

TRANSFORMING THE RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM OF URBAN MUSLIMS IN THE CHOOSING OF ELEMENTARY-LEVEL EDUCATION IN PURWOKERTO, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze religious enthusiasm that does not continue after the primary school period is over and instead shows contrasting situations. Urban Muslims in Purwokerto, Indonesia, show high religious enthusiasm when *choosing* primary schools for their children. The number of public elementary school students has declined in the last five years, while Madrasah Ibtida'iyah has increased dramatically. This research is field-type with data sources from urban Muslims who choose Madrasah Ibtida'iyah as a primary school choice for their children. The data were analyzed qualitatively using a sociological approach. The study found that the religious enthusiasm of urban Muslims is pragmatic. Their pragmatic nature is shown by the resistance of different social groups that give rise to covert conflicts. In addition, they form new communities that actively represent them in public spaces. This finding has implications for a change in the perspective of the phenomenon of religious enthusiasm from theological awareness to a new trend of community-based urban Muslim pragmatism. Further research recommended the representation of the new identity of Muslim communities in virtual public spaces.

Keywords: religious enthusiasm, urban Muslim, elementary-level education.

Abstrak

Tulisan ini bertujuan menganalisis antusiasme keagamaan orang tua yang tidak berlanjut pada jenjang pendidikan setelah Sekolah Dasar dan justru menunjukkan situasi yang kontras. Muslim perkotaan di Purwokerto, Indonesia, menunjukkan antusiasme agama yang tinggi dalam memilih Sekolah Dasar untuk anak-anak mereka. Jumlah siswa Sekolah Dasar Negeri mengalami penurunan dalam lima tahun terakhir, sebaliknya Madrasah Ibtida'iyah meningkat secara drastis.. Penelitian ini berjenis lapangan dengan sumber data dari kelompok muslim perkotaan yang memilih Madrasah Ibtida'iyah sebagai pilihan sekolah dasar untuk anak-anak mereka. Data dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis. Studi ini menemukan bahwa antusiasme keagamaan muslim perkotaan bersifat pragmatis. Sifat pragmatis mereka ditunjukkan melalui perlawanan dan menimbulkan konflik terselubung. Selain itu, mereka membentuk komunitas baru yang secara aktif merepresentasikannya di ruang publik. Temuan ini berimplikasi pada perubahan perspektif fenomena antusiasme keagamaan dari kesadaran teologis ke kecenderungan baru pragmatisme. Penelitian lebih lanjut merekomendasikan representasi identitas baru komunitas muslim di ruang publik virtual.

Kata Kunci: Antusiasme Keagamaan, Urban Muslim, Sekolah Dasar.

Background

Indonesia's public elementary schools have become insolvent in the last five years. Some elementary schools were forced to be merged (*regrouping*) due to a drastic decrease in students. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in 2023, the number of elementary schools in 2018 was

131,974, and in 2023, it decreased to 129,600, or was reduced by 2,300 schools. Purwokerto has the same trend; according to data from the Banyumas Regency Education and Culture Office, the number of elementary schools in Purwokerto city in 2018 was 83. This number will decrease by 2023 to 55 schools and is planned to continue

according to developments on the ground. In contrast, Madrasah Ibtida'iyah (MI) experienced a significant increase in the number of students. This trend differs from the previous ten years when MI became a basic education institution empty of enthusiasts. The increasing number of MI students parallels the growth of new communities that show high religious enthusiasm.

Religious enthusiasm is a passion within oneself followed by feelings of inspiration, motivation, optimism, and creativity to realize something by relying on religious values.¹ This feeling is subjective and will arise when you get stimulation, encouragement, and desire for something high.² In urban Muslim groups, religious enthusiasm is shown through specific actions, including choosing elementary schools for their children.³ According to Sukmayadi,⁴ Elementary schools aim to shape children's character by developing positive social attitudes and behaviors according to their beliefs. The most appropriate phase in instilling personal character is elementary school. This is because, at that time, they had a unique perspective that everything they received was considered pleasant.

