

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

**Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad**

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Aceh, Indonesia

Email: [kamaruzzaman@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:kamaruzzaman@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Fitri Zulfidar Ibrahim**

Universitas Al-Washliyah Darussalam, Aceh, Indonesia

Email: [fitri.zulfidar@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:fitri.zulfidar@ar-raniry.ac.id)

**Qatrin Shabra Shatilla**

Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Email: [qatrin.shatilla@auw.edu.bd](mailto:qatrin.shatilla@auw.edu.bd)

### Abstract

*The study delves into the response of the younger generation of Muslims in Banda Aceh to contemporary issues in Indonesia. It aims to investigate their perspectives on religious tolerance and their attitudes towards socio-political issues in Indonesia. The author employed in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to gain insights into the mindset of the young Muslim populace in Banda Aceh. The study unearthed a notable shift in the acquisition of religious knowledge, primarily through digital mediums, leading to a diminished association of violence and extremism with religious discord. The young Muslims of Banda Aceh exhibit a substantial inclination towards tolerance and nationalism. However, they hold firm in their unwillingness to compromise when tolerance undermines their religious convictions. Furthermore, they assert that national issues intertwined with Islam do not sway their overarching outlook on the nation and state.*

**Keywords:** Muslim Youth; Aceh; social media; Youtuber; tolerance

### Abstrak

*Kajian ini merupakan studi kami tentang bagaimana respon generasi muda Muslim di Banda Aceh terhadap persoalan-persoalan kontemporer di Indonesia. Kajian ini mencoba melihat bagaimana pandangan mereka terhadap persoalan toleransi beragama dan sikap mereka terhadap persoalan-persoalan sosial politik di Indonesia. Untuk menjawab persoalan tersebut, maka wawancara mendalam dan FGD dilakukan oleh penulis untuk mendapatkan gambaran pemikiran Generasi Muda Muslim di Kota Banda Aceh. Dalam studi ini didapati bahwa bahwa telah terjadi pergeseran produksi pengetahuan keagamaan di kalangan mereka, yang serba digital dan cenderung tidak melihat kekerasan dan ekstremisme sebagai wujud untuk tidak setuju dengan persoalan-persoalan yang menyangkut keimanan mereka. Para generasi muda Muslim di Kota Banda Aceh tampaknya memiliki semangat toleransi dan nasionalisme yang cukup kuat. Akan tetapi, mereka tidak mau bernegosiasi ketika toleransi membawa pada aspek-*

---

\* Corresponding author, email: [kamaruzzaman@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:kamaruzzaman@ar-raniry.ac.id)

# THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

*aspek keyakinan mereka dalam beragama. Demikian pula, mereka meyakini bahwa isu-isu nasional yang selalu terkait dengan Islam tidak mengubah cara pandang mereka dalam berbangsa dan bernegara.*

**Kata Kunci:** Pemuda Islam; Aceh; Social media; Youtube; Toleransi

## مستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة دراسة لمعرفة كيف يتعامل الجيل الشاب من المسلمين في باندا آتشيه مع القضايا المعاصرة في إندونيسيا. تحاول هذه الدراسة معرفة وجهة نظرهم بشأن قضية التسامح الديني ومواقفهم تجاه القضايا الاجتماعية والسياسية في إندونيسيا. للإجابة على هذا السؤال، أجرى المؤلف مقابلات معمقة ومجموعة التركيز للحصول على نظرة عامة حول مواقف الجيل الشاب من المسلمين في مدينة باندا آتشيه. من خلال هذه الدراسة، تبين أن هناك تحولاً في إنتاج المعرفة الدينية عندهم، حيث أصبح كل شيء رقمياً، وبميل إلى عدم رؤية العنف والتطرف كشكل من أشكال الخلاف مع القضايا التي تخص إيمانهم. ويبدو أن الجيل الشاب من المسلمين في مدينة باندا آتشيه يتمتع بروح قوية إلى حد ما من التسامح والقومية. ومع ذلك، فإنهم غير مستعدين للتفاوض عندما يتعلق التسامح بجوانب من معتقداتهم الدينية. كما أنهم يعتقدون أن القضايا الوطنية التي ترتبط دائماً بالإسلام لا تتغير من نظرتهم في المواطنة

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** الشباب المسلم; آتشيه; وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي; يوتيوب; التسامح

## A. Introduction

The article aims to analyze the perceptions of Muslim youth in Banda Aceh City, Aceh province, on contemporary issues surrounding ideology, politics, and culture in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Despite the existence of studies examining the phenomenon of Muslim youth in Indonesia, with a focus on areas such as social media, identity, fashion, violence, and radicalism, there has been a dearth of research on Muslim youth in Aceh.<sup>2</sup> Existing studies have primarily centred on influential figures in Acehese society, such as former GAM combatants, religious scholars,<sup>3</sup> and political figures,<sup>4</sup> emphasizing matters related to religion, conflict, politics, identity,

<sup>1</sup>Moch Nur Ichwan, Arskal Salim, and Eka Srimulyani, "Islam and Dormant Citizenship: Soft Religious Ethno-Nationalism and Minorities in Aceh, Indonesia," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 31, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 215–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1780407>. R. Michael Feener, David Kloos, and Annemarie Samuels, eds., *Islam and the Limits of the State: Reconfiguration of Practices, Community and Authority in Contemporary Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). R. Michael Feener, "Social Engineering through Shari'a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da'wa in Contemporary Aceh," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 2715–311. Al Makin, "Islamic Acehese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor: A Study of the Narratives of the Attack on the Bethel Church in Penauyong Banda Aceh," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1–36.

<sup>2</sup> Mun'im Sirry, "Muslim Student Radicalism and Self-Deradicalization in Indonesia," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 31, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 241–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1770665>.

<sup>3</sup>Moch Nur Ichwan, "Ulama, Negara-Bangsa, Dan Etnonasionalisme Religius: Kasus Banda Aceh," in *Ulama Politik Dan Narasi Kebangsaan: Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan Di Kota-Kota Indonesia*, ed. Ibnu Burdah, Najib Kailani, and Munirul Ikhwani (Yogyakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam Demokrasi dan Perdamaian, 2019), 167–204.

<sup>4</sup>Bayu Satria Utama, "Asymmetric Decentralization in Aceh: Institutionalization of Conflict of Interest by Elites of GAM," *Jurnal Politik* 5, no. 1 (2019): 5–24.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

culture, socio-religious movements, and economics.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Aceh is frequently regarded as a social science and humanities laboratory in Indonesia.<sup>6</sup>

Thus far, the scholarly community has disregarded the emergence of a newly identified demographic in Aceh: Muslim youth. These individuals are active on various social media platforms, often emulating the actions of religious authorities online and expressing their perspectives on domestic and international affairs related to their religious identity. Despite this, detailed research on this emerging group is notably lacking. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly examine the experiences of Muslim youth in Aceh within the contexts of family, society, education, public spaces, and cyberspace.

This study aims to elucidate the responses of Muslim youths in Banda Aceh to prevalent societal issues. It is anticipated that such an investigation will underscore the significant contribution of Muslim youth to the contemporary perception of Aceh, notwithstanding the challenges associated with implementing Islamic law and the post-conflict socio-political milieu in the region. Moreover, the study will emphasize the Muslim Youth's reactions to national-level issues such as national ideology, the status of non-Muslims, and religious tolerance. Preceding this, it will provide an overview of the community's societal and educational background to facilitate an understanding of the formation of its spiritual foundations."

