



Religious or Consumptive? Rereading the Piety of Urban Muslim Youth in Indonesia

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Abstract

The Islamic resurgence in Indonesia has driven significant changes in religious expression, particularly among urban Muslim youth. Amidst the currents of modernity, globalization, and digital media development, piety is no longer confined to private practices but appears as a public identity intertwined with popular culture and consumer logic. This research addresses the question of how urban Muslim youth negotiate their religious identity between modernity, piety, and the commodification of religion. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach with library research method, this study analyzes academic literature, scholarly articles, and relevant popular sources. The findings reveal that the piety of urban Muslim youth is a dynamic process negotiated through interaction with social media, popular culture, and capitalism. Phenomena such as hijrah (religious migration), Muslim communities, and da'wah influencers demonstrate that piety has become part of a hybrid urban lifestyle. On one hand, this reflects increased religious awareness; on the other, it also shows a tendency toward the commodification of religion, where Islamic symbols are produced and consumed within market frameworks. Thus, the religiosity of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia is fluid, adaptive, and continuously evolving in response to the dynamics of modernity.

Keywords: urban Muslim youth; modernity; piety; commodification of religion; Indonesia

A. Introduction

The piety of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia today is no longer confined to mosques or private spaces; it also appears on smartphone screens, in lifestyles, and within social media algorithms. Hijrah has become a trend, da'wah has turned into content, and Islamic identity is often produced and simultaneously consumed (Fealy & White, 2008). This phenomenon raises a dilemma: is this a sign of a spiritual awakening among the younger generation, or rather a new form of commodification of religion in the digital era? This question is important to understand how urban Muslim youth negotiate their faith amidst the fast-paced and consumptive currents of modernity.

Studies on urban Muslim youth in Indonesia have developed rapidly over the past two decades. A number of studies highlight the post-New Order Islamic resurgence as a significant phenomenon involving young people, particularly through campus da'wah movements and the transformation of religious identity in public spaces (Hasan, 2013a; Heryanto, 2015a; Ramidi, 2025; Sakti & Yulianto, 2013; Van Bruinessen, 2013). Early studies tended to emphasize aspects of Islamic revivalism and the role of institutions such as Campus Da'wah Institutions (LDK) in shaping normative piety among university students.

Subsequent developments show a shift in focus toward popular culture and digital media (Heryanto, 2015b; Hoesterey, 2008; Saluz, 2009). Research on the hijrah phenomenon, urban Muslim communities, and the role of da'wah influencers reveals that youth piety is no longer private but appears as a public identity constructed through social media, fashion, music, and the creative industry (Ramidi, 2025; Rozi et al., 2021; Sunaryanto et al., 2022). In this context, several studies have also begun to highlight the commodification of religion, where Islamic symbols become part of market logic and consumption (Pribadi & Sila, 2023; Turner, 2007).

Nevertheless, these studies remain partial. Some research emphasizes only the spiritual dimension (hijrah and piety), while others focus more on popular culture or economic aspects (commodification).

Relatively few studies comprehensively view this phenomenon as a process of identity negotiation involving the simultaneous interaction between modernity, piety, popular culture, and capitalism. The research gap this study addresses is the lack of an integrative perspective that treats urban Muslim youth as active agents negotiating their religious identity amid the tensions between modernity and piety, rather than as passive recipients of either religious revivalism or consumer culture.

Continuing from previous studies, this research offers novelty by positioning urban Muslim youth as active actors who negotiate their religious identity amidst the pull between modernity and piety. This study does not only see piety as a religious practice or social trend but as a dynamic process influenced by digital media, popular culture, and economic structures. This article contributes to presenting a more integrative perspective on the hybrid religiosity of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia. The main objective of this research is to analyze how urban Muslim youth negotiate their religious identity between modernity, piety, and the commodification of religion, and to understand whether the current expressions of piety reflect authentic spiritual awakening or consumer trends.

