



## Religious culture reflection of young Muslims community

Guntoro Guntoro,<sup>1\*</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Islamic Studies, Doctorate Postgraduate Program, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**Abstract:** The identity formation of young Muslims is a complex issue influenced by various factors such as transition, culture, religion, and external factors like parents and environment. Despite facing challenges, young Muslims have the power to adapt, select, and appropriate their cultural identity in the contemporary Islamic era. This study aims to describe the reflection of religious life through three dimensions: belief, worship, and social society. The young Muslim ACM (Ayo Cinta Masjid) community has various social activities and strong religious culture. Through these practices, the ACM community strives to build and apply the practice of religiosity as a fancy religious life identity while maintaining the basic values and Islamic principles. The construction of ACM community religiosity identity begins with various religious activities such as congregational prayers, great recitation (*tabligh akbar*), ACM riders subuhan, sharing time weekends, ACM volunteers, prepekan, and other activities. In the worship dimension, the religiosity of the ACM community can be identified from the intensity and the practice of worship in daily life through various religious activities. Meanwhile, in the social dimension, the religiosity of the ACM community is reflected in social life by carrying out positive and constructive activities for others based on religious awareness.

**Keywords:** life; religious culture; young Muslims; ACM community

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\*Corresponding Author: Guntoro (gguntoro553@gmail.com), Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Jl. Laksada Adisucipto, Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia.

## A. Introduction

Various types of research about young Muslims are inseparable from the issue of identity or identity hybrid (Saluz, 2007), the transition period (Nilan et al., 2011), young people as action or creators of culture (Naafs & White, 2012), and the phenomenon of hijra as a new identity of contemporary Muslim youth (Sunesti et al., 2018). The discussion of young people also involves the work sector to meet the welfare of life; they plan expectations and ambitions more about their personal lives (Naafs, 2018). Meanwhile, Kathryn Robinson, in her research centered on the study of transition and generational change of young people, argues that political and economic forces also affect young people differently across genders, ages, classes, and ethnic lines when they negotiate access to employment and education (Robinson, 2016).

In particular situations, the interrelation of the phenomenon of Islamic market type and the role of the preacher in formulating the Islamic da'wah format also offers new colors to the identity formation of young Muslims (Kailani, 2019). In addition, contrasting influences also emerge on cultural inclusion and exclusion supposed by young people. In this position, they are sometimes idealized as agents of the future, but at the same time, they are feared and criticized for having different cultural values from previous generations.

Young people are identified struggle generation going through a social, cultural, physical, and psychological transition period. Youth is a periodization of life characterized by spontaneous, adventurous, non-conservative, and changeable actions (Sarwono, 2013). In its metamorphosis, in addition to being influenced by personal intellectual factors along with modernization and globalization, the development of young people is also inseparable from external factors such as parents, the environment, and the constitution that applies as binding social control. However, despite the problems mentioned above, in the contemporary Islamic era, the young Muslims in this study still keep the power of selection, adaptation, and appropriation, following the tendency to understand the mood and cultural identity (Hasan, 2020).

This study aims to describe the reflection of religious life in the Ayo Cinta Masjid (ACM) community in Kota Metro. A generation of young millennial Muslims follows ACM community members with approximately 6-50 members. They come from diverse backgrounds, such as students and youth organizations. The ACM community is headquartered at the Taqwa mosque as a center for activities and coordination. Geographically, Kota Metro has a strategic position in the middle of the

city and is directly opposite the city park (Taman Merdeka). The ACM community has a basic goal as the basis of its activity to prosper the mosque and da'wah activity by conducting scientific knowledge, various activities, and social religion.

Furthermore, the explanation of the reflection of religious life in this study refers to the religious dimension theory developed by Joachim Wach (1963). Three dimensions in religious life were discussed, specifically the dimension of belief, the dimension of worship, and the social dimension of society. Finally, these three perspectives will describe the level of religiosity of the ACM community members.

