**SHIFT IN SPIRITUALITY OF URBAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND TENDENCY TOWARDS FORMALISTIC ISLAMIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GORONTALO CITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to reveal the reasons for rapid growth of Islamic educational institutions in Gorontalo City in the last decade. Most of these Islamic educational institutions have an affiliation tendency to a formalistic-literalist perspective of Islam. Nevertheless, the interest of the urban Muslim community towards Islamic educational institutions that tend to be formalistic continues to increase. This current study employs a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach. Data analysis is processed through a model developed by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The result of this study indicates that there has been an open mindedness in which pluralistic urban community tends to choose content of educational institutions that are considered appropriate and practical to improve students’ abilities, and ignore ideological aspects. In addition, there has been a spiritual shift in the community, from student academic mastery aspect-oriented to spiritual aspect-oriented in the form of social attitudes and religious skills such as memorizing the Qur’an and the like.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education Institutions, Shift in Spirituality, Urban Muslim.

**INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of increasing lifestyle shifts towards religious piety is actually a frequent thing. This phenomenon, according to Azyumardi Azra, emerged in the last three decades (Azra, 2018). Some indicators that show religious piety include the rise of the Muslim middle class, the widespread use of the headscarf, the increasing number of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims, the widespread trend of “sharia” and the “halal” label, and the strengthening of Islamic philanthropy and other religious symbols. In a special case, the phenomenon of celebrities doing *hijrah* (shift in spiritual) has only recently emerged massively in the past decades.

The life of the urban community is actually the life of the middle class which is closer to the rationalist-positivistic world. The increasing shift in religious piety that tends to be empirical-intuitive is an interesting phenomenon. Moreover, if most people want peace in religion, the Sufistic path is certainly more promising. This condition is referred to in Marxist language as alienating oneself from religion (Magnis-Suseno, 2005).

Formalistic Islam is one of the religious models that many urban people follow. Some of them are seen to be active in online studies delivered by clerics from the Salaf school of thought, such as Khalid Basalamah, Subhan Bawazier, and Syafiq Reza Basalamah, who are generally known to be formalistic, exclusive, and literalist. What phenomenon underlies the spiritual shift of urban community towards a formalistic religious model?

Not only on the phenomenon of religion, but in choosing schools for their children, the urban community also tends to choose schools with Islamic labels. Even though it looks new, the Islamic schools that teach formalistic Islam have experienced quite massive growth. Meanwhile, public schools experience the trend of decreasing the number of students every year.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are several studies that discuss the variables of this study, both religious phenomenon and formalistic religious models such as Salafi. Firstly, a study conducted by Noorhaidi Hasan (Hasan, 2007) entitled The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics and Local Development. Hasan sees the development of Salafi in Indonesia with the framework of political policy, both local and international. Internationally, Salafi development cannot be separated from Saudi Arabia’s ambition to spread Wahhabism among Muslims. Meanwhile, nationally, since the collapse of the New Order regime, the gate of democracy has been opened wide, which has resulted in the emergence of Islamic organizations affiliated with the Middle East. Hence, this study only focuses on the Salafi movement.

Secondly, a study conducted by Rahmi Nur Fitri and Indah Rama Jayanti (Rahmi Nur Fitri, 2020) Entitled Celebrity Hijrah Phenomenon; The Tendency of Exclusivism and the Emergence of New Social Groups. This study reveals the celebrity hijrah phenomenon from a sociological perspective which then gives rise to a new exclusive social group. In addition, this study also looks at the commodification of religion by identifying the celebrities as a group of preachers. In particular, this study discusses the *hijrah* phenomenon.

The first study only focuses on the Salafi movement and has not touched on its influence on the Islamic views of urban community. On the other hand, the second study focuses on the phenomenon of *hijrah* and does not touch on Salafism, which also influences the concept of *hijrah* for some celebrities, who are generally role models in urban communities. The two studies do not really touch on the diversity of urban community and their choices in Islamic educational institutions which tend to be formalistic.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This is a qualitative field study applied to examine the condition of natural object, where the researcher is the key instrument. The data validity test is done by triangulation (combined), and the resulting data are descriptive and inductive analysis (Nasution, 1996). The result of a qualitative study emphasizes meaning rather than generalization. Qualitative study is usually more concerned with humans in their environment, interacting with them, and trying to understand their language and interpretation of the world and its surroundings (Darmawan, 2008).

