speaking, digital media, choreography, inner beauty, women's empowerment, and entrepreneurship. After going through the quarantine process, all the finalists appear at the peak of the grand final stage, witnessed by activists, academics, *Kyai* and *Bu Nyai*.

In Putri Muslimah, DS, and MP, Islam is presented and discussed with different dressings than usual. The bandage is a festival that simultaneously offers piety as a contestation and celebration (Jannah, 2016). Obedience to Islam is shown by the figures or participants on the stages. Islam is defined not only in the normative side but also in the appearance, style of speech, clothing, body, expertise, vision, and so on that are attached to them on the stages. If Puteri Muslimah and MP emphasize women, Islam, and talent, DS has men other than women who become participants. Its target is Islam and nationality at the same time. Therefore, in this context, the DS collaborates with the UGM (Gadjah Mada University) Mardiyah Mosque and the Pancasila Study Center at UIN (Islamic State University) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

In the three festivals above, discussions about normative Islam are also discussed. Participants have a dialogue session with the judges, such as da'wah, inviting Muslim women to wear the *hijab*. There is also a personal vision of developing one day one *juz* in reading the Qur'an and getting closer to Allah (Sunesti, 2014), nationality, and entrepreneurship. On the magnificent stage in the spotlight of millions of eyes, participants perform their skills such as reciting the Qur'an, lecturing, acting, singing, and so on. In dialogue with the judges, they often quote Islamic texts, define Islam, and demonstrate how to be Muslims and Muslimah in public; Hijab, for example, does not just cover the body but becomes part of the obedience of Islamic normativity such as Fiqh and ethics. On the other hand, hijab comes with a brand wrap as a modern, contemporary, and stylish fashion package (Sunesti, 2014).

### The Middle Class and Public Moral Agency

Putri Muslimah, MP, and DS are important festivals celebrating the middle-class's Islamic beliefs. The festivals are essential to communities' social structure and beliefs (Emmanuel, 2014). The three forms of festival piety are closely related to middle-class Muslims. They are a social group that has a passion for religion, is well educated, has access to the economy (Ridho, 2017), and have a distinctive lifestyle. They link their lifestyle with religion, including in this context, highlighting their piety in religion (Jati, 2015). One form of this relationship is to organize middle-class piety festivals, such as PMI, MP, and DS.

The middle-class Muslim has so far enjoyed many world facilities ranging from economics, education, and technology, and has actively taken opportunities for socio-economic-political changes in this country (Ali et al., 2017). Modern life with a luxurious life and a level of spiritual emptiness is often pinned to them. However, lately, the middle-class is looking for a new model of spirituality. It started with the emergence of the wave of Islamization in the 1970s and its development through global media networks (Golkar, 2012), the involvement of students in the educated middle-class and bureaucrats (Howell, 2001), and the *hijrah* movement (Fuad, 2020). Now, they have become a group actively looking for a form of Islam according to their needs (Dewi & Fata, 2021). The middle-class reconnects their world with Islamic spirituality. In their hands, Islam has become a class religious identity quite different from religion (Islam) in general.

Indonesian middle-class Muslims have increasingly shown their new orientation and obedience to Islam (Azra, 2017). According to Wasisto, citing Riesebrodt (1993), they appear in the following four ways. First, the intensity of worship, obligatory, and Sunnah is increasing. Moreover, they can formulate the sunnah in such a way as a class identity. The sunnah looks flexible and can be adjusted as a form of their Islamic style. Second, their obedience in implementing orders is based on the Qur'an and Hadith. The phenomena of *one day one juz* (ODOJ) (Nisa, 2018), training in solemn prayer, and dressing to cover their genitals following the Qur'an and Hadith are practiced in public spaces. Third, the celebration of Islamic celebrations is constructed based on certain ideologies. Fourth, they pack socio-economic and religious values together (Jati, 2015).

DS, MP, and PM are a set of festival piety resulting from the four Islamic formulations above. The selection of Muslim women represents Muslim women who are religious and also skillful. MP is an opportunity to present Muslim women who are religious, pious, and economically empowered. DS takes the form of celebrating the piety of Muslim students in public spaces. In the three festivals, religious dogmas, information, rituals, and so forth are demonstrated and exhibited

to the public. The practice of piety in the three festivals is visible to the public with various standards and qualifications.

The pious practices in the three festivals are impossible without access to the economy, education, public networks, and religion. The selection or competition in three events was held because they did not have religious authority like authoritative religious figures. However, this middle-class is active in learning religion (Dewi & Fata, 2021), which they believe to be accurate. They practice and promote what they learned through the three festivals with their characteristics. They present the winners or the participants they chose as prophetic role models in the three events with different styles. The middle-class in this festival does not practice da'wah like some who have Islamic authorities but are more concerned with promoting middle-class Islamic ethics.

PMI, MP, and DS are celebrations of the subjectivity of middle-class Muslims, the religious norms they understand, and meaningful portraits of social life according to social class categories. They show Islam not only in rituals but also in the lifestyles of the class (Dewi & Fata, 2021). The appearance, manner of dress, and Islamic knowledge they present in various patterns in the three festivals are directed at traditionalizing middle-class Islamic norms. In these three festivals, they maintain their selves as agents of forming public morality. The pious deeds they perform through the figures or the participants are an effort to revive the piety norms that are distinctive from society. Muslim women's characteristics are having beautiful morals, covering their genitals, and being talented and intelligent. The features of the MP portray Islamic obedience and economic independence. The features of DS should have morals, master Islamic texts, and have public skills shown to the public.