## B. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative type that relies on a phenomenological approach as an analytical tool to explore the reflection of religious life in the ACM community in Kota Metro. The determination of informants is based on choices about who and what aspects to focus on in the research that is carried out continuously until the research fits. The informant recruitment strategy is *purposive* and depends on the objectives and focus of the research. At the same time, the communication model used among researchers and informants was through email and *WhatsApp* contacts to arrange interviews. Researchers conducted twelve interviews with eight men and four women (N = 12). The interview uses informal methods to adjust to the social situation of each informant. Endless open-ended questions are used to improve accuracy and avoid excessive assumptions from researchers about research phenomena (Silverman, 2014; Brinkmann, 2018; Neuman, 2014). Open-ended questions include self-identity, assimilation or affiliation, social events, cultural practices, and religious life.

In addition to interviews, direct observation is used to obtain basic data captured by the five senses. Furthermore, the methodology of data analysis in the phenomenological approach consists of several stages as developed by Creswell (1998) as follows: 1) Researchers conceptualize all data or a comprehensive concept of phenomena collected in the field by completing written texts (transcripts) on all interview results. 2) The next stage is the *decoding process*, which provides codes considered important in every line of interviews that researchers conduct on research subjects. 3) Carefully repeat the interview results' readings to understand them correctly. 4) After reading carefully, reduce the data by cutting off unimportant and irrelevant statements. 5) The statements are collected in several meanings and written using easy-to-understand language. 6) In constructing meaning from the informant's statement, use unambiguous language so that the essence and meaning of the subject can be conveyed and understood properly. 7) The main meaning

obtained from the informant is then integrated into a harmony of meaning. 8) The deepest meaning of the form of harmony of meaning is the focus of the research discussion and is the result of the research described in the discussion chapter.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **Reflections on the Religious Life of the ACM Community**

Religion is a processor of human relationships and is believed to be higher than humans (Daradjat, 2005; Faisal, 1997; Ishomuddin, 2002; Kamad, 2002). Religion is also interpreted as a symptom and characteristic of universal social life (Sharif, 1996). Koentjaraningkat, in his book, describes the five elements of religious life: religious emotions, belief systems, rituals and ceremonial equipment, ceremonial rites, and religious people (Koentjaraningkat, 1992). In comparison, Geertz interprets religion as a system or symbol that applies to establish strong moods and motivations by formulating concepts about the general order of existence and then wrapping these concepts with a radiance of factuality so that the mood and motivation appear to be realistic (Geertz, 1992).

Furthermore, the concept of religion developed by Geertz by establishing a strong mood and motivation in recent decades is expressed by young Muslims by catching new opportunities to develop according to the context of their locality both in terms of social, cultural, and religious as well as the Ayo Cinta Masjid (ACM) community in Kota Metro. In practice, human life activities that are natural, rational, concrete, and empirical are reflections of religious life, including believing in everything holy and sacred. The researcher elaborated on the reflection of the religious life of the ACM community through three dimensions which will be separately explained in the next discussion below.

#### **Belief Dimension**

The phenomenology of religious belief is a fact of human life found throughout the history of society in its personal life (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012). The discussion of religious beliefs is connected to two main elements: humans and culture. As actors develop culture and religion, humans are part of the culture. To live out his destiny, man needs religion as a principle or guidance, and vice versa, and religion requires man to preserve their teachings, both transcendental and natural. In this position, young Muslims have a complex thought of expressing their religious beliefs due to the uncertainty of the norms they get or the contradictions in real life (Mubarok, 2008).

The dimension of belief is closely related to a person's thoughts in interpreting a particular object. This meaning will be based on the behavior of believing spirituality as a comprehensive perspective of life related to life guidelines and basic principles. The ACM community melts the acculturation of two beliefs into a collective character called *Trans traditional-modernist*.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the findings of filed data, ACM community members who have long lived in Kota Metro have asked for long-term thinking to believe in the supernatural in religious life (Pals, 2006). On the other hand, some student members of the ACM community were initially still identical to traditional ideas about religious beliefs, such as supernatural things, holy or sacred objects, divination, or reflections. Most student members arrive from rural areas (interview, December 19, 2022). Initially, knowledge of belief in the occult was acquired by generations of unclear sources of truth. The term is merely conjecture and articulated from parents or fairy tales. However, after blending the scope of the ACM community with the climate of the city's Muslim life, they could access a new definition of the supernatural perspective. They get this understanding through various Islamic activities the ACM community organizes.