### ***Research Approach***

The data for this study were obtained from in-depth interviews and FGDs with several young people in Banda Aceh, ranging from those who were still in high school to those at the university level. In addition, the researchers also conducted several unstructured interviews with young people in coffee shops and their places of residence to understand their daily lives. The participants involved in this study comprised students from multiple schools and campuses in the city of Banda Aceh.

Specifically, the selected individuals were actively engaged in organizational activities within their respective educational institutions, embodying the role of school or campus activists. Initially, they underwent individual interviews to extract their perspectives and attitudes regarding various national issues pertinent to Islam, ideology, pluralism, and

---

<sup>5</sup>Ben Hilman, "Power-Sharing and Political Party Engineering in Conflict-Prone Society," *Conflict, Security, and Development* 12, no. 2 (2012): 149–69.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Perret, "Aceh as a Field For Ancient History Studies," in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly, and Anthony Reid (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 25–38.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

nationalism in Indonesia. These thorough interviews provided valuable insights into their familial backgrounds, daily engagements, and viewpoints on the issues mentioned earlier.

Subsequently, the author held a Focus Group Discussion convened at a coffee shop in Banda Aceh City, where participants were invited to address significant issues concerning the Young Muslim Generation in Indonesia, specifically on the presence of Islamic imagery in public spaces. The dialogue provided an opportunity for participants to engage in an exchange of views. The researchers documented key observations for subsequent data analysis.

The researcher meticulously documented and noted several issues that surfaced from the perspectives and thoughts of the respondents. These observations were crucial in uncovering their attitudes towards the practice of Islam among the young Muslim generation in Banda Aceh. Employing the "as it is" model, the researcher conducted an analysis that preserved the unfiltered nature of the respondents' viewpoints. This methodology aimed to present an authentic portrayal of the attitudes and responses of the young Muslim generation of Aceh towards contemporary issues in Indonesia at the time of the research.

### B. Result

The transmission of religious knowledge in Aceh, initially rooted in traditional practices, has undergone significant changes. Urban socio-religious dynamics have gradually influenced the evolution of *dayah* types,<sup>7</sup> which were previously confined to traditional and modern forms. The rising influence of religion as a catalyst for social change has prompted dayahs to adapt. Presently, five distinct types of *dayah* are prevalent in Aceh: First, Traditional Dayah Salafi, adhering to conventional systems akin to general *dayahs* in Aceh, upholding the province's historical dayah tradition. Second, there have been many Salafi-oriented *dayahs* with modern management frameworks, exemplified by the administration of MUDI al-Aziziyah Dayah in Samalanga. Some such *dayahs* have even established universities, like Ma'had Aly. Third, Modern-dayahs adopted the Gontor pesantren system, offering education encompassing religious and general sciences. Fourth, Integrated Islamic boarding schools emphasize Quranic memorization within their programs. Fifth, *Dayahs* reportedly contributed to the propagation of Wahhabism in Aceh after the Tsunami.

---

<sup>7</sup>On *dayah*, see Mukhlisuddin Ilyas et al., "Leadership Transformation: Study of Islamic Boarding School (Dayah) in Aceh Province of Indonesia," *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education* 22, no. 2 (2019): 1–5. Nasir Usman et al., "The Implementation of Learning Management at the Institution of Modern Dayah in Aceh Besar District," *Journal of Physics* 1175 (2019): 1–9. Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, Miswari, and Sabaruddin, "Preserving Identity through Modernity: Dayah al-Aziziyah and Its Negotiations with Modernity in Aceh," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 211–32, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.003.2.06>. Huwaida, "Change and Development in the Acehese Dayah Salafi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 3, no. 2 (2015): 279–94.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

Currently, the integrated Islamic education system mandates Quran memorization for students. Previously, only a fraction of parents enrolled their children in the fourth variant of *dayah*. However, in the aftermath of the tsunami, there has been a notable surge in parental preference for the fourth model of *dayah*. Many educational institutions have embraced the fourth-pattern system, compelling students to undertake Quranic recitation and memorization. This predisposition has engendered a burgeoning interest in Islamic education in urban locales, particularly within Banda Aceh.

Additionally, there is a discernible incline among parents towards enrolling their children from kindergarten through integrated Islamic elementary schools, intending to integrate them into Islamic boarding schools offering comprehensive programs. Some third-type *dayah* establishments have also endeavoured to effectuate a shift towards the fourth model of *dayah*. This transition has resulted in unwavering enthusiasm among students for the fourth model of *dayah*.

The impact experienced by several respondents indicates that life at an Islamic boarding school profoundly affected their spiritual development during their time on campus.<sup>8</sup> The subsequent notes address the inclination of parents to desire their children to attain the status of hafiz:

Kausar is the second of four children born into a devout family. His father is a civil servant at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, while his mother is a homemaker. Both parents advocate for their children's attendance at religious schools and aspire for them to become hafiz. This aspiration is evident in Kausar's eldest brother, who became a Hafiz, and Kausar, who has memorized eight *juzs*. Kausar's younger sister attended a Hafiz school, and his younger brother received an education at an Islamic Elementary School (MIN). In addition to his religious education, Kausar completed his junior high school studies at Madrasah Ulumul Qur'an in Lambaro, Aceh Besar.<sup>9</sup>

In the province of Aceh, it is widely acknowledged that early religious education plays a crucial role in young Muslims' development before they pursue higher education at the university level. The experiences shared by several respondents underscore this notion:

The societal circumstances of Ikhsan's family indicate that his father is engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits, specifically operating a food stall. At the same time, his mother is employed as a civil servant within a government agency. Their current place of residence is South Aceh. Both parents regularly participate in Quranic study sessions on Wednesday evenings, while Ikhsan is an alumnus of the Islamic Boarding School in Nagan Raya.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Riska Amelia, "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Kausar, "Field Notes," 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Nurul Ikhsan, "Interview," 2017.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

Amel is an alumna of Babun Najah in Ulee Kareng, Banda Aceh. Given the educational choices made for their children, this family can be identified as religious, as they have opted to enrol their children in Islamic boarding schools.<sup>11</sup> Suhail's extracurricular activities encompass assisting his father in establishing the study of the Qur'an in Neusu and actively participating in Qur'an recitation alongside his family members at the dayah of GURAH (Gunung Rahmat) in Peukan Bada, Aceh Besar, under the guidance of Abu Hamdan.<sup>12</sup>

The integration of religion into the education system is increasingly observable within contemporary societies. Even in educational institutions recognized for their adherence to international standards rather than religious doctrine, there exists a phenomenon known as "sharing time." This practice entails educators attentively receiving student narratives that may draw from religious literature or contemporary digital platforms such as YouTube and other social media channels.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, within religious schools, activities such as "*Kajum*" (Friday Study) and "*Nojum*" (Watch Friday) have surged in popularity. These activities involve the examination of religious discourses and viewing presentations by Islamic figures like Khaled Basalamah, Hannan Attaki, Felix Siau, and Abdul Shomad.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, educators illustrate the content of these programs to participating students.