The religious enthusiasm in urban Muslim communities is particularly notable in educational choices. The decision-making process, especially

when selecting elementary schools for their children, becomes a tangible expression of religious fervor among parents.⁵ This intricate relationship between religious enthusiasm and educational decisions highlights the broader impact of faith on shaping not only individual character, as mentioned earlier, but also influencing the collective choices of a community. Understanding how religious enthusiasm intertwines with educational preferences provides a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of belief systems in urban Muslim societies. This intricate interplay contributes to the rich tapestry of social behaviors and decisions that define the character of these communities.

The study of religious enthusiasm in general can be divided into 3 (three) groups. First, the movement fosters absolute values-based power to compete with other groups.⁶ Denning⁷ states that enthusiasm becomes additional ammunition for certain groups to show supremacy. Second, tendencies that show group interest in something high are manifested by expressive behavior.⁸ Moghadasi explains several key factors that cause students' enthusiasm to increase when a paradigm shift in learning is implemented through free expression. Third, strategies to acquire new social capital.⁹ Religious enthusiasm is the social capital

¹ Stephanie Denning, "Religious Faith, Effort and Enthusiasm: Motivations to Volunteer in Response to Holiday Hunger," *Cultural Geographies* 28, no. 1 (January 24, 2021): 57–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474020933894>.

² Zulfa Ridhani Abwi, Saiful Amien, and Muhammad Yusuf, "Improving Students' Learning Enthusiasm for the Islamic Education Subject Using Wordwall," *Edunesia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (April 7, 2023): 671–81, <https://doi.org/10.51276/edu.v4i2.439>.

³ Dian Hidayati and Andi Arif Rifa'i, "Factors Influencing Parents' Decisions on Choosing an Islamic Primary School in Bandung Indonesia," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal* 1, no. 1 (April 25, 2020): 121–26, <https://doi.org/10.47175/rissj.v1i1.15>; Ahmad Royani and Hepni, "The Survival and Continuity of Islamic Boarding School in the Era of Changes," *Jurnal Penelitian* 19, 2 (2022): 129–38, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v19i2.1073>.

⁴ Vidi Sukmayadi, "Indonesian Education Landscape and the 21st Century Challenges," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 11, 4 (2020): 219–34, <https://doi.org/https://www.learntechlib.org/p/218538/>.

⁵ Derya Iner, "Faith-Inspired Muslim Parents' School Choices and Attitudes in the Cultural West and Australia," *Religions* 12, no. 9 (September 10, 2021): 746, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090746>.

⁶ Denning, "Religious Faith, Effort and Enthusiasm: Motivations to Volunteer in Response to Holiday Hunger"; Natalia Andrienko et al., "Space Transformation for Understanding Group Movement," *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics* 19, 12 (2013): 2169–78.

⁷ Denning, "Religious Faith, Effort and Enthusiasm: Motivations to Volunteer in Response to Holiday Hunger."

⁸ Javad Moghadasi and Leila Keikavoosi-Arani, "Investigating the Factors Influencing Students' Academic Enthusiasm for a Shift of Paradigm among Education Managers Shaping Academic Pedagogy," *BMC Medical Education*, 2023, 1–13; Jennifer L Berdahl and Paul Martorana, "Effects of Power on Emotion and Expression during a Controversial Group Discussion," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36, no. 4 (July 17, 2006): 497–509, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.354>.

⁹ Walter Leal et al Filho, "International Trends on Transformative Learning for Urban Sustainability," *Discover*

of a group that can be mobilized to support collective and enduring goals.

Religious enthusiasm utilizes principles considered absolute to arouse the collective spirit of achieving something, becoming an alternative strength for a long time when other potentials, especially capital, are bottlenecked.¹⁰ In fact, as social capital, it can create a collective consciousness that binds the community. However, religious enthusiasm does not always have a permanent sustainability and ideological effect. In urban Muslim groups, it occurs at a specific, partial, and pragmatic time accompanied by technical and short-term considerations.¹¹ In Purwokerto, religious enthusiasm is evident in the parents' choice of elementary schools for their children. The same event did not occur in the next phase, the secondary and upper education level, where non-ideological considerations were predominant.

Unlike previous studies, this study answers the religious enthusiasm of urban Muslims that takes place only in choosing a primary school for their children. Entering the post-primary education phase, the same phenomenon is not visible and, on the contrary, indicates a different situation. This paper will have implications for the change in the perspective of religious enthusiasm from the theological consciousness movement to the general trend of pragmatism of social groups that need a new public space.