B. Method

This research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the study is to understand and analyze the phenomenon of religiosity among urban Muslim youth in relation to modern lifestyles and piety practices, which requires an in-depth textual and contextual analysis rather than statistical measurement. The research design is qualitative, as the data consist of written texts and documented phenomena, making library research the most suitable strategy. The research object is the expression of piety among urban Muslim youth in Indonesia, examined through existing academic and popular literature.

The data sources consist of two main categories: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include academic works such as books,

national and international journal articles, and previous studies that discuss the Islamic resurgence in Indonesia, youth da'wah movements, the hijrah phenomenon, and the transformation of da'wah through digital media. Secondary sources include news articles, online media content, and popular works such as films and novels that represent expressions of the urban Muslim lifestyle. The combination of these two source types allows for a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study. Data collection was conducted through documentation, identifying and extracting relevant information from the selected sources using keywords such as "urban Muslim youth," "piety," "hijrah," "commodification of religion," and "digital da'wah" in Indonesia.

Data analysis followed a thematic content analysis procedure. First, all extracted data were coded according to emerging themes: the history of Islamic resurgence among youth, the role of popular culture, the hijrah movement, digital da'wah, and commodification. Second, the coded data were organized into thematic categories that reflect the main dimensions of the phenomenon. Third, the findings were synthesized to identify patterns of negotiation, hybridity, and ambivalence in youth piety. The analysis was guided by theoretical perspectives on modernity, popular culture, and consumerism as discussed in the introduction. This study did not involve human or animal participants and therefore did not require ethical approval from a research ethics committee. However, all data were collected and cited in accordance with institutional ethical standards and academic integrity principles.

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings from the literature analysis, followed by their interpretation. The results are organized into thematic categories that emerged from the data: the history of Islamic resurgence and the role of youth, the intersection of urban Muslim youth and popular culture, the hijrah phenomenon as a lifestyle, new media and da'wah, and the tension between spirituality and commodification. The discussion then interprets these findings in relation to theories of modernity, identity

negotiation, and consumer culture, while also addressing the study's limitations and implications.

1. Results

The Islamic Resurgence in Indonesia and the Role of Youth

The Islamic resurgence in Indonesia since the 1980s cannot be separated from the surrounding social, political, and cultural dynamics. This period marked the emergence of new phenomena in religious practice, where Islam was viewed not only as a theological and normative system but also as a social force and collective identity. Young people, particularly urban students and university youth, played a central role in this resurgence, both through campus da'wah spaces, social movements, and popular culture (Gomez-Perez et al., 2009; Hakim, 2022). In the early 1980s, campus da'wah became an important center for the development of Islam among youth. The *Tarbiyah* movement, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, spread widely through student study groups and later formed Campus Da'wah Institutions (LDK) (Hefner, 2011). LDK became a strategic arena for developing a more scripturalist, systematic, and organized understanding of Islam. This movement gave birth to what is called the *Muslim revivalist generation*, namely young people committed to Islam in the context of modern life (Hasan, 2009c; Shaw, 2012).

The 1998 Reform opened the door to widespread democratization, including in religious expression. Whereas previously young people's Islamic expression was relatively limited to private spaces, after Reform they gained the freedom to express Muslim identity in public (Fealy & White, 2008). This phenomenon is evident in popular culture, such as the birth of contemporary Islamic literature, including works by Helvy Tiana Rosa, Asma Nadia, and Habiburrahman El Shirazy, which inspired young people to express religiosity through stories, films, and dramas (Latief, 2008). The short story *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* is not only a work of popular literature but also a medium of da'wah that encourages readers to undergo hijrah and deepen their religion, an expression that later developed into other media, including film and music. In addition to literature, there is also

the phenomenon of *public piety*, where religious symbols such as the headscarf, *syar'i* clothing, and Islamic study communities become part of the urban lifestyle (Hasan, 2013b; Heryanto, 2015a). This change shows that piety is no longer an exclusive practice but openly manifests in urban life. The role of youth in the Islamic resurgence is not limited to the religious domain but also touches social and political aspects. They are active in forming *da'wah* communities, social movements, and political organizations (Kailani, 2017; Rosyad, 2007).