Furthermore, a respondent elaborates on the religious studies conducted at the college level:

The religious program within the Student Executive Board (BEM) at Syiah Kuala University is under the direct oversight of the "Minister of Religion." Typically, religious activities centre on the study and are conducted weekly on Fridays and Saturdays, led by an ustad from Baitur Rahman Mosque. These study sessions are open to the public, and all individuals are encouraged to participate.<sup>15</sup>

The importance of this circumstance becomes evident when information and communication technology (ICT) plays a fundamental role in the comprehension of religious principles. Individuals gravitate towards "YouTube preachers" for accessibility, lack of condescension, and scholarly discourse. It can be contended that an increasing portion of religious knowledge is derived from digital sources, giving rise to the concept of Digital

---

<sup>11</sup> Riska Amelia, Interview, September 28, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Suhail Gifari, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Intan Kumalasari, Darliana Sormin, and Muhammad Irsan Barus, "Celebrity 'Ulama': Contiguity Religion and Popular Culture," *Britain International of Humanities and Social Sciences Journal* 1, no. 2 (2019): 124–31. Ferdi Arifin, "Mubalig Youtube Dan Komodifikasi Konten Dakwah," *Al-Balagh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 1 (2019): 91–120, <https://doi.org/10.22515/balagh.v4i1.1718>.

<sup>14</sup> On them, see generally Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>. Nor Latifah and Romario, "Trendsetter Muballigh Di Medsos: Analisis Framing Instagram Felix Siau Dan Hanan Attaki," *Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Masyarakat* 15, no. 1 (2019): 36–48, <https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v15i1.1150>.

<sup>15</sup> Suhail Gifari, Interview, Oktober 2017.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

Religious-Based Knowledge (DRBK).<sup>16</sup> The idea of DRBK presupposes that individuals assimilate and practice their faith based on a digitally formulated knowledge framework. The internet is a prolific resource, facilitating active religious engagement, irrespective of an individual's devoutness.

The passage discusses the impact of role models on the younger generation, particularly young public figures. It recounts the wedding of Muzammil and Sonia on Friday, July 7, 2017, in which the couple, joined by thousands of attendees near a mosque in Banda Aceh, attracted attention due to their attire. Sonia's choice to wear a niqab during the ceremony garnered significant public interest, leading to discussions among netizens on social media platforms. This prompted observations that Sonia's attire may have influenced a burgeoning trend among the city's youth. Notably, Muzammil, dressed in a bow tie suit, did not exude the appearance of an Ustaz (Islamic religious leader) during the event, sparking further debate.

The influence of role models on young people is significant, especially when the role models are also young. For instance, Muzammil, a young Muslim and an alumnus of Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), married Sonia on Friday, July 7 2017. The wedding ceremony occurred at a mosque in Banda Aceh, and many young people attended.<sup>17</sup> The marriage ceremony is scheduled to take place immediately after the Subuh prayer. Muzammil's wife will be veiled in a niqab, which will be the focal point of the event, while Muzammil will be dressed in a bow-tie suit. The ceremony is expected to be attended by thousands of people.<sup>18</sup> During the marriage, Muzammil does not seem like *Ustaz*. Netizens engaged in discussions about the attire of Muzammil and his wife during a specific event. An informant indicated that the adoption of the *niqab* by Muzammil's wife at the wedding seemed to have instigated a new fashion trend among the city's youth.

---

<sup>16</sup>See also Paul K. McClure, "Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 3 (2017): 481–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12365>. Marcus Moberg et al., "From Socialization to Self-Socialization? Exploring the Role of Digital Media in the Religious Lives of Young Adults in Ghana, Turkey, and Peru," *Religion* 49, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 240–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2019.1584353>. Dindin Solahuddin and Moch Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority," *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2020): 19, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010019>. Eric D. Rackley, "'Blessings and Friends and Knowledge': Environmental Motivations for Religious Literacy," *Religious Education*, September 17, 2020, 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2020.1821303>.

<sup>17</sup>Hadri Hasan, "Contemporary Religious Movement in Indonesia: A Study of Hijrah Festival in Jakarta in 2018," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 230–65.

<sup>18</sup>On *niqab*, see Iffath Unissa Syed, "Hijab, Niqab, and the Religious Symbol Debates: Consequences for Health and Human Rights," *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 2020, 1–16. Fathayatul Husna, "Niqab Squad Jogja Dan Muslimah Era Kontemporer Di Indonesia," *Al-Bayan: Media Kajian Dan Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah* 24, no. 1 (2018): 1–28. Siti Ruhaihi Dzuhayatin, "Islamism and Nationalism Among Niqabis Women in Egypt and Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 49–77.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

The religious influence of the preacher, including other key figures, is widely recognized and vigorously discussed in online spaces, particularly concerning Habib Rizieq Shihab. A recent study revealed that most respondents were familiar with Habib Rizieq Shihab, who held the position of Chief within the Islamic Defender Front in Indonesia.<sup>19</sup> They didn't care about the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), but Habib Rizieq's image became significant to them. The same thing happened with the figure of Abdul Somad from Pekanbaru, who was phenomenal in recent years. The students also mentioned being familiar with Abdul Somad's religious teachings via social media, especially YouTube.<sup>20</sup> Another significantly influential individual was Hannan Attaki, a young preacher from Central Aceh (Takengon) who advocated the concept of "Hijrah." Within Banda Aceh, the younger generation and students greatly admired this figure. Notably, the idea of "Hijrah" profoundly influenced the religious awareness of the youth.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the *niqab* phenomenon in some of the younger generation in Banda Aceh is caused mainly by the results of their learning through social media. However, for those who are not ready for the *niqab*, there will be a phenomenon of female students wearing masks. According to some participants and female students, the mask is a process towards the *niqab*. However, initially, the mask was more related to health reasons.<sup>22</sup> Some participants were female students who had their views on the *niqab*, which, according to him, was a style of just Islam. This is proven, according to him, many who wear *niqabs* and then like to selfies and show eyeliners on social media. According to him, this behaviour is far from Islamic values. Therefore, he said there is no solid foundation to justify the *niqab's* behaviour as fashion.<sup>23</sup>

The role models in religion, charismatic figures at first in a changing society in cyberspace, are a landscape of the imagination of young Muslims in Banda Aceh. In searching YouTube and discussing on WhatsApp, it appears that the "YouTube Preachers"<sup>24</sup> are trying to

---

<sup>19</sup>Siti Chuzaemah, JM. Muslimin, and Hamka Hasan, "The Concept of Nahy Munkar and Islam: Study on Habib Rizieq's Legal Thought" (Jakarta: EAI, 2020), 1–12. See also Maurisa Zinira, "The Movement of Islamic Defenders Front and Its Socio Political Influence on Indonesian Society," *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 2 (2015): 245–63, <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v5i2.578>.

<sup>20</sup>Dony Arung Triantoro, "Ustaz Youtube: Ustaz Abdul Somad Dan Dinamika Perubahan Otoritas Keagamaan," *Penamas: Jurnal Penelitian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 33, no. 2 (2020): 205–25.

<sup>21</sup>On this concept, see Rahmad Hidayat, Muhammad Sholihin, and Deri Wanto, "The Hijrah Communities and Religious Superficiality: Ideology and Religiosity of the Islamic Hijrah Communities on Social Media," *Journal of Population and Social Studies* 29 (2021): 118–38. Suci Wahyu Fajriani and Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi, "Hijrah Islami Milenial Berdasarkan Paradigma Beorientasi Identitas," *SosioGlobal: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Sosiologi* 3, no. 2 (2019): 77–88.

<sup>22</sup>Khairani, "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

<sup>23</sup>Lia, "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

<sup>24</sup>Triantoro, "Ustaz Youtube: Ustaz Abdul Somad Dan Dinamika Perubahan Otoritas Keagamaan." Arifin, "Mubalig Youtube Dan Komodifikasi Konten Dakwah."