Sustainability 4. 31 (2023): 1–20; Michael J Arena and Mary Uhl-Bien, “Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting from Human Capital to Social Capital,” *People and Strategy* 39. 2 (2016): 22.

¹⁰ Dundin Zaenuddin, “Religion and Social Capital of Citizenship: Bogor Islamic Community in a Globalizing World Development,” *International Journal of Interreligious and Intercultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 3, 2020): 86–100, <https://doi.org/10.32795/ijis.vol3.iss2.2020.1093>.

¹¹ Resul Cesur and Naci Mocan, “Education, Religion, and Voter Preference in a Muslim Country,” *Journal of Population Economics* 31 (2018): 1–44.

Religious Enthusiasm as a Public Space for Religious Sentiments of Urban Communities

Enthusiasm is a passion or enthusiasm in a person and group followed by feelings of inspiration, motivation, optimism, and creativity to realize something by relying on certain values.¹² Verbally, this passion is expressed through speech, attitude, and action to provide actions and reactions directed to external objects. In the non-verbal form, arousal is generally expressed through subjective attitudes and feelings. Both are positive responses of individuals or groups to objects, events, or the existence of something, followed by verbal and nonverbal expressions.¹³ There is also an urge to be part of the object through identical responses as either individuals or groups. Religion is one of the existences outside individuals and groups with great potential to give birth to enthusiasm.

Religion has truth values believed to be absolute and encourages its adherents to do deeds in the name or at least identical to it.¹⁴ These actions are considered worship that can produce rewards and transcendental achievements. Enthusiasm is one of the important principles that ensure that worship carried out by someone

¹² Denning, “Religious Faith, Effort and Enthusiasm: Motivations to Volunteer in Response to Holiday Hunger.”

¹³ Lukasz D Kaczmarek et al., “Positive Emotions Boost Enthusiastic Responsiveness to Capitalization Attempts. Dissecting Self-Report, Physiology, and Behavior,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 7. 2 (2021): 1–19; Puthut Ardianto and Muhamat Ridho Yuliyanto, “I Am Enthusiastic!: Exploring Students’ Responses on the Roleplay Assignment,” *Academic Journal Perspective : Education, Language, and Literature* 8, no. 2 (November 30, 2020): 135–46, <https://doi.org/10.33603/perspective.v8i2.3974>.

¹⁴ Nida Kirmani, “The Role of Religious Values and Beliefs in Charitable and Development Organizations in Karachi and Sindh, Pakistan,” *Development in Practice* 22 (2012): 5–6; Nathalie E. Williams, Arland Thornton, and Linda C. Young-DeMarco, “Migrant Values and Beliefs: How Are They Different and How Do They Change?,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 5 (May 4, 2014): 796–813, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.830501>; Anne Cleary and Teresa Brannick, “Suicide and Changing Values and Beliefs in Ireland,” *Crisis* 28, no. 2 (March 2007): 82–88, <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910.28.2.82>.

obtains perfection.¹⁵ The number of religious activities, such as holiday celebrations, the practice of mass congregational gatherings, or the intensity of worship rituals generally indicates the form.¹⁶ However, the expressed form is modified in the modern religious group by adjusting to emerging fashion, culinary, or travel trends. The trend is packaged or associated with religion to become visible when displayed as a form of religiosity.

The intricate tapestry of religious practices and the evolving nature of worship not only encompass traditional rituals but also extend into the realm of contemporary living. This transformation of religious expression in modern times transcends the confines of established ceremonies, encompassing a dynamic interplay with emerging societal trends. In urban Muslim communities, the palpable connection between religious fervor and daily life becomes evident as individuals and groups weave their spiritual beliefs into the fabric of modernity. Adapting religious practices to align with contemporary trends serves as a nuanced reflection of the dynamic nature of religious enthusiasm.

Religious enthusiasm is the spirit a person or group possesses to realize idealism in a concrete form by relying on absolute and transcendental values.¹⁷ Therefore, this enthusiasm is very strong, and the subjects have great energy to realize it. This energy comes from religious beliefs that will continue to develop in line with organized activities or rituals. Durkheim¹⁸ explained that one of the functions of religion is to build cooperation

¹⁵ Adam Ashforth, "AIDS, Religious Enthusiasm and Spiritual Insecurity in Africa," in *Religious Responses to HIV and AIDS* (Routledge, 2016), 6–21.