The three festivals are a form of construction of middle-class festival piety as a show, promotion, and pious self-presentation in front of the public (Getz, 2010). In the three festivals, Islamic normativity is considered piety as it has been embedded in the system of public norms wrapped in class luxury. The compromise of social class and Islamic normativity in the three festivals plays a role in contested piety. Such a compromise is designed as a form of public performance that is quite interesting. The compromise of the two can present a performance of piety (Peterson, 2016) with the standardization of Islamic morality, which is quite different from the general public.

### **Festivals and Standardization of Public Piety**

The grand finals of the three festivals above were broadcast live on television and YouTube. The Grand Finals are the highlight events where the participants present Islam differently. In the grand finals, the participants wore Islamic clothing,

showed their knowledge of Islam, recited the Qur'an, and performed some skills. The event stages displayed luxury, such as camera highlights to sponsors. At those stages, the figures or participants who appear are examples of figures of Islam. The judges asked them questions about Islam, entrepreneurship, and nationality. In the grand finals, there was access to the middle-class, especially economically, marked by the presence of sponsors and brands used by the participants (Sunesti, 2014).

Festivals serve as a locus for the formation and promotion of piety. In the festival hall, the participants of the three festivals representing their regions were gathered. They performed on stage and were watched nationally. Through their expertise, knowledge, and religious fashion, the participants were described as pious Muslims. All of these processes have criteria that have been standardized and adapted to the participants and the committees. Religious normativity and class ideology have become the standard for defining middle-class Muslims (Jati, 2016). Self-presentation as a Muslims and pious Muslim is part of defining piety in the public sphere (Bravin & Setiawan, 2021).

The three festivals refer to general Islamic morality. Putri Muslimah, for example, implements the *ABC* criteria (morals based on faith, talent based on intelligence, and beauty based on attractive appearance). Muslimah Preneur emphasizes Muslims' clothing, morals, and businesses. Then DS puts forward on Islam and nationality, Islamic boarding school students, and mastery of Arabic and English. These three piety festivals are in dialogue with general Islamic norms taught by religious leaders. Therefore, these three festivals raise dialogues/discussions about individual obedience, good performance according to Islam, role models, a *kāffah* (complete) way of life, and *fiqh* reasoning about covering the *aurat* (genitals).

Islamic norms and morals are used to legitimize the appearance of the three festivals. The appearance of the three festivals is seen as not only a part of body appearance but also a beautiful appearance. Oki Setiana Dewi once asked Erra Fazhira (Puteri Muslimah 2019) about what beauty means to a Muslim woman. Erra answered that beauty is appearance, faith, and love for religion. Erra quotes the hadith "*The world is jewelry, and the best of the world is a pious woman.*" The clothes they wear on stage are understood as a form of performing Islamic orders and religious obedience. They rely on the Qur'an Al-A'araf verse 31 (Ulya, 2018). Thus, the discourses of religion discussed in the three festivals define public piety. The legitimacy of Islamic morality is seen as normative ways of displaying the ability to read religious texts such as the Qur'an, to master foreign languages, to have social concerns, and to dress and behave.

Thus, the festival piety is not only a way of coloring public Islam but also a means to bring this norm into public, called performative ways. What they display in the

three festivals is a way of preserving the prevailing standards (Mahmood, 2011). Being good at reciting, creative, beautiful, and talented are commendable values normalized in the public sphere. The pressure of the three festivals is not only on the participants' behavior but also at the stage of formalizing the standard of class behavior as a public practice. Thus, the Islamic morality displayed is the same as general morality, but middle-class Muslims set the dress.

The festivals demonstrate Islamic practices, morals, and intelligence in detail, such as how to dress and cover *aurat* with hijab and how to talk. It is a form of performing self-cultivation as a pious Muslim. Therefore, the three festivals are the growth of religious symbols in the public sphere and the locus for forming and promoting piety. However, they appear to be distinctive because of the intervention of the middle-class. The performance of piety is distinguished through capital, sponsorship access such as cosmetics, expensive *hijab* or clothes, styles, and so on (Peterson, 2016; Sunesti, 2014). Thus, piety with middle-class intervention is the ideal form of pious Muslim in the public sphere.

The normative practice in the three festivals becomes a concrete form of cultivation (Mahmood, 2011) in righteousness among middle-class Muslims. Therefore, this middle-class piety has its standards of morals and values. Their characters are based on Islamic normativity, while their self-worth is attached to class status. Thus, the performance of piety that appears is luxurious, which distinguishes it from other general piety practices. The logic of social class demonstrates efforts to differentiate oneself in piety (Jati, 2015). Meanwhile, the figures who performed well on PMI, MP, and DS seemed to be models of pious individuals for Islamic public representation. For the middle-class, all of these are part of the passion for Islam and the practices of Islam in urban spaces (Dewi & Fata, 2021).

## D. Conclusion

The pious practices of middle-class Muslims are presented in the festivals. Through the festivals, piety is standardized and promoted as Islamic public ethics. Therefore, this study concluded that there are three essential points. First, Putri Muslimah, DS, and MP are the locus for forming and demonstrating the piety of middle-class Muslims. Second, piety in the three festivals not only celebrates Islamic symbols but also is a form of cultivation in which one is defined through a compromise of Islamic normativity and class composition. Third, the practices of the festival piety in Putri Muslimah, MP, and DS are ways of reviving Islamic norms in dressing and class intervention through public spectacles. These three findings indicate that the practices of piety are not only an alternative for the middle-class to

become a Muslim and Muslimah but also a form of promoting and traditionalizing the practice of piety and Islam through festivals in public spaces.

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