

Religious Identity Among Students in Urban Area: A Case Study of MATAN

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Abstract: This research covers the study of religious identity with a case study of MATAN students as part of urban Sufism experience. This research explains the development of Muslim identity among university students in urban areas that developed with the influence mainly by student organizations based on the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Currently, however, the student identity related to Sufism can also be witnessed in Indonesian urban universities through the establishment and development of MATAN. This is qualitative research using library research as a data collection method. The case study applied in this research is MATAN or *Mahasiswa Ahlu Tariqah Al Mu'tabarah an Nahdliyah*. This study shows that religious identity among students related to Sufism is indicated by characteristics including the implementation of Islamic teachings; Sufism spiritual-based academics without leaving rational intellectuals; development of Sufism to achieve Akhlaq Al-Mahmudah (noble characters); Tasawuf ethics socialization; Amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar; and love of the motherland/ nationalism. The development of religious identity with a Sufism color is a new phenomenon among students and in the future, it is expected that it will give a thicker spirituality color to the student movement in Indonesian universities.

Keywords: Urban Sufism; MATAN; Student Spirituality; Religious Identity

Introduction

Islamic religiosity is a topic that is widely discussed in social humanities and religious studies. "Religiosity is an appreciation of the values conveyed by religion and practiced in everyday life. It is a form of the totality of one's religion which includes one's religious qualities including physical and spiritual qualities, thoughts and dhikr, beliefs and rituals, appreciation and practice, morals, individual and society, the world, and the soul". (Safriyah, 2013) This topic is important to see the development of Islamic teachings in an area and sometimes its relation. A region and sometimes its relation to global issues. For example, researchers who have started studies on religiosity (Arizqi, 2016; Rosifah et al., 2019; Sofyani et al., 2016; Suzanawaty et al., 2021)

In the context of Indonesia as a Muslim majority country in the world, the color of religious practices (Islam) seems to be inseparable from the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah which was founded in 1912 marked the identity of modernist among Muslims which at that time was needed to develop education and the social role of religious health in the perspective of modernization

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among Muslims in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah's consistency in the development of its charity business can be seen in various aspects including in the health sector in the form of hospitals and other health institutions; educational institutions ranging from schools to tertiary institutions as well as Islamic boarding schools; as well as philanthropic institutions that contribute to modernist identity in Muhammadiyah (Barton, 2014; Fanani et al., 2021; Latief & Nashir, 2020; Njoto-Feillard, 2014).

Meanwhile, Nahdlatul Ulama which was founded in 1926 can be said to be a counterbalance to the establishment of the Muhammadiyah organization. Nahdlatul Ulama is better known as a traditional Islamic organization that appreciates local culture in the practice of Islamic rituals. Currently, Nahdlatul Ulama is an Islamic organization that has the largest number of members and sympathizers in Indonesia. This organization has developed from a traditionalist organization to a modern management organization that has a wide range of roles from religious studies, education to Islamic philanthropy (Barton, 2014; Barton & Fealy, 1996).

In the context of Muslims in Indonesia, Islamic identity is more often associated with religious institutions such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Especially because both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have succeeded in developing autonomous organizations under the parent organization. For example, Muhammadiyah which has student, youth, and student level organizations as well as in various other fields. Likewise, within Nahdlatul Ulama which has various youth and student organizations that are in coordination as part of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization itself. So, for example, at the student level, Muhammadiyah has the Muhammadiyah Student Association while Nahdlatul Ulama has the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement. In addition, other students also associate themselves with Islamic organizations such as the Islamic Student Association. Various student organizations that have an identity or that reflect an Islamic identity are developing and playing a very important role in the context of modern Indonesia. This can be seen, for example, from Muflihah Dwi Lestari's study (Afrianty, 2012; Fherastama et al., 2019; Lestari, 2017; Musthofa, 2017)

However, there are new developments that have not been widely studied, namely that teenagers or students also use the association of Sufism or Sufism as part of identifying their Islamic identity. This is quite unique considering that Sufism was synonymous with the older generation who practice *akhlaqi tasawuf*, not teenagers or students. The growth of student identity with links to Sufism is for example shown by the existence of the MATAN organization, namely *thoriqoh mu'tabaroh an nahdliyah* expert students. Noting the name, this name is related to JATMAN or *jamiyah thoriqoh mu'tabaroh an nahdliyah* led by Habib Lutfi of Pekalongan (Cahyani, 2019).