Urban Muslim Youth and Popular Culture

Since the early Reform era, popular culture has become a strategic medium for urban Muslim youth to express their religious identity. Unlike traditional *da'wah*, which tends to be formal and institution-based, popular culture provides a more fluid, creative, and accessible space. Religious pop music, Islamic films, hijab fashion, and digital content have become means for young people to negotiate piety with modern tastes (Heryanto, 2015b; Waliyuddin & Noor, 2022). For instance, the film *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2008) by Habiburrahman El Shirazy and *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2013) by Hanum Rais demonstrate how Islamic narratives can be conveyed in popular language that touches emotional and aesthetic aspects, thereby attracting urban Muslim youth audiences (Rosidi, 2021; Van Bruinessen, 2013). Music also plays an important role in shaping the Muslim identity of urban youth. If in the 1990s Islamic music was relatively limited to *nasyid* and *qasidah*, after Reform a wave of more modern popular religious music emerged. Music groups such as Snada, Edcoustic, and solo singers like Opick have successfully combined religious lyrics with contemporary musical arrangements, making them widely accepted by young people (Fealy & White, 2008).

In addition, fashion, particularly the hijab trend, is one of the most prominent symbols of urban youth piety. If during the New Order the headscarf was banned in public schools, since the 1990s the headscarf has become a strong public identity (Brenner, 1996). In the contemporary era, the hijab is understood not only as a religious obligation but also as part of a modern lifestyle. The *Hijabers Community* phenomenon that emerged in

the early 2010s is a clear example of how Muslim fashion has become an arena for religious and social expression. This community popularized modern hijab styles that are fashionable, elegant, and in line with urban tastes, attracting many young Muslims in big cities (Beta, 2014; Sholichah, 2020; Najib et al., 2023; Jones-Gailani, 2019). Therefore, through popular media, the Islamic expression of urban Muslim youth also grows within urban communities. An important example is the *Pemuda Hijrah* movement in Bandung, which holds study sessions in mosques with a youth-friendly atmosphere, complete with music, visual design, and a digitally friendly environment. This movement shows that youth da'wah is no longer top-down but participatory and community-based (Rakhmani, 2017).

Religious Lifestyle: Hijrah, Muslim Communities, and Identity

The term *hijrah* has also undergone a transformation of meaning among urban Muslim youth. While in classical Islamic tradition hijrah refers to the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, in the contemporary era it is understood as a change toward a more Islamic life, whether in personal, social, or cultural aspects. Hijrah has become a symbol of moral and spiritual commitment popular among youth, often associated with a new lifestyle emphasizing piety (Zahara et al., 2020; Fuad, 2020; Taufiq et al., 2022). This hijrah phenomenon is reinforced by social media as a medium for self-image building. Many young Muslims share their hijrah journey stories through Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok, complete with attractive visuals and language close to the digital generation (Addini, 2019; Slama, 2018; Musahadah & Triyono, 2019; Rozi et al., 2021). Communities such as *Shift* in Bandung, *Pemuda Hijrah* managing Al-Lathif Mosque, and various study communities in Jakarta or Surabaya have become important forums for young Muslims to interact, learn about religion, and build social networks (Rijal, 2018; Rosyad, 2007; Triantoro, 2018; Triantoro & Zumiraj, 2021).

