OVERCOMING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN INDONESIA THROUGH SPIRITUAL EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON ICEBERG AND U-THEORY

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the gap between the ideals and practical application of spiritual education, focusing on persistent Islamophobia in Indonesia. Ideally, spiritual education fosters tolerance and humanism, accommodating diverse religious expressions like the niqab, burqa, cingkrang pants, and full beards, aligned with Islam's principles. However, ongoing Islamophobia reveals significant flaws in its implementation. This qualitative literature review synthesizes primary and secondary data from scholarly works over the past decade, using Iceberg and U-Theory methods within a phenomenological framework. The study aims to identify spiritual concepts that mitigate Islamophobia, especially post-2002 Bali terrorism. Findings show that enhancing spiritual education and promoting religious moderation are crucial for reducing Islamophobia by providing accurate understandings of Islamic teachings. Misinterpretations and extremist ideologies, rather than Islam's core tenets, are the root causes of Islamophobic sentiments.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Iceberg and U-Theory Analysis, Spiritual Education

ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci: Islamofobia, Analisis Iceberg dan U-Theory, Pendidikan Spiritual
INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its rich cultural, ethnic, linguistic, traditional attire, and religious diversity, embodies a multicultural nation that upholds the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as the foundation of humanism and unity (Pendidikan et al., 2022, p. 238). This principle underscores unity in diversity, fostering a non-discriminatory attitude and strong nationalism (Arianto, 2023, p. 352). However, issues related to multiculturalism persist, including the notable presence of Islamophobia.

Islamophobia refers to the fear of Islam and its adherents, often associated with extremism, jihadist warfare, and a perceived lack of humanistic values (Witro & Alamin, 2021, p. 149). This phenomenon has become increasingly evident in the 21st century, marked by several terrorism cases invoking Islam, such as the Sarinah-Thamrin bombing (2017), the Serpong incident (2011), and the J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotel attacks (2009) (Witro & Alamin, 2021, p. 146). The surge in Islamophobia has been particularly notable since the 2002 Bali bombings, which were attributed to Islamic militants (Arifa et al., 2022, p. 49).

In Indonesia, Islamophobia is often exacerbated by the use of Islamic attire, which is perceived as indicative of radical extremism and rigid, violent religious practices (Satori & Widiastuti, 2018, p. 23). Such attire includes the niqab, burqa, veil, short trousers, and long beards (Satori & Widiastuti, 2018, pp. 23–24). Although not all who wear these garments are extremists, this perception persists within the community. Addressing Islamophobia in Indonesia is crucial as it constitutes an unjust form of discrimination.

Nevertheless, the reality of Islamophobia continues to surface in Indonesia, with frequent terrorism incidents exacerbating societal reluctance to associate with Muslims who resemble stereotypical terrorists. From any perspective, Islamophobia rooted in terrorism is fundamentally objectionable as it amounts to racism against a specific group of Muslim adherents or those wearing similar attire to terrorists.

Spiritual education in Indonesia, which is grounded in theological and moral principles, holds the potential to combat Islamophobia by imparting values of humanism and tolerance (Kambali et al., 2019, p. 17; Sisdiknas, 2003). Ideally, spiritual education fosters religious practice and humanistic behavior without discriminatory elements (Muhtadi, 2021, p. 29). Through Islamic teachings that emphasize tauhid, religious moderation, and humanism (rahmah), it is possible to prevent terrorism and Islamophobia. However, the persistence of Islamophobia in Indonesia highlights the inadequacies in spiritual education, presenting a significant challenge for this research.

This study seeks to address how the concept of spiritual education can effectively mitigate and prevent the spread of Islamophobia in Indonesia. The research aims to explore the role of spiritual education in curbing and countering Islamophobia in the country. This issue is urgent given that Indonesia’s diversity is a national asset that must be preserved, in part by reducing Islamophobia through spiritual education.
This study distinguishes itself from previous research, such as “Grounding Islam Moderation Through Social Media: A Form To Prevent Islamophobia In Indonesia” by D. Witro and N. Alamin (2021), “Islamophobia dan Dampaknya Bagi Kehidupan Beragama di Indonesia” by B. Rosada (2022), and “The Strategy of the Radicalism Movement in Building a Culture of Islamophobia in Indonesia” by T.I. Prayogo et al. (2023), by focusing on the concept of spiritual education using the Iceberg and U-Theory methodologies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is classified as qualitative research utilizing a literature review approach. This approach was chosen due to the study’s focus on analyzing existing literature to identify problems and propose solutions (Hernawati et al., 2024; Pringgar, R. F., & Sujatmiko, 2020). Primary data was sourced from scientific articles, books, and research reports directly relevant to the research topic. Secondary data was gathered from additional literature that, although not directly related, still provided crucial contextual support (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 171; Yusuf, 2017, p. 62). Data was collected through a Google Scholar search spanning ten years.