MATAN was officially established on 14 January 2012 which coincided with the closing ceremony of the XI JATMAN Conference which was located at the al-Munawariyyah Islamic Boarding School, Bululawang, Malang, East Java on 10–14 January 2012 AD / 16–20 Shafar 1433 H. Even though it was officially established in 2012, in fact, the desire to organize youth groups to perform tariqah had emerged starting in 2000 at the request of Rais 'Am Habib Luthfi of Pekalongan. This idea then gained more concrete momentum when on 2 August 2009 a discussion took place between Habib Luthfi and Dr. H. Hamdani Mu'in, M.Ag and several other people including students at the residence of Habib Luthfi Pekalongan. During the meeting there was a desire and support to form a spiritual and intellectual movement among students as part of efforts to find solutions to concerns related to the phenomenon of radical and pragmatic student movements in several universities. Sufism through tariqah is expected to be part of the solution to this problem. (<https://jatman.or.id/sejarah-mahasiswa-ahlith-thoriqoh-almutabaroh-an-nahdliyyah>, 2022; Cahyani, 2019).

Therefore, it can be explained here that the establishment of MATAN is inseparable from the existence of JATMAN and the role of Rais 'Am himself, namely Habib Lutfi of Pekalongan. Here,

the role of Nahdlatul Ulama as an Islamic organization for students' Islamic identity is a necessity. MATAN with its Sufism identity adds an example of the development of Sufism in urban areas in Indonesia. In this study, researchers focused on identifying the religious elements of students who are members of JATMAN through the vision, mission, profile, and goals of MATAN.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative research (Bryman, 2022) which aims to understand the religious identity of students affiliated with MATAN. This research is descriptive analytical with a case study of MATAN or *Thoriqoh Mu'tabaroh an Nahdliyah Expert Student*. Matan was chosen as the object of research in a study related to this diversity identity because it represents elements of student organizations that are developing at universities, especially at various universities in urban areas such as Jakarta, Bandung, Malang, and Surabaya. Matan also has a relationship with the JATMAN institution, namely *Jamiyah Ahl Thoriqoh Mu'tabaroh an Nahdliyah* which is one of the organizations under Nahdlatul Ulama that focuses on fostering Sufism-based religious spirituality in tariqa institutions which can be said to be legitimate (Cahyani, 2019).

This is library research that uses library research as a data collection instrument. The literature research that was conducted involved literature that described the religious identity of the vision, mission, profile, and objectives of the establishment of MATAN. The data used is considered representative because it comes from MATAN management and can be found publicly both on the website and in previous studies which can also be accessed online. Websites of related organizations such as nu.or.id and the like are often very relevant sources of information in describing history and the role of certain figures during the formation of religious identity. The author pays close attention to the website source used as a reference in this study to ensure that the data contained or used is representative and authoritative data (Bryman, 2022).

Findings & Discussion

The first discussion is that the religious identity of students affiliated with Matan can be identified from the vision, mission, profile, and objectives of MATAN which will be presented below. Documents related to MATAN's vision, mission, profile, and objectives data are quoted from (Cahyani, 2019). MATAN's vision is "The birth of the next generation and future leaders of the nation who have intellectual acuity and wisdom and spiritual depth as a basis for building and upholding the glory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia". While the mission of MATAN is:

1. Defending Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the ideology of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.
2. Growing love for the motherland and the spirit of nationalism among students to defend the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.
3. Develop national insight among students.
4. To stem the rate and growth of extremist movements and latency in universities in Indonesia.
5. Preserving Islamic teachings in the style of *ahl as-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah* based on moderate, tolerant, and inclusive Islam among students.
6. Instill heart education among students based on spiritual values (tarekat/tasawuf) and *mahmūdah* morals.

7. Improve intellectual abilities to provide more benefits and glory for the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.
8. Participate in guarding the legacy of *salafush sholihin* and his tarekat from an early age.

From the vision and mission above, it can be identified that MATAN seeks to reinforce intellectual and wisdom visions as part of the manifestation of student organization segmentation which is very closely related to identity as a representation of a nation that has excellence in the field of intellectual and wisdom. These two things do not stand alone, MATAN then relates them to the side of spirituality as one of the characteristics or identity of Sufism in Islam. So here we can see the integration between intellect and spirituality as the identity that MATAN wants to carry. Then, the vision that has combined the above intellectual and spiritual identities with the purpose of the establishment of MATAN itself is to build and uphold the glory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This is because it is in accordance with the background of the momentum of MATAN's establishment, namely the challenges of extremism and undermining of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia which are allegedly related to young people and students. So, it can be seen above that based on the vision of MATAN itself there are at least three elements of identity that MATAN wants to strengthen and develop: intellectuality, spirituality, and nationalism.