New Media and Youth Da'wah

The presence of new media such as social media, streaming platforms, and digital applications has changed the way young Muslims practice and express their piety. Whereas previously da'wah was identical

to sermons in mosques or study forums, now da'wah can be conducted through short videos on TikTok, YouTube, Islamic podcasts on Spotify, or visual posts on Instagram (Slama, 2018). One important phenomenon in the context of new media is the emergence of digital preachers and Muslim influencers. Figures such as Hanan Attaki, Felix Siauw, and hijrah influencers like Oki Setiana Dewi and Natta Reza utilize social media to convey da'wah messages with a communicative and visual style suited to young people's tastes (Akmaliah, 2021; Hananto, 2021). New media also facilitates the formation of virtual Muslim communities. WhatsApp study groups, hijrah communities on Telegram, and Islamic discussion forums on Clubhouse serve as means for young people to build religious solidarity online (Campbell, 2012). This demonstrates how new media transforms da'wah into a phenomenon that is both global and local (glocalization) (Syarif & Hannan, 2022).

Between Spirituality and the Commodification of Religion

In the context of urban Muslim youth piety in Indonesia, there is ambivalence: on one hand, there is a sincere spiritual enthusiasm to deepen religion; on the other hand, there is a tendency to turn religion into a lifestyle trend. This ambivalence can be traced through the practice of hijrah, which is often publicized on social media, in the consumption of Islamic products, and in participation in religious communities saturated with modern symbols (Addini, 2019; Kusumalestari, 2020). One of the main challenges is the commodification of religion, where religious values become commodities in the cultural industry. Islamic fashion, halal cosmetics, religious music, and Islamic applications are marketed not only as necessities but also as symbols of piety (Heryanto, 2015b). New media encourages the phenomenon of *performativity of piety*, that is, piety displayed publicly through digital posts. Young Muslims often express their religious identity through Instagram posts containing Qur'anic quotes, short da'wah videos, or spiritual journey vlogs (Royanulloh et al., 2022). This performative piety raises a dilemma between sincere intentions to worship and the drive for social recognition.

2. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the piety of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia is not a static or monolithic phenomenon but a dynamic, fluid, and hybrid process. The historical trajectory from the 1980s campus da'wah movements to the contemporary digital hijrah phenomenon shows a significant shift in how piety is expressed and negotiated. In the early period, piety was largely institutional, normative, and centered on formal study groups and mosque activities. Today, piety has expanded into popular culture, fashion, music, social media, and consumer practices. This shift reflects what Hasan (2009b) calls the *making of public Islam*, where religious identity is no longer confined to private spirituality but is performed, displayed, and consumed in public arenas.

The integration of piety with popular culture and digital media suggests that urban Muslim youth are not simply abandoning traditional religious practices but are reinterpreting and recontextualizing them within their contemporary lived realities. The hijrah phenomenon, for instance, while rooted in classical Islamic concepts, has been adapted to resonate with modern aspirations for self-improvement, social belonging, and aesthetic expression. This adaptation is not necessarily a dilution of religious authenticity but can be seen as a creative negotiation between tradition and modernity. As Howell (2013) observes, urban Muslim youth in Indonesia are developing new forms of religious engagement that are commercially infused yet spiritually motivated. The role of digital media is particularly significant. By enabling direct, interactive, and decentralized forms of da'wah, new media has democratized religious authority. Traditional religious scholars (*ulama*) no longer hold a monopoly over religious interpretation; instead, digital influencers, community leaders, and even ordinary young Muslims can produce and disseminate religious content. This decentralization has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, it allows for more diverse, inclusive, and contextually relevant expressions of Islam. On the negative side, it risks the spread of superficial or even erroneous religious understandings, as well as the fragmentation of religious authority.

The ambivalence between spirituality and commodification identified in the findings is a key feature of contemporary urban Muslim piety. The commodification of religion—where Islamic symbols, practices, and identities are marketed as consumer goods—is not unique to Indonesia but is a global phenomenon linked to neoliberal capitalism and the rise of the “religious marketplace” (Turner, 2007). However, the Indonesian case shows that commodification does not necessarily negate spiritual authenticity. Many young Muslims consume Islamic fashion, attend hijrah events, and follow digital preachers while simultaneously maintaining sincere devotional practices. The boundary between sincere piety and performative consumption is often blurred, and attempts to draw a sharp dichotomy may miss the complexity of lived religion. As Pribadi and Sila (2023) argue, for many urban Muslims, beauty and piety are intertwined, not contradictory. Wearing fashionable hijab, using halal cosmetics, or listening to religious pop music are ways of embodying faith in everyday life, not merely acts of consumerism.