The literature used was selected based on specific criteria, including relevance to the topic, source credibility, and publication date. The literature search process was conducted through Google Scholar within the last ten years, using predetermined keywords. Each identified piece of literature was then evaluated for its alignment with the research questions.

Data analysis was performed using two main methods: the Iceberg method and U-Theory. The Iceberg method involves three stages of analysis: observation of events and trend patterns, identification of impact structures, and analysis of underlying mental models. U-Theory consists of steps such as re-examining fundamental assumptions, redesigning concepts, reframing problems, and creatively responding to findings. A phenomenological approach was applied in this analysis to understand the subjective experiences from various perspectives within the analyzed literature (Hadiyanto et al., 2023, pp. 133–134).

The application of this analysis aims to support the research objectives outlined in the introduction: to deeply understand the discussed problems and to find literature-based solutions to address these issues. Key references used include Sugiyono (2013) and Yusuf (2017), which provide a strong theoretical foundation for this methodology (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 171; Yusuf, 2017, p. 62).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition and History of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the excessive fear or prejudice against Islam and Muslims. According to Linda De Clerq (1994), a phobia is an anxiety experienced by an individual when confronted with a feared situation or object, often resulting in avoidance behavior. Moordiningsih (2004) further elaborates that Islamophobia is the fear or anxiety experienced by individuals or social groups towards Islam and Muslims, based on negative views and prejudices that perceive Islam as an “inferior” religion unworthy of
altering societal values (Amalia & Haris, 2019, p. 73).

The history of modern Islamophobia can be traced back to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York. Following this attack, Muslims were frequently associated with global terrorism. On October 1, 2002, the United States released a list of individuals entering the country suspected of being terrorists (Moordiningsih, 2004, p. 73).

This event spurred similar actions in other countries, such as the Australian government’s response after the 2002 Bali bombings. Australia implemented anti-terrorism regulations and conducted raids on Muslim households. Dr. Kingsbury of Deakin University posited that the Australian government suspected a connection between Al Qaeda’s terrorist network and radical groups in Indonesia, with the belief that these networks infiltrated Australia through Indonesian students and residents (Republika, 2004).

However, Australia and Indonesia have forged a remarkable cooperation in international counter-terrorism efforts, notably through the Lombok Treaty. Australia has provided substantial assistance to Indonesia, particularly through the support of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in the investigation and resolution of the Bali bombings (Hardiana, Sushanti, & Fasisaka, 2014, p. 12; Windiani, 2018, p. 141). In the United Kingdom, post-September 11, 2001, numerous Muslims of South Asian descent were suspected and linked to terrorism, raising concerns about the threat of terrorism in the country.

The Emergence of Islamophobia in Indonesia

The Bali bombing on October 12, 2002, sparked widespread anxiety among the Indonesian populace, particularly within the Muslim community. The arrests of several Muslim individuals such as Amrozi, Ali Imron, and Abu Bakar Baasyir further exacerbated tensions. The fear extended beyond those apprehended, permeating the general Muslim community, especially among bearded men who worried about being targeted by security forces.

Islamophobia, as delineated in “A Challenge for Us All,” refers to a form of anti-Asian racism, with a specific focus on anti-Muslim sentiments. This term describes Islamophobia as a unique and complex form of racism. Particularly after the events of September 11, 2001, individuals began to judge Muslims based on religious markers rather than physical characteristics. For instance, the case of a Sikh man who was killed on September 15, 2001, because he was mistaken for a Muslim due to his appearance, underscores the perilous nature of Islamophobia in society (Abdillah and Putri 2022:2).

This phenomenon highlights how stereotypes and prejudices can lead to discriminatory and violent actions. Islamophobia, when intersecting with Indonesia, tends to distort the harmony of the country’s diversity, resulting in mutual blame among Muslims and a propensity for fanaticism within certain Islamic groups. This
has ignited multicultural conflicts through the adoption of Islamic values propagated by the West as a form of Islamophobia (Abdillah and Putri 2022:13; Apriliani et al. 2021:119).