**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

strengthen the basis of religious understanding and behaviour in the contemporary era. The response to this present society can be included in four terms. Firstly, to enhance Islamic identity towards the triumph of Islam in the end times, so that the information traffic on social media sometimes tries to see the phenomenon of the rise of Islam at the end of time. Secondly, begin to understand how the existence of the Islamic Ummah that is being miserable or miserable by a regime, both in Indonesia and outside the country. This situation then emerges to respond to the contestation of Islam with other religions. Third, strengthen individual and social piety to awaken the solidarity of the brotherhood of Muslims, so that sometimes comes to a creative response that has a high tension on the behaviour of Non-Muslims towards the Islamic Ummah. Fourth, prepare yourself with all the possibilities if there is a clash with groups that do not have the same religious understanding.

The issues mentioned above represent a series of religious adaptations among young Muslims. For instance, the response to the righteousness of role models in cyberspace has been overwhelmingly positive. If the Young Marriage Movement were to gain traction among students, it could foster a sense of solidarity aimed at supporting the Islamic Ummah, promoting Islamic attire, and establishing a "safe zone." The purpose of "the safe zone" is that students from outside Banda Aceh assume this positive behaviour will create a comfortable and safe religious atmosphere for them and their parents in the village<sup>25</sup> because if it is not as per the rules, the students may fall into negative things. Therefore, a "safe zone" in religion is a prerequisite for the righteousness of individuals in Banda Aceh, so they compete to enter a "safe zone" through role models.

Meanwhile, based on information about "YouTube preachers" figures, some participants tried to classify religious groups among young people in the city, including Khalid Basalamah, Habib Rizieq, Abu Janda, and Salafi groups. The presence of this group is more because of the dynamics in cyberspace, not of the reality of religious life among the people of Aceh, which is what the informant saw on the impact of the social media phenomenon on youth in Banda Aceh.<sup>26</sup> Each of these groups has a character in the opinion that sometimes leaves religious values that have local wisdom. Meanwhile, from the socio-religious aspects that emerged among the youth, some attempted to make the following classification:<sup>27</sup> Some young people were "left" and did not want to be involved in religious affairs. This group is similar to

---

<sup>25</sup> "Focus Group Discussion with PMII Activist," 2017.

<sup>26</sup> See also Eva F. Nisa, "Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 24–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1416758>.

<sup>27</sup> Ramli Cibro, "Focus Group Discussion," 2019.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

Muhammad's opinion of the head of KAMMI Aceh, who said they were "canteen/coffee shop college students."<sup>28</sup> Secondly, the generation of Mosque Youth who were only concerned with religious narratives and devout worship but were less critical and obedient to teachers became a tool for seniors. Thirdly, *Partai Aceh* (PA) youth is a new generation of combatant children with political narratives,<sup>29</sup> but the direction of understanding religious issues is not yet known. This last group now began to rise. They are the children of former GAM combatants whose parents were involved in the conflict in which some of them lost their parents. In this study, religious narratives were found more in the second number of youth groups.

In this context, individuals endeavour to represent religious groups in various ways. Some interpret this behaviour as a symbolic embrace of Islam as a way of life. Specific physical manifestations, such as donning a niqab, wearing all-black attire, and sporting a beard or messy hair, are perceived as commendable reflections of commitment to Islamic teachings. Moreover, from a symbolic perspective, these representations may indicate the contemporary appeal of adhering to Islamic principles. However, there are instances where individuals overlook religious values, resulting in attire that contradicts the concept of "Sunnah".

Furthermore, there are instances of inadequate observance of religious rituals.<sup>30</sup> All this appears because of the innovation in da'wah in the current era, so those religious concepts are attached to figures who are role models. An FGD participant expressed his thoughts as follows:

In contemporary society, there is a notable increase in public consciousness towards religion, paralleled by educational advancements. An emerging trend is the growing interest in Islam among younger demographics, necessitating a refinement approach to religious outreach. Accompanying this trend is the promotion of religious practices under the practices of the Prophet (sunnah) and active involvement in the Islamic movement. Scholars play a pivotal role in shaping the interpretation of religion, particularly among the youth. Innovative methods of religious outreach, or da'wah, are instrumental in fostering an understanding that Islam embodies simplicity and beauty. Noteworthy contemporary approaches to da'wah include the advocacy of Salafi-Wahabi thought by Khaled Basalamah, Hannan Attaki's emphasis on the concept of Hijrah, and Salim M's literature on early marriage. Additionally, the exemplification of the straightforwardness of Islam by Channel Darul Alquran is influential—this diversity of methodologies in da'wah endeavours to facilitate a more profound comprehension of Islam.<sup>31</sup>

Related to non-social factors that influence the way of thinking is how to image "friends" and "opponents" in religion, as well as exceptionally social and religious political

---

<sup>28</sup> Tuanku Muhammad, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>29</sup> On Partai Aceh, see Moch Nurhasim, "Dominasi Partai Aceh Pasda MoU Helsinki," *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 9, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>30</sup> Amelia, "Focus Group Discussion," n.d.

<sup>31</sup> Fathur, "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

problems that affect how to think and decide to create a "safety zone." Regarding non-Muslim leaders, some respondents and interviewees have their perceptions. Nadia, one of the students, said as follows:

Alhamdulillah, Ahok was defeated in the election because Jakarta is the centre of Indonesia. Ahok is Chinese and will destroy Indonesia. Although he defended Indonesia, his behaviour was contradictory and tended to oppress the natives. If it is a Muslim leader, then he will protect the Islamic Ummah. Therefore, we must have a filter when choosing leaders.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding non-Muslim leaders, I strongly reject that because it has been forbidden in the Qur'an, regardless of the religious conditions in Indonesia, which has five other religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucius, Christianity, and others). However, this does not legalize the rights of Muslims, who are obliged to choose leaders from Muslims themselves.<sup>33</sup>

In essence, the opportunity to make non-Muslims become leaders becomes a point of self-determination among Islamic youth in Banda Aceh.<sup>34</sup> As seen from the following interview:

Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population, so Muslims should lead it because if non-Muslims take the lead, then the social conditions of the community will be chaotic which is because the leader cannot adjust to the customs, norms, and laws that have prevailed in the community and cannot control the people with a mindset based on their beliefs.<sup>35</sup>

Women being leaders are not following the verses of the Qur'an, but when compared with non-Muslim men, women are better in the lead if there are no more Muslim men who can be leaders.<sup>36</sup>

Some accept Non-Muslim leaders, as shown in the following quote:

I accept non-Muslim leaders as long as the program proposed is under its implementation and does not conflict with Islam. Moreover, with Indonesia's diverse conditions, citizens have the same rights and obligations, including leadership.<sup>37</sup>

In terms of tolerance, the opinion of the Aceh Youth can be grouped into four groups. Tolerance is an integral component of diversity. The group perceives tolerance as an attitude of mutual respect for religious differences. They establish a connection between tolerance and diversity, considering the diverse nature of Indonesian society, and they identify *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as the symbol of Indonesian unity. His thoughts are:

---

<sup>32</sup> Nadia Rizqina, "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Amelia, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>34</sup> Jaili Farman, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Ambia Samsuri, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>36</sup> Jujur Madi, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Fuad, "Interview," n.d.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

Indonesia is diverse, as is the case with *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, where various ethnicities, cultures, and religions exist. Hence, our attitude towards the existence of churches and non-Muslim neighbours is mutual respect for one another. Likewise, the Indonesian state is led by non-Muslims, and it cannot be denied because it returns to *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, so if we demand that Muslims lead our rights, then the rights of non-Muslim Indonesian citizens will be ignored.<sup>38</sup>

This view indicates tolerance is more directed at mutual respect for different beliefs. If so, tolerance in this interpretation is limited to recognizing differences in beliefs: Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucius, Christianity, and other non-Islamic. While the flow of understanding in Islam itself, Muhammadiyah, Ahmadiyah, Shia, Ahlus Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah, etc, lacks the recognition of the youth. As a result, responses to these differences will tend to be reactive.