Then from the mission carried out by MATAN, it can also be identified that MATAN elaborates the three elements of identity; intellectuality, spirituality, and nationalism, in the eight missions carried out. So, it can be seen quite clearly, elements of nationalism identity are represented in the first to fourth missions. While the elements of spiritual identity are represented in the fifth, sixth, and eighth missions. And the third element of identity, namely intellectuality, is represented in the sixth and seventh missions.

The second discussion is identification of identity through the following MATAN profile. Matan has the following profile:

1. Sufism, namely having spiritual depth through the practice of the *mu'tabaroh* order to achieve *wushul ila Allah* so as to win the pleasure of Allah SWT.
2. Intellectual, namely having the enthusiasm to learn in improving intellectual abilities to provide the benefits and glory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.
3. Nationalist, namely having a spirit of patriotism and nationalism by increasing a sense of love for the motherland to defend the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Again, we can see the consistency of the identity elements depicted in the profile of MATAN. The first profile is related to spirituality which is grown by the implementation and practice of *mu'tabaroh tareqat* as part of piety to Allah SWT. Then, the intellectual element is depicted in the profile of an enthusiastic learner who will later help the glory of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Apart from that, the nationalist element is also manifested in activities that depict the profile of love for the motherland and protecting the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia from all challenges.

The third discussion is that the identification of religious identity within the MATAN community can also be seen through the formulation of the objectives of the MATAN itself, namely: "In general the aim of MATAN is to balance spiritual and intellectual aspects among students and increase inclusiveness of thinking, harmony in action and spiritual depth in youth spirit to build the nation, strengthen the spirit of nationalism, and participate in maintaining the unity and integrity of the Unitary State of

the Republic of Indonesia." Specifically, in each of its aspects, the objectives of MATAN are as follows:

1. In the field of religion, spreading and promoting the implementation of Islamic teachings according to the understanding of *ahl as-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah* among students.
2. In the academic field, actualizing the spiritual-based scientific tradition of Sufism without abandoning elements of rational intellect.
3. In the field of morality, developing the tradition of Sufism in order to achieve *akhlaq mahmudah* among students.
4. In the field of *ukhuwah ijtima'iyah*, strengthening and strengthening the kinship of fellow students.
5. Socialize the ethics of Sufism in the midst of the campus community
6. In the field of tarekat, strive to achieve *as-shari'ati al-Ghourok wath-Thariqil Baidlo'*, namely *shari'at Islamiyyah and thoriqoh muttashil sanaduha ila-Rasulillah Shallallahu Alaihi Wasallam*
7. In the field of movement, improve *al-amar bil ma'ruf and an-nahyi 'anil mungkar*, based on *akhlaq mahmudah* and realize the creation of Islam that is *rahmatan lil ālamīn*
8. In the field of *wathanīyah*, increasing love for the motherland, maintaining the upholding of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by practicing and embracing the ethics of Sufism/tarekat.

The intellectual identity element can be linked to goal number two; the element of the field of nationalism is related to the field of eight; while others, namely goals number one, three to seven are related to the field of religion and spirituality.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that there is a picture of student identity which consists of elements of intellect, spirituality, and nationalism initiated by MATAN. The ideas of the three elements above are illustrated very consistently from the vision, mission, profile, and objectives of the establishment of MATAN. This conclusion adds something new to his religious identity with the strengthening of nationalism besides of course academics as a feature of student affairs, and spirituality as an indicator of diversity identity. As suggested by (Safrihsyah, 2013) that "religiosity is an appreciation of the values conveyed by religion and practiced in everyday life". MATAN has been showing evidence that the Sufi organization is helping the establishment of Islamic religiosity through its vision and mission. These elements are expected to be practiced in the daily activities through spiritual practices such as dhikr, purifying morals, and Islamic rituals.

- a. This research can be continued with survey research to measure and find evidence from MATAN members regarding the understanding, growing methods, and implementation of the three elements above through representatives of the studied MATAN members. If this can be done, good practice examples of how religion and religious identity can contribute to strengthening the value of nationalism among the younger generation will be more explanatory.

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