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RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN URBAN AREAS A STUDY OF THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN BIG CITIES

Mhd Fadly Chaniago, Muhammad Kemal Arifin, Abdi Saad zuharum

Faculty of Usuluddin and Islamic Studies, Study Program of Religious Studies, State Islamic
University of North Sumatra, Indonesia

chanfad479@gmail.com, arifinkemal44@gmail.com, abdisaadzuharum@gmail.com

ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
This study examines how religious identities respond to social change in urban areas, particularly in large cities in Indonesia such as Medan, Jakarta, and Surabaya. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews to understand how religious communities maintain and transform their identities amidst globalization, secularization, and modernity. The results show that religious identity remains a key factor in maintaining social stability. Communities with strong religious roots tend to maintain their traditions as a countermeasure to new values. In contrast, more adaptive communities show openness to using technology to encourage member participation. The study also finds that geographic context and internal community characteristics influence responses to social change. For example, communities with strong traditional ties tend to be more conservative, while younger and more modern communities are more open to secular aspects of everyday life. These findings highlight how religion can be a flexible social force in urban areas and potentially support inclusive urban policies	Article History: <i>Created: October 25, 2024</i> <i>Revised 8 Nov 2024</i> <i>Accepted 23 Nov 2024</i> <i>Available online 15 Dec 2024</i> Keywords: Religious Identity, Social Change, Urban Areas, Religious Communities, Social Cohesion.
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INTRODUCTION

Large cities around the world, including in Indonesia, have experienced significant social changes as a result of modernization and urbanization. Large cities become centers of social, economic, and cultural transformation that affect various aspects of people's lives, including religious identity. Religious identity in urban areas often faces challenges from social dynamics such as secularization, pluralism, and globalization (Casanova, 1994). On the one hand, large cities provide a space where religious identity can develop in a more open and heterogeneous environment, but rapid social change can also cause a loss of identity for some religious communities (Berger, 1999).

According to Durkheim (1912), religious identity is not only related to individual beliefs, but also to the way society builds social networks and creates collective standards. Religion can be one of the main pillars in building social cohesion in urban environments where social activities are increasingly complex. On the other hand, religious identity can also cause conflict when religious differences collide with the principles of modernization or other social identities (Turner, 1991).

Big cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan are centers of very diverse social activities in Indonesia. These cities are centers of business and politics, as well as places where people from different religions and cultures interact. Religion is very important in the social structure of society in these cities, both in private and public life. Religious identities are still strong and greatly influence the lives of urban communities, although modernization and globalization have brought new values that may not be in accordance with religious beliefs (Hefner, 2000).

This study examines how religious communities maintain, change, or negotiate religious identities in large cities in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature. The focus of this study is on three large cities, namely Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, to gain a better understanding of the social dynamics that influence religious communities in the face of social change. This study explores how urban religious communities maintain their religious identities amidst rapid modernity and social transformation.

METHOD

The research in this article uses a mixed methods approach to analyze the impact of social change on religious identity in urban areas. With Using qualitative methods, researchers were able to gain valuable insights by conducting in-depth interviews and monitoring religious groups in major cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan. To ensure that the data obtained from respondents were relevant and insightful, they were selected based on their involvement in religious communities and their experiences in social change. Using qualitative data, we were able to identify important patterns in social cohesion, technological adaptation, and responses to secularization in society through thematic analysis.

In addition, qualitative results are strengthened through a survey that uses numbers to provide measurable data. This survey measures factors such as the intensity of social change and religious participation, and simple regression analysis is used to test the effect of social change on religious participation. In this analysis, the relationship between social change and religious identity is evaluated using a linear equation to identify the impact of social factors on religious identity in urban areas. To ensure the validity of the findings, researchers triangulated data by comparing data from interviews, observations, and surveys. This approach creates a comprehensive understanding that combines the power of in-depth analysis of qualitative data with the numerical support of quantitative data and provides an understanding of the role of religion as a force to be reckoned with in managing social dynamics in urban environments

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study reveals several important factors regarding the relationship between religious identity and social change in urban areas. Data obtained from interviews and observations conducted in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan show significant differences in how religious communities respond to social change:

1. **Strengthening Religious Identity:** In the face of modernization, strong religious communities in Jakarta, such as the Islamic and Christian communities, strengthen their religious identity. More than 70% of respondents stated that religious activities are an important way to maintain their religious identity.
2. **Technology Adaptation:** In Surabaya and Medan, younger religious communities demonstrate technological adaptation by using social media and digital applications for worship activities and religious interactions.
3. **Rejection of Secularization:** In Medan, the conservative Muslim community largely rejects secularization, with around 80% of respondents believing that secularization threatens their religious practices.
4. **Social Cohesion:** Religious communities in all three cities demonstrated strong social cohesion, with 85% of respondents considering solidarity and support among community members to be very important to combat social disintegration due to urbanization.

Discussion

The above results show that religious identity is still important in the lives of urban communities despite the pressures of modernity and globalization. Religious people in big cities, especially Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, have found various ways to maintain and change their beliefs.

1. Strengthening religious identity in responding to modernity: The nature of strengthening religious identity in Jakarta. This shows that religion continues to function as a social barrier towards the modernization of society. According to Durkheim's (1912) sociology of religion theory, religion plays an important role in creating social unity. Research shows that religious communities use rituals and public activities to strengthen social ties and maintain their identity.
2. Integration of technology in religious activities: Religious communities in Surabaya and Medan show a more adaptive pattern in utilizing technology in their religious activities. This phenomenon shows that religion has not only survived, but has become part of everyday and modern life. Berger's (1999) secularization theory is relevant here because this theory increases access and participation in religious practices, rather than reducing the status of religion.
3. Resistance to politicization: Madan points out that some religious communities may resist modern culture. Some religious communities still view the modern world as a threat to their religious identity. This idea is in line with Turner's (1991) theory of religion as a force in modern culture. The old ways are better than modern change.
4. The role of religion in social cohesion: Social cohesion due to belief shows that religion still plays an important role in maintaining social cohesion in urban areas. This study supports Giddens' (1991) idea that religion can be a force to unite society in facing social problems. In urban areas, religious social cohesion is very relevant because it is full of differences and social challenges, the unity of religious communities can strengthen bonds between members of society.

All tables should be numbered with Arabic numerals. Every table should have a caption. Headings should be placed above the table, left justified. Only horizontal lines should be used within a table, to distinguish the column headings from the body of the table, and immediately above and below the table. Tables must be embedded into the text and not supplied separately. Below is an example which the authors may find useful.

Table 1 – Respondents' Perceptions of Religion-Based Social Cohesion

City	Islam	Christia n	Catholic	Hindu	Buddha	Other	Total Respondent s
Jakarta	120	80	40	10	5	5	260
Surabaya	100	70	35	8	2	3	218

Medan	90	65	25	5	3	4	192
Total	310	215	100	23	10	12	670

This table shows the distribution of surveyed respondents based on their religion and city of residence.

Table 2 – Level of Religious Involvement in Social Life

Religious Involvement	Respondent Percentage (%)	Average Engagement
Very involved (active in religious activities weekly)	35%	7.8
Quite involved (active in monthly activities)	40%	6.3

This table shows the distribution of attitudes of respondents from various religions towards modernization and secularization in urban areas

Table 4 – Use of Technology in Religious Activities

Use of Technology	Islam (%)	Christian (%)	Catholic (%)	Hindu (%)	Buddha (%)	Other (%)
Online worship (sermon, lectures, etc.)	45%	55%	60%	35%	40%	50%
Religious discussions through social media	60%	70%	65%	50%	45%	55%
Use of religious applications (prayers, holy books)	55%	65%	60%	45%	35%	40%

This table illustrates the use of technology in religious activities by respondents from various religions

Table 5 - Respondents' Perceptions of Religion-Based Social Cohesion

Level of Social Cohesion	Islam (%)	Christian (%)	Catholic (%)	Hindu (%)	Buddha (%)	Other (%)
Very high (very high community solid)	50%	45%	55%	40%	30%	40%
High enough	35%	40%	35%	45%	50%	35%
Currently	10%	10%	5%	10%	15%	20%
Low	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%

This table illustrates respondents' perceptions of the level of religion-based social cohesion in their community

Illustrations

Figure 1 – Adaptation of Technology in Religious Communities



This figure shows how technology, especially digital applications and social media, has become part of religious activities in urban communities. Religious communities in big cities use technology more often to communicate with each other and organize religious activities, such as virtual lectures and studies.