This study employs an ethnographic approach. By using this approach, the researcher tries to map the habits of a community/institution.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The family is the first educational institution in which it is expected to always try to provide for the needs of the children, as well as to care for and educate them in the best way possible. The family is the core group for the children education because it is where children acquire their first lesson by nature. In the family, children are prepared to establish stages of development, as a provision when entering the ripe world (Soemarjan, 1962).

The role of parents is so great in helping children to be ready to enter the gate of their life. When it happens, they enter an independent world that should have been separated from their parents, where their life decisions must be made on their own. This is where the role of parents starts to decrease and sees the result of their parenting. Therefore, it is necessary for parents to participate in children's education so that children have readiness to enter the gate of their life (Permono, 2013).

**The Growth of Educational Institutions with Islamic Characteristics**

The term Islamic school in Indonesia's world of education has only emerged in the last decade. However, substantially, several educational institutions in Indonesia have implemented an Islamic education system called “Pondok Pesantren/ Islamic boarding school”. Over time, there has been a change in the shape of the education system as a result of a combination between the Islamic education system institutionalized in traditional madrasas (pesantren/Islamic boarding school) and modern schools that come with colonialism (Subhan, 2012). The final form of this combination is marked by the emergence of public schools with Islamic characteristics.

As a result of the combination between the Islamic education system and the modern education system, there are at least five forms of Islamic educational institutions. The first is the madrasa group, one of the Islamic educational institutions that combine religious subjects with general subjects. The second is *Diniyyah* Madrasa, the madrasa group that only teaches Islamic knowledge, including Arabic. The third is salafiyah boarding schools, Islamic boarding schools that offer formal education to students. The fourth is *Kulliyatul Mu’allimin al-Islamiyyah* (KMI) or *Muallimin*, a group of educational institutions that combine religious and general knowledge. The fifth is educational institutions that call themselves Islamic schools. This last group later became the origin of the emergence of public schools with Islamic characteristics. (Zaenuri, 2021).

The growth of Islamic schools that specifically teach Islamic values ​​has increased in Gorontalo City. Here is the data for schools that are relatively new but show significant growth in Gorontalo City.

**Table 1. Data of Islamic Schools in Gorontalo which Experienced Massive Growth.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number** | **School Name** | **National School Identification Code** | **BP** | **Status** | **Last Sync** |
| **1** | SD ISLAM AL HIJRAH | 69981276 | Elementary School | Private | 02 Aug 2022 14:06:32 |
| **2** | SDIT AZ-ZAHRA | 70002631 | Elementary School | Private | 28 Jun 2022 13:01:05 |
| **3** | SDS IT QURRATU AYUN | 69727082 | Elementary School | Private | 08 Aug 2022 05:31:49 |
| **4** | SD ISLAM AL HIJRAH | 69981276 | Elementary School | Private | 02 Aug 2022 14:06:32 |

**The Role of Parents in Choosing Children’s Schools**

Parents play an important role in developing the potential of their children. Parents are the first and foremost educators in the family environment, so parents need to be aware that children have great potential when they are born. Children’s education is crucial because the development of children’s personality formation process is taking place in this period. That is the right time to lay the foundations of character education in accordance with its development. To achieve this, it requires maximum effort from parents to educate children in all aspects of their development and increase their role as educators in the family.

It is considerably momentous to select educational institutions for children because it has a correlation in character building. This is as expressed by a parent of student in Gorontalo City,

*“As a parent, I have taught the best for my children. From asking them to pray, being polite to elders, and speaking well. That is all I have taught my children because it can make them have the morals that are formed from an early age. Because when they get older, their habits from childhood will carry over. I also often tell them that at school, you have to obey the teachers because teachers are parents at school, so do not ever argue with the teachers. (Lamali, 2022)”*

Based on the result of the interview, it is known that, in general, parents choose their children’s educational institutions because of the need for a good character education pattern. Moreover, the closeness of religious values ​​emotionally requires parents to choose Islamic educational institutions.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the religious spiritual shift of parents has brought them, especially urban community, to be open minded. This open-mindedness is seen that pluralistic urban community tends to choose the content of educational institutions that are considered good and practical to improve the ability of students and ignore the ideological aspects. Furthermore, there has been a spiritual shift in the community, from student academic mastery aspect-oriented to spiritual aspect-oriented in the form of social attitudes and religious skills such as memorizing the Qur’an and the like.

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