Secondly, tolerance is seen as an image of Islamic Ummah to Non-Muslims. It means that the mission of Muslim tolerance towards non-Muslims is to maintain the positive image of Islam with the hope that the attitude can attract non-Muslims to convert to Islam, which can be seen from the statements below:

Tolerance must be built, and as Muslims, we must maintain ethics in religion so that adherents do not poorly see the image of Islam of other faiths. He added that it is inappropriate for Muslims to apply anarchism that can harm non-Muslims, be it burning houses of worship or others, because we may defend and preserve religion and hold fast to those things. We are considered carriers of problems and not good at applying religion.<sup>39</sup>

Churches and non-Muslim neighbours are not a problem as long as they do not disturb us. Besides, we are *ukhrijan binnas* and ordered to spread Islam. How do they want to know us if we stay away from them? We should understand them first or approach them so that they are interested in us. God willing, in the end, we can attract them to our religion.<sup>40</sup>

Muslims should show good examples of tolerance for adherents of other religions, and the tolerance referred to here is the tolerance that does not come out of Islamic rules. As long as they do not disturb us, we must also respect their religion.<sup>41</sup>

Thirdly, tolerance is seen as necessary because this is how to maintain harmony. However, tolerance is still limited by Islamic Sharia. As long as it does not break the provisions, tolerance must be. Opinions related to this are:

Indonesia has a variety of languages, ethnicities, and religions. Tolerance is the solution to maintaining harmony.<sup>42</sup>

As long as Sharia is permitted and there is no harm in associating with non-Muslims, as long as their teachings are not followed.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Rahmadsyah, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Nabil Syafiq, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Ikrima Qusruni, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Nadia Rizqina, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Ikhsan, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Putri Nur Yasmin, "Interview," 2017.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

Fourthly, tolerance is part of the Islamic teaching system. It means that tolerance is an ethic that is taught in Islam. In this case, the youth said:

Islam is a tolerant religion, and Prophets are tolerant of non-Muslims living. As stated in a story, Rasulullah was stoned every day by his neighbours, but the next day, when the person did not throw stones at him again, the Prophet asked about his existence and turned out to be non-Muslims were sick. The Prophet rushed to visit them, which should be exemplified by Muslims today, that it must apply both to non-Muslims as long as they do not disturb the benefits of Ummah or defile our religion. The Prophet was never angry if his personality was disturbed but would act decisively when the people and Islam were disturbed.<sup>44</sup>

A comprehensive Islam that teaches tolerance and mutual care. The limit of tolerance is that if we feel safe, as long as they do not disturb us, we should not deal with them (religious, physical, nationalist / all aspects), but if they disturb us, we must defend ourselves.<sup>45</sup>

Tolerance is part of Islam, mutual respect beliefs. Likewise, the acceptance of non-Muslim leaders in the Indonesian context is legitimate when viewed by the majority of Muslims. It is not appropriate because they are ordered to choose Muslim leaders in the context of the Muslim religion.<sup>46</sup>

Islam teaches us tolerance by respecting other religions in terms of interaction with them, not violating the provisions of shari'a, for example, following their worship activities.<sup>47</sup>

Based on the attitude of the youth, it appears that their concept of tolerance is confined to interreligious tolerance. However, there seems to be a lack of attention to the varying interpretations of religious texts and the resulting development of diverse Islamic laws within the Islamic community. Zulfata emphasized that it is crucial to practice tolerance apart from theological concerns. While our theological beliefs may constrain us, it is imperative to mutually respect one another during social interactions in a multicultural society.<sup>48</sup> Based on the provided statement, tolerance should be expanded to include a broader range of differences, such as beliefs, understanding, and religious practices.

Additionally, tolerance is a direct result of the diverse nature of society, encompassing cultural, ethnic, and religious aspects. This diversity necessitates the provision of equal rights and obligations for all citizens, a principle particularly ingrained in Indonesia's national ethos of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. An examination of the prior discussion reveals that the diverse

---

<sup>44</sup> Ambia Samsuri, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Andika Saputra, "Interview," 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Fathur Hadyan, "Focused Interview," 2017.

<sup>47</sup> Nazela Humaira, "Focused Interview," 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Zulfata, "Focused Interview," 2017.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

perspectives of the youth predominantly revolve around religious diversity, a notion corroborated by Ambia:

Indonesia's social system is characterized by pluralism, recognizing all religions while upholding the state's rights. Advocating for Islam to become the official law of the country could potentially spark new tensions given the historical context of Indonesia's struggle for independence, which involved non-Muslims as well. With Indonesia's majority Muslim population, some argue for Muslim leadership, expressing concerns that non-Muslim leadership might lead to social upheaval. They posit that leaders from different religious backgrounds may struggle to adapt to prevailing customs, norms, and laws and may face challenges governing people with divergent belief systems.

The passage underscores the constitutional recognition and protection of pluralism in Indonesia while acknowledging the predominant Muslim presence and the country's adherence to a democratic system. Furthermore, it suggests several key points: Firstly, tolerance between religions is confined to social interactions within the bounds of Sharia law. Secondly, the diversity of society does not automatically warrant non-Muslim leadership. Thirdly, it emphasizes that religious zeal should not serve as a justification for intolerance.

The form of nationalism of the youth was also shown by their recognition of the ideology of Pancasila. During the rise of issues that question the validity of Pancasila as the state ideology, the youth still believe it and even pair it up with Islam. The views of youth can be illustrated as follows:

Pancasila ideology does not conflict with Islam and contains the interests of Muslims. Even though it is mentioned in an Islamic state, Pancasila contains Islamic values.<sup>49</sup>

Islamic law does not have to be the official law of the state because Indonesia is *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, and Pancasila's ideology represents the application of Islamic law.<sup>50</sup>

Indonesia is in Pancasila, especially the first principle, Belief in the One and Only God (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*), which does not contradict Islam.<sup>51</sup>

Indonesia already has the ideology of Pancasila as the country's foundation, and Ulema has designed this ideology in such a way as to fit the diversity that exists in Indonesia. Therefore, if one wants to make Indonesia an Islamic state that fully implements Islamic law, it will not be difficult because of the *Bhinnekaan* (diversity) of Indonesia.<sup>52</sup>

Pancasila has been designed to suit a religious state. So, it is forced Islam must be the basis of the country. It will be difficult. Furthermore, Islam must adapt to the environment and not have to force *Khilafah* so that people outside of Islam are interested in Muslims.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Fuad, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>50</sup> Ikhsan, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>51</sup> Fifi, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>52</sup> Andika, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>53</sup> Fathur Hadyan, "Interview," n.d.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

The perspectives mentioned earlier demonstrate the fervent nationalism of young individuals in Indonesia as they express their steadfast commitment to embracing Pancasila as the nation's cornerstone. Moreover, they assert that Pancasila is imbued with Islamic principles. Notably, Zulfata's viewpoint underscores that:

Pancasila holds significant importance and warrants further development and implementation for the people of Indonesia. It interprets universal Islamic law and does not present conflicts with theological matters or religious beliefs. Misconceptions of Pancasila favouring non-Muslim individuals stem from a lack of understanding. It is crucial to aid individuals in discerning the distinction between the absence of Pancasila integration and its influential prowess, which tends to evoke scepticism.