Figure 2 – Community Response to Secularization



This figure shows how more adaptive and more conservative communities respond to secularization. More adaptive communities show that they reject modernization, while more conservative communities tend to accept modernization in their religious practices.

Figure 3 – Level of Social Cohesion in Religious-Based Communities



This illustration shows varying levels of social cohesion among religious communities in cities. Darker areas are shown indicating higher levels of social cohesion, indicating a strong relationship between religious identity and community solidarity in large cities.

Equality

According to this study, the correlation between religious identity (R) and social change in urban areas (S) is significant because it influences how religious communities adapt to rapid social change in large cities. A simple linear equation can be used to describe this correlation: $R = S + i(R)$, where S is social change, and R is religiously active in urban community life. The degree to which religious identity is influenced by social change is measured by a coefficient of. In addition to direct social change, the presence of is another factor that can influence religious identity. This study collects qualitative information from indicators of urban social change using a survey.

The purpose of this study is to calculate the S value to show the effect of each unit of social change on the level of religious participation, coefficients and constant values obtained using the regression line. According to the study, the alpha value is positive, indicating that significant social changes, such as globalization and modernization, are associated with greater religious involvement as an adaptation or reaction. This is in line with the degradation theory which states that religion becomes more influential in social instability (Berger, 1999). Conversely, a positive value indicates that religious principles remain intact despite social change. This equation helps

show the role of religious communities in the city in relation to social dynamics. Religious

identities are often activated or strengthened in response to the planetary and mass environment. Religious traits play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and guiding the responses of urban religious communities to social change, the study found. The results showed that more conservative religious communities tended to strengthen their traditional traits in response to modernization and secularization. This is consistent with Durkheim's (1912) theory that religion acts as a social glue when shared values are threatened by external pressures. Durkheim also found that religion plays a role in creating community cohesion. The findings of this study are consistent with the idea that religious communities rely on rituals and shared activities to maintain social cohesion.

In addition, the findings show that more adaptive communities, especially young communities in big cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya, are more accepting of modernization and use technology to expand access to religious activities. According to Berger (1999), there is a reality that is considered as "desecularization," where religion in the context of increasingly complex modernity is actually getting stronger rather than fading. This reality is seen in communities that use digital technology in their practices. Their religion, such as using social media for preaching and communal prayer applications, which help maintain social cohesion in a changing environment.

This study adds to the current literature by providing an understanding that beliefs serve as spiritual vehicles as well as social pillars to address contemporary challenges. This supports Hefner's (2000) research, which emphasizes that beliefs in Indonesia continue to change to adapt to world changes without sacrificing their local roots. This study differs from previous studies that have focused more seriously on the role of religion in rural settings. Instead, this study provides new insights into the dynamic role of religion in multicultural and diverse urban areas. Thus, this study shows that the characteristics of trust in urban communities are flexible and resilient to the currents of modernization and secularization. It is hoped that these findings will serve as a basis for forming social policies that consider the role of trust as a crucial component in building social stability in growing urban areas

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the importance of religious identity in urban areas, especially in cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, where it helps maintain social cohesion and facilitates rapid change. Different religious communities respond differently to the processes of modernization, globalization, and even secularization in cities where religious identities are very strong and diverse. Religious communities with strong religious beliefs tend to oppose

secularization and maintain social order by upholding culture, while more tolerant communities are more likely to adapt and adopt technology.

The findings of this study reinforce the idea that religion is more than just an institution of spirituality, but rather a social function that is evolving and beneficial. This study not only confirms the relevance of religion in developing social networks but also provides various ideas about the ability of religion to change and grow in a fast-paced urban environment. The religious identity of urban communities, thus, helps maintain social order, while at the same time enabling changes related to social development. This is very important in relation to the formation of sustainable policies for cities.

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