Furthermore, the majority of Indonesians practice a moderate form of Islam, which suggests that harmonious and tolerant interfaith relations were achievable before the advent of Islamophobia. Therefore, Islamophobia poses a significant threat to the continuity of religious tolerance and harmony in Indonesia (Irpan and Widodo 2021). Additionally, the sweeping of entertainment venues by Islamic groups during Ramadan in Jakarta has heightened concerns among government officials and police, who view these groups as threats rather than merely allies in law enforcement. Concerns grew when Hidayat Nur Wahid, a Muslim, was elected as the chairman of the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), raising fears of potential changes to Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution regarding religious freedom.

These events reflect the complexity of the socio-political dynamics in Indonesia post-Bali bombing. The widespread anxiety and apprehension underscore the importance of dialogue and understanding between various societal groups and government institutions. A collective effort is needed to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all citizens, regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds. This study emphasizes the need for a deeper analysis of the impact of terrorist attacks on public perception and how inclusive policy strategies can mitigate social tensions in the future (Moordiningsih, 2004, pp. 73–74).

The author concludes that Islamophobia has serious repercussions for Indonesian society. This includes the potential for inter-religious conflict, restricted access to social and economic opportunities for Muslims, and a decline in Indonesia’s image on the global stage. Therefore, it is crucial to address Islamophobia earnestly through education, spiritual dialogue, and concrete actions to promote tolerance and interfaith harmony.

**Definition of Spiritual Education and Its Implementation Reality**

The definition of spiritual education varies among scholars. Ahmad Suhailah posits that spiritual education aims to instill a love for Allah in the hearts of learners, encouraging them to seek Allah’s pleasure in every word, action, and attitude, while avoiding behaviors that might incur His wrath (Hammad, 2004, p. 4). Abu Bakar Aceh describes spiritual education as an effort to build a relationship with Allah through education and training, enabling individuals to find and unite with Him (Aceh, 1996, p. 42). Sa’id Hawa emphasizes that spiritual education in Islam is a process of purifying the soul towards Allah SWT, eliminating negative traits and replacing them with positive ones in accordance with Sharia law (Aceh, 1996, p. 42).

Sa’id Hawa defines spiritual education in Islam as an endeavor to cleanse the soul towards Allah SWT. This involves purifying the soul from negative elements towards positive ones, from intellect that does not comply with Sharia law to intellect that adheres to it, from a hardened and diseased heart to a calm and healthy one, and from a
spirit that is distant from Allah SWT’s path, negligent in worship, and insincere in practice, towards a spirit that is knowledgeable (‘arif) of Allah SWT (Hawa, 1992, p. 69).

Based on these definitions, spiritual education can be summarized as a process aimed at instilling an awareness of the essence of all things originating from and returning to Allah SWT. This is done to ensure that every activity of the learners is based on Allah’s commandments and prohibitions to gain His pleasure.

In the Indonesian Dictionary, implementation is defined as execution or application. Usman (2002) states that implementation is an activity related to actions or mechanisms of a system. Implementation is not merely an activity but a planned action to achieve specific objectives (Rosad, 2019, p. 176). Therefore, the planning of spiritual education implementation must be conducted carefully to achieve its primary goal, which is to instill awareness of Allah’s pleasure as the foundation of life, so that the basis of executing life is Allah’s commandments and prohibitions.

Iceberg and U-Theory Analysis of Islamophobia and Spiritual Education in Indonesia

Iceberg and U-Theory Analysis is a method used to achieve social change or transformation by following a systematic approach. The process begins with understanding the actual facts of a situation rather than relying on assumptions, conjectures, or opinions. From there, it involves identifying related patterns, trends, and tendencies by observing attitudes, behaviors, and habits linked to these facts. The next step is to examine the underlying structures, including traditions, cultures, and governmental systems, that contribute to the observed facts. This analysis extends to exploring mental models, which require accountability for one’s attitudes and behaviors, by examining paradigms, perspectives, and mindsets that shape these mental models. Transforming these paradigms involves reconstructing mental models through thoughtful consideration, leading to the revision of policies, work programs, and reward systems. The process continues with reconstructing or creating new structures to change social behaviors, using supervision to ensure the effectiveness of these new structures. Finally, implementing new actions demonstrates that behaviors and attitudes have changed.

According to Adib Machrus, successful transformation of social behavior requires a comprehensive and sequential approach. He emphasizes that this process necessitates a systematic and gradual method. Moreover, he highlights that the same technique can be applied to address challenges such as the growing intolerance and religious radicalism in contemporary society. Therefore, a structured and sustainable approach is crucial in tackling complex issues within modern social dynamics (Machrus, 2020).