So that over time, there was a transformation of beliefs of life from traditional to modernist with the adjustment of the city's Muslim culture in terms of religious life beliefs. The occurrence of life changes affected several factors in constructing the frame of mind. On internal factors, this situation is inseparable from the role of religious leaders who continue to provide guidance and Islamic sciences, either through great recitation (*tabligh akbar*) or scientific assemblies organized by the ACM community. While on the external factor as a Muslim community living in urban areas, the ACM community has broad access to the culture, social and religious life of various other Muslim communities in various regions. This situation also provides various references in expressing the religious beliefs of young Muslims. The overall reflection of religious life beliefs in the ACM community is adequate regarding the correct understanding and practice of supernatural or spiritual things following the teachings of Islam.

### **Worship Dimension (*Ritual*)**

The identification of a religious Muslim can be reflected in his religious activities with God. The worship dimension of Muslims can be noticed from the extent of each

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<sup>1</sup>*Trans-traditional-modernism is the transformation of thoughts of life from traditional to modernist with the adjustment of urban Muslim culture in terms of religious life beliefs depicted in daily life.*

individual's obedience level in carrying out their commandments and avoiding all that is forbidden or known as *taqwā*. In Islam, worship is divided into *maḥḍah* worship (pure worship) and *ghayru maḥḍah* worship (blended worship).<sup>2</sup> In practice, this aspect of worship is related to the frequency, intensity, and practice of religious rituals in daily life, such as prayer, remembrance, fasting, Hajj, and other practices.

In different scopes, the religiosity of worship can be comprehended from social life activities. Religiosity is assessed from the positive and constructive activities of others based on religious awareness. This aspect of worship is related to the activities of religious believers to actualize religious rituals adopted in their daily lives based on religious ethics and spirituality. This aspect is in direct contact between people and humans with the environment.

In the worship dimension, compulsory congregational prayer activities are the main priority of the ACM community as a realization to prosper the Taqwa mosque in Kota Metro. The level of identity and practice in each obligatory prayer is always crowded with worshippers, both members of the ACM community and the surrounding community. As a balancer, ACM also intensifies Dhuha's reminder as a form of obedience in Sunatullah. In addition, the Qur'an recitation routine is evidence that the worship dimension of the ACM community also includes knowledge and science to deepen Islamic teachings (interview, December 20, 2022).

In another segment, as a form of *ghayru maḥḍah* worship, the ACM community is also actively carrying out the great recitation (Tabligh Akbar) by conveying inspiring Islamic figures from within and outside the country, such as the Middle East. This activity received an enthusiastic response from the congregation, including young Muslims who are the main target of the great recitation (Tabligh Akbar) event. The ACM community's strategies to attract the sympathy of the congregation is to bring in popular celebrities and modern preacher idols of young people, such as Hanan Attaki, Adi Hidayat, Oki Setiana Dewi, Handy Bony, Arifin Ilham, Oemar Mita, Evie Effendi, and several founders of hijrah from various cities in Indonesia. Great recitation (*tabligh akbar*) events are part of the ACM community's actions to achieve the goals of the mosque prosperity movement and

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<sup>2</sup>*Mahdhah* worship is a worship whose rules and procedures are standard. The requirements and ruku have been determined in Islamic guidance, which includes this worship category: prayer, fasting, zakat, Hajj/pilgrimage, praying dhikr, qurban worship, and so on. While *gairu mahdhah* worship is a general worship activity, its implementation is not all given examples directly by the Prophet. As well as working, studying, farming and others.

as a method of da'wah in broadcasting Islam openly without determining the background of religious organizations and other youth communities.