¹⁶ Scott Larson, "Histrionics of the Pulpit: Trans Tonalities of Religious Enthusiasm," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6. 3 (2019): 315–37; N Shalihin and M U Amri, "An Evaluation of Women and the Ideological Interest of the Integrated Islamic School," *JURNAL PENELITIAN* 19. 2 (2022): 167–78, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v19i2.1076>.

¹⁷ Cleary and Brannick, "Suicide and Changing Values and Beliefs in Ireland."

¹⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious* (New York: Life-Free Press, 1995).

between community members, which will only be carried out if they have social sentiments. This feeling grows at a time when members of society build intensive relationships in which religion is a highly effective medium. Religion through ritual practices is transformed into a public space to build social sentiments so that each member feels bound and has the urge to cooperate.¹⁹

Religion is the source and encouragement of its adherents in various life activities, making them feel like religious individuals and groups.²⁰ For them, real-world life presents both opportunities and threats that are equally uncertain. Meanwhile, they have yet to guarantee everything they have, especially science and technology.²¹ Therefore, they need a set of values that are believed in and absolute to control opportunities and threats. Religion, with its transcendence, offers absolutism, accepted as truth at the time of human impasse. Enthusiasm arises in the deadlock situation and becomes a common feeling shared by religious communities.

Urban Muslims as Group Identity

Islam as an identity refers to the religious consciousness of a particular community that arises due to misunderstandings of others.²² Initially intended to provide understanding and correct misunderstandings, it developed into a new movement that actively formed religious

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," ed. Kibujjo M. Kalumba, *Philosophia Africana* 8, no. 2 (2005): 99–109, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philaficana2005823>.

²⁰ Jeppe Sinding Jensen, *What Is Religion?* (Routledge, 2019); Anthony Ellis, "What Is Special about Religion?," *Law and Philosophy* 25. 2 (2006): 219–41, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/27639429>.

²¹ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (Routledge, 2013), 1–46; Maurice Bloch, "Why Religion Is Nothing Special but Is Central," ed. Colin Renfrew, Chris Frith, and Lambros Malafouris, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 363, no. 1499 (June 12, 2008): 2055–61, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2008.0007>.

²² Dr Sarah Risha, "Islam as Identity: Religious Awareness," *Addaiyan Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2021, 79–97; Masdar Hilmy, "Towards a Religiously Hybrid Identity? The Changing Face of Javanese Islam," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 2018): 45, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2018.12.1.45-68>.

groups. Globally, Abu-Rabi explained that after the events of September 11, 2001, the definition of Islam underwent a fundamental change regarding its association with violence.²³ Questions come from many Western circles, and even some experts argue that violence is built into the Qur'an. This redefinition and Western view then received a mixed response from the world's Muslims, one of which was the massive formation of group identity by relying on Islam.

Lord revealed that in Turkey, Islamic identity, in addition to responding to Western misconceptions, is also directed at building the existence of a community to realize political goals.²⁴ Islam was chosen as an identity because it has an effective binding force to consolidate and mobilize potential resources, especially at a time when Islam is questioned as a religion, politics, and identity that attributes a group of people and is used as an indicator to treat its users disproportionately. Nevertheless, Islam as a religion is the easiest institution to be identified by groups who experience threats and need protection.²⁵ Jacobson said Islam was positioned as an identity for British youth and Pakistanis who were in the minority category. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of Islam being used as an identity is rife by Muslim groups that ideologically and politically have no affiliation.

Non-affiliated Muslim groups are generally new residents in urban areas.²⁶ Previously, they

lived in villages or areas that did not have adequate access to support career development and other professional jobs. In cities, personally meet individuals with similar backgrounds and contexts to form groups and carry out collective activities. At first, this group was active in filling the activity with simple activities, but then they developed into an existential form.²⁷ This is because, besides them, other groups with various variations fill the social public spaces of urban communities. The identity of this group varies according to the pattern of social affiliation followed, such as youth community organizations, religious community organizations, and associations based on hobbies. Muslims in urban areas, as a new social group, do not yet have an identity affiliated with established organizations.