The critique of Pancasila does not target the principle itself but rather its implementation, which appears to demonstrate partiality towards specific interests. This partiality is discernible in Indonesia's legislative output, policies, and law enforcement, as it tends to favour individuals in positions of power while placing those in less influential positions at a disadvantage. As such, it is not unreasonable to contend that:

Pancasila is the basis of the country 50% is under Islam, and 50% is not appropriate. Indeed, in Pancasila, there is a concept of justice, but justice results from the temptation of five religions, not pure justice from Islam. In addition, I also do not agree with the Garuda symbol; if it can be changed with a symbol that is under our religion, but for now, it is impossible to do even though most of us are Muslim. However, only some Muslims understand Islam, so there is a plan to convert Muslims into genuine Muslims.<sup>54</sup>

The statement above stated that Pancasila was not the source of all the political turmoil in Indonesia. However, it must be recognized that Pancasila has not fully adopted Islamic values. However, the phrase "Islamize Muslims" is the keyword for the real problem, in which Pancasila is the basis of the state, which is the basis of the Constitution, policies, regulations, and the application of the law in Indonesia, the lameness cannot be scapegoated, but the contamination of policymakers, regulators and other political elites causes Pancasila to appear to favour specific interests.

The perspectives of Aceh's youth regarding Islamism are discernible through their views on the ideal concept of jihad, the validation of violence in the name of religion, influential jihadist figures, and the degree of enthusiasm towards a specific sect. When delving into the concept of jihad, a range of perspectives emerges. If categorized, multiple interpretations

---

<sup>54</sup> Ikrima Qusruni, "Interview," n.d.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

surface: jihad as a missionary endeavour,<sup>55</sup> a striving to advance Islam through education,<sup>56</sup> a movement to promote virtuousness,<sup>57</sup> and actions to safeguard Islam and the Muslim community.<sup>58</sup> Although diverse perspectives on jihad have emerged among the youth, there is a prevailing consensus that the contemporary notion of jihad does not encompass violent measures. This stance is attributed to several reasons, chief among them being the imperative to avoid warfare in the name of *jihad*:

- a. Several international organizations have recently been vested with the authority and a vision to foster global peace.<sup>59</sup>
- b. Jihad, recognized in Islam as *jihad fisabilillah*, is intended for benevolence. Hence, any form of violence leading to harm cannot be considered jihad.<sup>60</sup>
- c. Jihad can be executed through the provision of both tangible and intangible support to our oppressed brethren.<sup>61</sup>
- d. Currently, the most crucial form of jihad is the endeavour to attain proficiency in knowledge.<sup>62</sup>
- e. The legitimization of jihad is indicated by the mutual benefits derived.<sup>63</sup>

The concept of jihad provides insight into the perspective of Aceh's youth, who recognize that we are no longer in an era of war. They perceive numerous avenues through which peace can be attained and acknowledge the opportunity to serve as agents of the divine will. This perspective underscores the unequivocal rejection of violence in any manifestation by the youth of Aceh, as evidenced by their collective sentiments:

It is inappropriate to engage in physical conflict akin to the period of Rasulullah. The concept of jihad is better actualized through intellectual discourse and knowledge acquisition. Through critical thought and knowledge acquisition, we are empowered to identify vulnerabilities. In Islam, there is no rationale to pursue alternative avenues if matters can be deliberated through open discussion.<sup>64</sup> The concept of jihad in Islam does not inherently advocate violence. However, in contemporary contexts involving incidents such as church burnings, riots, demonstrations, or other forms of violence, Muslims may find themselves compelled to engage in defensive actions due to perceived threats arising from religious factors or the interests of religious communities.<sup>65</sup> Jihad encompasses a range of methods, with warfare serving as the ultimate recourse when all other avenues have been exhausted and all parties remain

---

<sup>55</sup> Fuad and Rahmatsyah, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>56</sup> Ikrima Qusruni, "Focused Interview," n.d.

<sup>57</sup> Viona Rofika, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>58</sup> Fifi and Suhail Gifari, "Focused Interview," n.d.

<sup>59</sup> Khairul Fuad, Interview, September 20, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Fifi, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>61</sup> Andika, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>62</sup> Ikrima, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>63</sup> Ikrima, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>64</sup> Ikrima, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>65</sup> Rahmadsyah, "Interview," n.d.



**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

unresponsive. It is a responsive measure to the suppression of our brethren and our religious beliefs.<sup>66</sup>

The statements mentioned above suggest that a significant portion of young individuals in Aceh do not align with the extremist activities associated with specific figures such as Amrozi, Usama bin Laden, and other organizations. However, youth are sceptical about the credibility of these figures due to their perception that the media disseminates information without genuine substantiation, often termed a "hoax."<sup>67</sup> Some assert that non-Muslim entities deliberately provoke Muslim resentment, inciting violence. For instance, the controversy surrounding the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in cartoons was opposed by Muslims<sup>68</sup> despite being created by Muslims. Furthermore, concerning the fervour for enforcing Islamic law, students tend to segregate into two categories: those who assert neutrality by refraining from aligning with either faction<sup>69</sup> and those who affiliate themselves with Nahdhatul Ulama.<sup>70</sup>

### **C. Discussion**

This phenomenon is prevalent among the younger demographic, reflecting a solid inclination to adhere to Islamic doctrines. However, young Muslims also perceive a sense of vulnerability in the current context. This circumstance gives rise to significant concerns. Network patterns are discernible in three distinct groups. The first is an underground network, less conspicuous among Islamic youth but prevalent among activists of Islamic organizations and specific figures engaged in fundraising operations, primarily concentrated in Aceh. Their emergence became pronounced after the Tsunami, with the mandate to implement Islam comprehensively in line with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Individuals familiar with this underground network have identified it as somewhat impervious to infiltration due to its reliance on principles of trust and recommendations from existing associates. Moreover, some individuals within the network exhibit reticence towards direct engagement with unfamiliar entities yet readily establish connections when endorsed by a recognized member.

The second group emphasizes leveraging the power of social media to engage in ongoing religious discussions and address contemporary issues about perceived threats to Islam and the anticipated resurgence of Islam in the latter days. Islamic youth play a pivotal role in

---

<sup>66</sup> Suhail, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>67</sup> Rahmadsyah, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>68</sup> Suhail, "Interview," n.d.

<sup>69</sup> Rahmadsyah et al., "Focused Interview," n.d.

<sup>70</sup> "Interview Focused with Dayah Ishafuddin and Fatih Senior High School Students," n.d.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

reinforcing "safe zones," addressing perceived threats, and fostering a sense of spiritual awakening. These three focal points serve as the cornerstone to understanding the operational framework of this group.

The third group operates as intermediaries, akin to connectors, fostering relationships among diverse layers of religious and community leaders, and remains present wherever religious issues manifest. In Banda Aceh, several individuals actively participate in these endeavours, garnering support from many organizations. Specific individuals hold multiple roles within Islamic organizations, consistently appearing at events as representatives of these entities.

The characteristics of the identified network patterns underscore the susceptibility of the younger generation to recruitment by underground networks, potentially exerting substantial influence over their religious attitudes and behaviours.

In Aceh, there is a discernible divergence in the attitudes of the youth towards others. There is a reluctance to advocate for tolerance, particularly in matters of faith. Conversely, a more receptive disposition towards differences exists in areas unrelated to faith, contingent upon their comprehension of the other party. Interviews have revealed a lack of hatred towards the Chinese, primarily attributed to the absence of significant discord between the Acehnese and the Chinese in Banda Aceh. However, in circumstances entwined with faith, as exemplified by the Ahok case,<sup>71</sup> support tends to wane due to its implications for the Islamic community rather than its alignment with pluralism.