Another variation is illustrated by the formation of dawn ACM riders, which are part of social education in a wider range of worship dimensions. This activity was spearheaded by an association of motorcycle lovers who are part of the ACM community members intending to find mosques within a radius of the Metro City and surrounding areas. This activity is filled with congregational dawn prayers, recitation of the Quran, dawn cult, shuruq prayers, mosque cleaning, and many others (interview, December 20, 2022). This action portrays the ACM community as a religious movement moving massively in the regional area and opening wide access to building public existence. The *ACM Riders Subuhan* activity also described how Muslim brotherhood communication between mosque managers was created to strengthen the relationship. These patterns indirectly provide education on a positive worship atmosphere, especially for the surrounding environment.

Meanwhile, *The Pre-Pekan* activities, *Ngeteh* (discussing *hidāyah* issues), *Ngopi* (chatting about matters of faith), often held in cafes or informal places packed with millennial culture, become ritual worship routines as a reflection of the lifestyle of young Muslims from the ACM community. Through these practices, they strive to create and implement impressive practices of religiosity and attract young people without becoming fanatical. For them, it is an impressive religious reflection without being un-Islamic and *fashionable* young Muslims. The Sharing Time Weekend is an activity to deepen Islamic knowledge, especially for ACM community members. The themes carried out in this study are attractive and interesting among young Muslims by taking contemporary and popular themes and slang, for example, talking about love and youth problems. Some of the themes raised include: "*Kalau udahan apa masih cinta?*", "*Menjemput jodoh impian*", "*Temani aku di jalan berlaku*", "*Biar Allah genggam hatimu*", "*Jodoh itu pilihan Allah*", "*Temani aku di jalan yang terjal*".

The themes of the study, as mentioned above, hold deep *turmoil* for the lives of young Muslims who are choosing the path of hijra to improve their religious life. The message or content talks about the problems in the lives of young Muslims, the spirit of hijra, *istiqomah* in worship, the problem of fillah youth, the problem of soul mates, and so on.

### **Social Dimension of Society**

Studying religion and society never lead to a single establishment because society will continue to grow. At the same time, religion, from a sociological perspective, is positioned as an important instrument for understanding these

developments. Through symbols and values, religion can influence the lives of both cultural, social, and economic systems. Society is also understood as a social system of interrelated elements united in balance (Ritzer, 2007). Meanwhile, from a structural perspective, religion refers to the value system society depends on in behaving and functioning.

In the social dimension of society, the ACM community is particularly diverse in describing its life at all levels of class, gender, and ethnicity. The ACM community's efforts to see the local potential of the diversity of Kota Metro communities by integrating various social community activities as part of Islamization can attract young people.

Its activity aims to achieve public recognition of the existence of the ACM community from local to national scales, for example, *the Pre-Pekan* activity targeting students and young people during Ramadhan in the courtyard of Taqwa Mosque. This event has various contemporary activities such as fun and games, talk shows, skateboarding, BMX, parkour, archery, magic, traditional games, and clogs that are integrated with various other Islamic activities such as tilawah, muhasabah, hijra motivation, and breaking the fast (interview, December 20, 2022). The ACM community can internalize Islamic values towards several non-religious youth communities and provide an overview (landscape) that adapts young Muslims' religious life and assimilate to modern cultures. This practice proves that the religious movement of Muslim youth in Kota Metro is inclusive.

The ACM community volunteers also build social communication relationships nationally, for example, by establishing volunteer posts in various natural disasters, such as North Lombok in 2018, West Pasaman West Sumatra in 2022, and most recently, the West Java Cianjur earthquake. These practices reveal the structured and systematic patterns to give a message to the wider community that Islam also teaches a high sense of concern for all elements of society without distinction of religion, social class, ethnicity, culture, and particular community.

In different sectors, as a characteristic of modern religious communities, the ACM community utilizes the development of communication technology in mass media (mass media communication) as an instrument of Islamic religious syiar with a wider spread. ACM Bolt (Brotherhood Tawheed) is a forum responsible for managing the development of da'wah in mass media with an Instagram account @AyoCintaMasjid. They disseminate various ACM community activities and other Islamic content through this account. ACM Bolt is at the forefront of exposing a variety of positive content as an effort to leave a virtual footprint ranging from aphorisms, posters containing moral messages, calling for more active worship, and

knowledge about Islam to various activities from the ACM community. This virtual footprint in mass media is intended to disseminate the mobility of the ACM community in various dimensions and diverse scopes accessed through social media.