When compared to global trends, the piety of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia shares similarities with youth religiosity in other Muslim-majority societies, such as Turkey, Egypt, or Malaysia, where digitalization, popular culture, and consumerism have also reshaped religious expression. However, Indonesia’s specific history of democratization, its vibrant civil society, and its moderate Islamic traditions have produced a distinctive form of hybrid piety that is generally more inclusive and less prone to extremism than in some other contexts. This local-global interplay suggests that the Indonesian experience can contribute to international discourse on religion, youth, and modernity, offering a model of how religious identity can be negotiated in open, democratic, and pluralistic settings.

This study has several limitations. First, as a library research, it does not include primary empirical data such as interviews or surveys with urban Muslim youth. The findings are therefore based on secondary analysis of existing studies and may not capture the full diversity of individual experiences. Second, the study focuses on general trends and does not differentiate between various subgroups of urban youth, such as by social

class, education level, or religious affiliation (e.g., traditionalist vs. modernist). Third, the rapid evolution of digital media and social platforms means that the phenomena described here may change quickly, and the findings may require updating. Future research should conduct ethnographic or survey-based studies to capture the lived experiences of urban Muslim youth, including comparative studies across different cities or socio-economic groups. Additionally, longitudinal research could examine how the negotiation of piety and modernity evolves over time as young people transition into different life stages.

The theoretical implication of this study is that the concept of *hybrid piety*—a form of religiosity that seamlessly blends traditional practices with modern lifestyles, popular culture, and consumer logic—offers a more nuanced framework than binary oppositions such as authentic/inauthentic or spiritual/material. Practically, these findings are relevant for religious educators, policymakers, and community leaders who seek to engage with urban Muslim youth. Rather than dismissing popular religious expressions as superficial or commodified, stakeholders might recognize them as valid forms of contemporary faith that can be nurtured toward deeper spiritual commitment. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of digital literacy and critical religious education to help young Muslims navigate the abundant religious content online.

D. Conclusion

This research has examined how urban Muslim youth in Indonesia negotiate their religious identity between modernity, piety, and the commodification of religion. The findings demonstrate that the Islamic resurgence since the 1980s, particularly through campus da'wah movements and the post-Reform democratic opening, has produced a generation of urban Muslim youth who express their faith openly and creatively. These expressions are no longer limited to ritual spaces but extend to popular culture, including music, film, fashion, and digital media. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, young people are not only consumers of da'wah but also producers of religious discourse, contributing to a shift from traditional religious authority to more decentralized,

participatory forms of religious engagement.

The study concludes that the piety of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia is a fluid, hybrid, and continuously evolving process. Phenomena such as hijrah, Muslim communities, and da'wah influencers demonstrate that piety has become part of an urban lifestyle that is simultaneously religious and modern. On one hand, this reflects a genuine increase in religious awareness and commitment; on the other, it shows a tendency toward the commodification of religion, where Islamic symbols are produced and consumed within market frameworks. However, rather than viewing this as a simple contradiction, the study argues that urban Muslim youth actively negotiate between spiritual authenticity and consumer culture, creating new forms of hybrid piety that are neither purely traditional nor purely modern.

The main contribution of this research is to provide an integrative perspective that places urban Muslim youth as active agents rather than passive recipients of either revivalism or consumerism. Future research should explore empirical studies that capture the voices and experiences of young Muslims directly, as well as comparative studies across different socio-economic and regional contexts. In conclusion, the religiosity of urban Muslim youth in Indonesia is not a fixed endpoint but a dynamic journey in which modern lifestyles and Islamic spirituality continually meet, negotiate, and shape the new face of religiosity in Indonesia.

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