In the societal context of Banda Aceh, a non-hostile attitude towards individuals with differing religious perspectives is prominently observed. Urban Islam has garnered significant prominence in the city, which has been marked by widespread participation in spiritual rituals such as *dhikr* and regular religious events organized by the local government. Despite occasional disagreements, the community remains cohesive, finding common ground through shared activities. Notably, the organization of Friday Studies at Taman Sari and *dhikr* sessions by the Regional Police and Indonesian National Armed Forces has successfully engaged individuals from all societal strata without giving rise to conflicts.

Certain religious factions, including Shi'a, heretical sects, and Wahhabism, vie for adherence, leading to clashes of ideologies in the public domain. The younger generation in Banda Aceh does not fully comprehend this phenomenon. The observed discord predominantly

---

<sup>71</sup>On Ahok's case, see Michael Hatherella and Alistair Welsh, "Rebel with a Cause: Ahok and Charismatic Leadership in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (2017): 174–90. Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman and Prashant Waikar, "Fear and Loathing: Uncivil Islamism and Indonesia's Anti-Ahok Movement," *Indonesia*, no. 106 (2018): 89–109.

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

manifests within Islamic mass organizations. It has extended to impact the intellectual discourse within Sufism, particularly between Sufism, Tawhid, and Jurisprudence (TASTAFI) and the Sufism Study Council (MPTT). However, it has not been discerned that this conflict significantly influences the youth, notably students. Students exhibit minimal interest in the local-level ideological conflicts, with some showing an inability to identify prominent religious leaders in Aceh province when queried. This trend is apparent among college students, with a more significant proportion failing to acknowledge these leaders than those who do.

Examining religious attitudes and behaviour among the youth in Banda Aceh reveals a tendency toward a pragmatic and easily comprehensible interpretation of Islam. There is a lack of enthusiasm for intricate theological concepts that necessitate profound contemplation. Consequently, it can be observed that Islamic discourse propagated through social media channels significantly influences the shaping of religious attitudes and behaviours in daily life. It is important to note that this scenario may not apply universally, as urban areas such as Meulaboh, South Aceh, Singkil, Kuta Cane, and North Aceh demonstrate a religious demeanour less susceptible to contemporary influences and more evidently regulated by local religious authorities. The concept of religious social imagination warrants consideration as a significant topic.

In recent years, various authors have dedicated their studies to analyzing social imagination in the archipelago.<sup>72</sup> Notably, the younger demographic of Muslims in Banda Aceh exhibits a desire for freedom in executing directives, diverging from strict adherence to Islamic teachings. This inclination aligns with the ideology of liberal sharia as espoused by Charles Kurzman,<sup>73</sup> where the implementation of Islamic sharia is perceived as synonymous with practising liberal Islam. Leonard Binder has further delved into this paradigm in his publication "Liberal Islamic."<sup>74</sup>

Since the signing of the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 15, 2005, a significant shift has occurred in the conflict dynamics within Aceh. The cessation of hostilities between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government marked Aceh's conclusion, leading to a subsequent transformation from ethnonationalist conflict to religious strife. The younger generation, unexposed primarily to overt military conflict during

---

<sup>72</sup> Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, *Kontribusi Charles Taylor, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Dan Henry Corbin Dalam Studi Metafisika Dan Meta-Teori Terhadap Islam Nusantara Di Indonesia* (Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2017).

<sup>73</sup> Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam: A Source Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critiques of Development Idelogies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

## **THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA**

the era of Military Operations in Aceh, is seemingly unfamiliar with such experiences. However, indications of religiously motivated violence have emerged, particularly preceding political events in Aceh. Despite this, the younger generation exhibits a diminished interest in endorsing jihad or resorting to violence, with the overwhelming majority of respondents expressing disagreement with the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution. Notably, there have been no reported physical confrontations involving students or college attendees in Aceh, a trend incongruent with reports of conflicts at community and national levels. Consequently, it is evident that the youth in Aceh are unwavering in their adherence to religious principles, establishing what can be deemed a "safe zone."

Aceh's engagement with external entities has been profoundly shaped by its historical adversities, particularly the conflicts and Tsunami it has weathered. These trials have rendered Aceh open to engagement at both national and international levels. The dynamic mobility of the Acehnese population has further fostered an environment of extensive interaction with the world beyond its borders. The Aceh government has recently extended scholarships to the region's most promising individuals, facilitating their pursuit of education abroad, notably in the Middle East. Consequently, a spectrum of young Muslims in Banda Aceh has developed a broad, global outlook. The presence of the Middle East Alumni Family Association (IKAT) has notably influenced the enrollment of Acehnese students at Al-Azhar University. A discernible trend has emerged wherein numerous prominent young figures from Aceh are products of Middle Eastern educational institutions.

The embrace of new ideas and perspectives in Aceh has significantly influenced the decision of young Acehnese individuals to pursue education abroad. This intellectual shift has given rise to a new cohort within Aceh, providing them with educational experiences that can potentially shape the future of Islamic life. This development indicates the potential emergence of a new influential class within Aceh's Islamic education sphere, with implications for social and cultural dynamics in the community of Banda Aceh. The aspiration to pursue Islamic studies abroad has instilled a renewed sense of purpose among the younger Muslim generation, steering the trajectory and aims of Islamic Studies and the Islamic movement in the future. While some religious institutions initially hesitated to send their students abroad, many alumni have been pursuing Islamic studies in the East and the West in recent years.

It is essential to underscore Banda Aceh's significant transformation to Islamic movements and the education landscape. The availability of public spaces, supported by the government, has enabled the manifestation of religious and social ideas, fostering a new generation of Islam adaptable to the evolving societal dynamics. Consequently, there is a

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

persistent ambivalence within the Islamic movement in Banda Aceh, with the evident aspiration to rejuvenate Islam and establish Banda Aceh as its focal point. Numerous informants, including students and scholars echo this sentiment.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The study offers several significant findings. Firstly, it has been observed that Muslim youth in Banda Aceh are influenced by the integrated Islamic education system and social media, which shape their attitudes and behaviours in their daily lives. Secondly, the millennial Muslim generation in Banda Aceh demonstrates a higher tolerance towards political issues than theological ones. Additionally, they uphold a perspective on national issues rooted in nationalism, patriotism, and a framework of respecting diversity within the country. Furthermore, the young Muslim generation in Banda Aceh encounters fragmentation when dealing with local issues to prevent conflict or violence between religious communities. However, the study indicates the state's challenge in intervening in the private space of the Muslim millennial generation, as their religious knowledge has shifted toward digital platforms. Consequently, it is recommended that policymakers intervene in this private space to advocate for moderate Islam in Aceh and Indonesia as a whole.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.
- Al Makin. "Islamic Acehnese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor: A Study of the Narratives of the Attack on the Bethel Church in Penauyong Banda Aceh." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1–36.
- Arifin, Ferdi. "Mubalig Youtube Dan Komodifikasi Konten Dakwah." *Al-Balagh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 1 (2019): 91–120. <https://doi.org/10.22515/balagh.v4i1.1718>.
- Binder, Leonard. *Islamic Liberalism: A Critiques of Development Ideologies* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Bustamam-Ahmad, Kamaruzzaman. *Kontribusi Charles Taylor, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Dan Henry Corbin Dalam Studi Metafisika Dan Meta-Teori Terhadap Islam Nusantara Di Indonesia*. Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2017.
- Chuzaemah, Siti, JM. Muslimin, and Hamka Hasan. "The Concept of Nahy Munkar and Islam: Study on Habib Rizieq's Legal Thought," 1–12. Jakarta: EAI, 2020.
- Cibro, Ramli. "Focus Group Discussion," 2019.
- Dzuhayatin, Siti Ruhaihi. "Islamism and Nationalism Among Niqabis Women in Egypt and Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 49–77.
- Fajriani, Suci Wahyu, and Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi. "Hijrah Islami Milenial Berdasarkan Paradigma Beorientasi Identitas." *SosioGlobal: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Sosiologi* 3, no. 2 (2019): 77–88.