Islamophobia, defined as the fear or prejudice against Muslims, has become an increasingly troubling issue in Indonesia. This phenomenon is often triggered by a series of terrorist events where the perpetrators are frequently identified as Muslims exhibiting
certain physical traits, such as wearing veils, having thick beards, or donning cropped pants. This negative association results in the unfair stigmatization of the broader Muslim community. Currently, there is a widespread misunderstanding of Islamic teachings, which fosters Islamophobia. Historically, groups such as the Assassins, an offshoot of the Shia Isma’iliyyah, justified political assassinations against their opponents like the Seljuk dynasty in the 11th to 13th centuries. Some historians view these actions as a form of terrorism. Similarly, the Khawarij sect was known for its violence against those who did not share their religious or political views. These historical patterns contribute to the perception of Islam being linked to extremist actions, thereby reinforcing stereotypes and prejudice against Muslims with specific characteristics (Azra, 2002, pp. 72–73).

Ideological factors related to fundamentalism, radicalism, and religious fanaticism are catalysts for terrorists to engage in acts of terrorism. As revealed by the Bali bombers, Imam Samudra, Amrozi, and Ali Gufron, the spirit of jihad was their primary motivation. However, it is important to note that applying jihad through murder, bombing, hijacking, robbery, and intimidation is a clear example of terrorism that cannot be justified and is, in fact, considered a violation of Islamic law (Salenda, 2009, p. 82; Salenda, 2009, p. 105). In the context of Islamic law, terrorism is unequivocally prohibited. While jihad in Islam has positive connotations related to noble and righteous struggle, terrorism does not reflect true jihad. Instead, such actions contradict the humanitarian and moral values taught in Islam (Amalia & Haris, 2019, p. 79).

Regrettably, many media outlets tend to associate Islam with terrorism, creating the impression that Islam endorses jihad through terrorist actions. This misrepresentation contradicts the core principles of Islam, which emphasize peace, justice, and compassion. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that terrorism does not represent the true teachings of Islam, and such stereotypes only lead to injustice and discrimination against Muslims in general. Society needs a clear understanding of the true teachings of Islam, which stress that Islam, as conveyed by Prophet Muhammad, is a religion of mercy for all creation. Implicitly, the principles of Islam advocate for the happiness and well-being of all beings.

“...And We have not sent you, except as a mercy to all of creation.”

The concise interpretation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenag RI) elucidates Surah Al-Anbiya, verse 107, emphasizing that Allah did not send Prophet Muhammad to propagate Islam with the intent of annihilating disbelievers. Rather, his mission was to foster peace. Additionally, he was sent as a mercy to all creation. Protection, peace, and compassion emanate from the true and pure teachings and practices of Islam (Ministry of Religious Affairs RI, 2016:93).

This information provides a new perspective, clarifying that Islam is a religion
that promotes peace, thereby contradicting the actions of terrorism that claim jihad in the name of Islam. Spiritual education holds significant potential in addressing Islamophobia within Indonesian society. This education can be implemented both formally and informally by incorporating a proper understanding of Islamic teachings. National programs such as “Moderasi Beragama” can also serve as a robust foundation for this endeavor. With a structured and comprehensive approach, spiritual education can help society comprehend the true teachings of Islam, which emphasize peace, justice, and compassion, thereby reducing prejudice and discrimination against Muslims.

**CONCLUSION**

In Indonesia, the rise of Islamophobia correlates with a series of terrorist incidents, marked by a pervasive fear of Muslim individuals who wear niqabs, cadars, burqas, short trousers, and have thick beards. One of the root causes of this issue is the widespread misinterpretation of Islamic teachings, where terrorism is erroneously perceived as a true representation of Islam. In reality, terrorism is a result of deviant extremist interpretations. The concept of jihad, often misconstrued as a justification for terrorist acts, is actually an effort to strive for goodness and peace in accordance with authentic Islamic teachings.

To combat Islamophobia, a profound spiritual education about Islam’s peaceful teachings and humanitarian values is essential. The “Religious Moderation” program can serve as a crucial foundation for promoting a moderate and tolerant understanding of religious differences. Therefore, a systematic and sustained collaborative effort is required to enhance the understanding of Islam through inclusive and responsible spiritual education. This includes the integration of moderation values into educational curricula, teacher training, and public campaigns supported by robust empirical evidence.

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