However, on the other hand, the explosion of the mass media industry, which is often used as an object of assessment for the younger generation of Muslims, can be disastrous when not accompanied by goodwill and ability from legal and political institutions and social ethics to protect long-term public interests (Arief & Utomo, 2015). Media information is formed through cognitive understanding, which coincides with human understanding. The information provided to users is highly contextualized and within a certain frame of reference (Noble, 2018). At this point, there is an affirmation that not all readings on the virtual trace can be used as a final assessment of a particular object because the vision in the mass media has a contextualized meaning different from the conveyor of meaning.

In addition, other social community activities such as care for orphans, ACM Peduli, solidarity action, BBM (mosque cleaning), and ACM futsal have become part of real communication with various levels of society. Understanding the values of social care in a Muslim spirit is crucial to provide a nuance of peace with the realization of mutual affection, as Muslims believe. Indirectly, all social activities carried out by the ACM community have contained Islamic *syiar* values with various methods to illustrate the good religiosity identity of the Ayo Cinta Masjid community on the social dimension of society.

### **Identity and Religiosity**

Identity formation is a commitment to the ideology of each individual, which Erickson describes as a social institution as the embodiment of identity itself (Erikson, 1968). Through this ideology, the social system can penetrate the order of the next generation and try to absorb into every line of life as the foundation of the ideology of rejuvenation or youth. Identity is defined as certain that organizes life clearly and openly based on binding values. Each individual or group's socio-cultural code can help form self-identity (Naim, 2000).

The diversity of religious life assimilated by the socio-cultural life of the ACM community is a struggle to spread Islam with various education that the large community can receive. Religion, culture, and social life are one particle that becomes a whole. The implementation of cultural values is clear evidence of the legitimacy efforts of certain communities or groups to preserve their culture as a symbol of identity (Guntoro, 2020). While Pam Nilan explained that contemporary

youth culture in Indonesia includes several practices to build identity, socialize, consume, claim legitimacy, creativity, and cultural mixing (Nilan & Mansfield, 2013).

Based on the findings of facts in the field, two elements are interrelated: the reflection of religious life as an identity of religiosity and as a form of the existence of the ACM community. As a structured religious movement, the ACM community positions in a homogeneous scope and moves dynamically to build a pious identity and show a fancy Muslim life. The efforts of the religious life are what researchers' term as *resistance* or balancing from the cultural biases of modern, global, and free city life.

The explanations above illustrate that the practices of religious life in the ACM community can merge with various levels of society, community, and social class through three dimensions, specifically the dimension of belief and worship and the social dimension of society. In addition, the ACM community can also show the idea of religiosity as a modern Muslim youth and maintain Islamic values as a guideline for life.

#### **D. Conclusion**

In essence, all human life activities are part of religious life as a form of faith in the existence of supernatural forces that influence the personal lives of certain groups of people. Analysis of data in the field shows that most of the construction of ACM community religiosity identity begins with various activities such as congregational prayers, great recitation (*tabligh akbar*), ACM *Riders Subuhan*, *sharing time weekends* program, ACM volunteers, *Pre-Pekan* program and other activities.

Reflection on religious life in the ACM community consists of collective activities related to knowledge, understanding, and practice of Islamic religious teachings and various social activities in the community. These two spaces have provided a general picture of the identity of religiosity through the three dimensions of religious life. The faith dimension of the ACM community has reflected a modern perspective of life, as well as a correct understanding and practice of supernatural or spiritual matters following the teachings of Islam. In the worship dimension, the religiosity of the ACM community is caught by the intensity and the practice of worship in daily life through various religious activities. Regarding social dime, the image of religiosity of the ACM community is reflected in social life by carrying out positive and constructive activities for others based on religious awareness.

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