## THE RESPONSE OF MUSLIM YOUTH IN BANDA ACEH TOWARD ISLAMIC CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INDONESIA

Feener, R. Michael. "Social Engineering through Shari'a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da'wa in Contemporary Aceh." *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 2715–311.

Feener, R. Michael, David Kloos, and Annemarie Samuels, eds. *Islam and the Limits of the State: Reconfiguration of Practices, Community and Authority in Contemporary Aceh*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Hasan, Hadri. "Contemporary Religious Movement in Indonesia: A Study of Hijrah Festival in Jakarta in 2018." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (2019): 230–65.

Hatherella, Michael, and Alistair Welsh. "Rebel with a Cause: Ahok and Charismatic Leadership in Indonesia." *Asian Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (2017): 174–90.

Hidayat, Rahmad, Muhammad Sholihin, and Deri Wanto. "The Hijrah Communities and Religious Superficiality: Ideology and Religiosity of the Islamic Hijrah Communities on Social Media." *Journal of Population and Social Studies* 29 (2021): 118–38.

Hilman, Ben. "Power-Sharing and Political Party Engineering in Conflict-Prone Society." *Conflict, Security, and Development* 12, no. 2 (2012): 149–69.

Humaira, Nazela. "Focused Interview," 2017.

Husna, Fathayatul. "Niqab Squad Jogja Dan Muslimah Era Kontemporer Di Indonesia." *Al-Bayan: Media Kajian Dan Pengembangan Ilmu Dakwah* 24, no. 1 (2018): 1–28.

Huwaida. "Change and Development in the Acehese Dayah Salafi." *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 3, no. 2 (2015): 279–94.

Ichwan, Moch Nur. "Ulama, Negara-Bangsa, Dan Etnonasionalisme Religius: Kasus Banda Aceh." In *Ulama Politik Dan Narasi Kebangsaan: Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan Di Kota-Kota Indonesia*, edited by Ibnu Burdah, Najib Kailani, and Munirul Ikhwan, 167–204. Yogyakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam Demokrasi dan Perdamaian, 2019.

Ichwan, Moch Nur, Arskal Salim, and Eka Srimulyani. "Islam and Dormant Citizenship: Soft Religious Ethno-Nationalism and Minorities in Aceh, Indonesia." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 31, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 215–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1780407>.

Ilyas, Mukhlisuddin, Zainuddin, Abdul Muin Sibuea, and Zahrila. "Leadership Transformation: Study of Islamic Boarding School (Dayah) in Aceh Province of Indonesia." *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education* 22, no. 2 (2019): 1–5.

Kumalasari, Intan, Darliana Sormin, and Muhammad Irsan Barus. "Celebrity 'Ulama': Contiguity Religion and Popular Culture." *Britain International of Humanities and Social Sciences Journal* 1, no. 2 (2019): 124–31.

Kurzman, Charles, ed. *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Latifah, Nor, and Romario. "Trendsetter Muballigh Di Medsos: Analisis Framing Instagram Felix Siauw Dan Hanan Attaki." *Jurna Studi Agama Dan Masyarakat* 15, no. 1 (2019): 36–48. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jsam.v15i1.1150>.

Lia. "Focus Group Discussion," 2017.

McClure, Paul K. "Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 3 (2017): 481–97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12365>.

Moberg, Marcus, Sofia Sjö, Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, Habibe Erdiş Gökçe, Rafael Fernández Hart, Sidney Castillo Cardenas, Francis Benyah, and Mauricio Javier Villacrez Jó. "From Socialization to Self-Socialization? Exploring the Role of Digital Media in the Religious Lives of Young Adults in Ghana, Turkey, and Peru." *Religion* 49, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 240–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2019.1584353>.

Muljadi, Yusar, Muhammad Bintarsih, and R.A. Tachya. "The Commodification of Religious Clothes Through The Social Media: The Identity Crisis on Youth Muslim Female in

**KAMARUZZAMAN BUSTAMAM AHMAD, FITRI ZULFIDAR IBRAHIM,  
QATRIN SHABRA SHATILLA**

Urban Indonesia." *Revista Româna de Jurnalism Si Comunicare; Bucharest* 12, no. 2/3 (53-65): 2017.

Nasution, Ismail Fahmi Arrauf, Miswari, and Sabaruddin. "Preserving Identity through Modernity: Dayah al-Aziziyah and Its Negotiations with Modernity in Aceh." *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 211–32. <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.003.2.06>.

Nisa, Eva F. "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia." *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1–2 (February 14, 2018): 68–99. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340085>.

———. "Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1416758>.

Nurhasim, Moch. "Dominasi Partai Aceh Pasda MoU Helsinki." *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 9, no. 2 (2012).

Osman, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed, and Prashant Waikar. "Fear and Loathing: Uncivil Islamism and Indonesia's Anti-Ahok Movement." *Indonesia*, no. 106 (2018): 89–109.

Perret, Daniel. "Aceh as a Field For Ancient History Studies." In *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, edited by R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly, and Anthony Reid, 25–38. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011.

Rackley, Eric D. "'Blessings and Friends and Knowledge': Environmental Motivations for Religious Literacy." *Religious Education*, September 17, 2020, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2020.1821303>.

Rahmadsyah. "Interview," 2017.

Rahmadsyah, Ikrima Qusruni, Ambia Samsuri, Fathur Hadyan, and Andika Saputra. "Focused Interview," n.d.

Rijal, Syamsul. "Following Arab Saints: Urban Muslim Youth and Traditional Piety in Indonesia." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48, no. 141 (May 3, 2020): 145–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1729540>.

Robinson, Kathryn, ed. *Youth Identities and Social Transformations in Modern Indonesia*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Sirry, Mun'im. "Muslim Student Radicalism and Self-Deradicalization in Indonesia." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 31, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 241–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1770665>.

Solahuddin, Dindin, and Moch Fakhruroji. "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority." *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2020): 19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010019>.

Triantoro, Dony Arung. "Ustaz Youtube: Ustaz Abdul Somad Dan Dinamika Perubahan Otoritas Keagamaan." *Penamas: Jurnal Penelitian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 33, no. 2 (2020): 205–25.

Unissa Syed, Iffath. "Hijab, Niqab, and the Religious Symbol Debates: Consequences for Health and Human Rights." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 2020, 1–16.

Usman, Nasir, AR Murniati, Syahril, Ulfah Irani, and ZA Tabrani. "The Implementation of Learning Management at the Institution of Modern Dayah in Aceh Besar District." *Journal of Physics* 1175 (2019): 1–9.

Utama, Bayu Satria. "Asymmetric Decentralization in Aceh: Institutionalization of Conflict of Interest by Elites of GAM." *Jurnal Politik* 5, no. 1 (2019): 5–24.

Zinira, Maurisa. "The Movement of Islamic Defenders Front and Its Socio-Political Influence on Indonesian Society." *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 2 (2015): 245–63. <https://doi.org/10.15642/religio.v5i2.578>.