Herta Halim (36 years old), a Civil Servant in Purwokerto from Pacitan Regency, East Java Province, admitted that living in the city changed his daily traditions from the previous communal to more formal and functional. Established interactions are based on relationships that meet each other's needs.

“The city gives a different feel to our previous situation in the village. The space to interact with each other informally is not available by itself. This condition often leads us to a warm atmosphere in the village. It turns out that other immigrants also experience this feeling; at least we are met at the same institution as the school. Through the like, we build an association into a community”²⁸

²³ Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi, “A Post September 11 Critical Assessment of Modern Islamic History,” in *11 September Religious Perspective on the Causes and Consequences*, ed. Ian Markham and Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi (Oxford: One World, 2002).

²⁴ Ceren Lord, “Between Islam and the Nation; Nation-building, the Ulama and Alevi Identity in Turkey,” *Nations and Nationalism* 23. 2 (2017): 48–67.

²⁵ Jessica Jacobson, “Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth,” 2015.

²⁶ Annisa R Beta, “Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia,” *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (June 7, 2014): 377–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514524103>; Iftikhar Ahmad and Michelle Y Szpara, “Muslim children in urban America: The New York city schools experience,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no. 2 (October 2003): 295–301, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360200032000139938>.

²⁷ Royanulloh Royanulloh, Thiyas Tono Taufiq, and Komari, “Representation of the Meaning of the Expression of Hijrah for Urban Muslim Community through Instagram: A Virtual Ethnographic Study,” *Journal of Islamic Civilization* 4, no. 1 (September 30, 2022): 68–80, <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v4i1.2804>; Syed Ali, “Collective and Elective Ethnicity: Caste among Urban Muslims in India,” in *Sociological Forum*, 2002, 593–620; Dorothea E Schulz, “Remaking Society from within Extraversion and the Social Forms of Female Muslim Activism in Urban Mali,” in *Development and Politics from Below: Exploring Religious Spaces in the African State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 74–96.

²⁸ Herta Halim, (Civil Servant) *Interview* (March 14, 2024).

The same thing was conveyed by Aini (45 years old), an entrepreneur who stated that grouping individuals with similar backgrounds became a choice for urban activities.

“We have relatively similar needs that are generally due to environmental changes. Groups and activities together, especially in the religious field, are basic needs that must be met”²⁹

Urban Muslims are dominated by young individuals who are starting a new family with an average number of 2 (two) children.³⁰ Therefore, their main activity outside the home is in primary educational institutions. In this environment, they then meet each other, build interactions, and develop to form social groups and actively carry out activities. During collective activities, the discourse that develops includes various things, one of which has received much attention and is related to the existence of groups.

Istiqamah (42 years old), an entrepreneur, explained that in addition to running his own business, his activities at school are interacting with students' guardians. While waiting for her children to learn at school, she discussed simple things that developed into a fluid group.

“Our conversations are generally related to simple and everyday things. However, along with the intensity of the meeting, we then developed activities to forms that show the existence of the group, such as providing alms on Fridays and Compensation Activities for Orphans”³¹

The question then is how to build the existence of a group whose members come from individuals without affiliation. As their ecosystem interacts, schools are positioned as binding social capital that unites and distributes to external

parties.³² This external distribution requires urban Muslims to formulate their collective identity rigidly. Elementary schools affiliated with Islam were then chosen as the space for the existence of urban Muslim groups.

They do not form a group with a new identity but rather identify it with the children's school. This school is a social capital and a bargaining power for this urban group against others who generally exist in the public space.

Change and Move because of Religious Enthusiasm

Urban social groups need a representative space to express themselves as new communities.³³ In a pragmatic society, existence is built based on material aspects such as economics, education, and affiliation with established large groups.³⁴ The problem is that other social groups have filled these aspects to close the opportunity for urban communities to be involved or part of the establishment. This forces them to look for a new strategic formula to be used as an identity and contested in open public spaces. Islam was then chosen as the epicenter explored to serve as a strategic keyword to gain high social and political acceptance from the public.

In general, urban communities come from the middle class, have a fairly established level of

³² Ana Echevarría Arsuaga, “Urban Development and Muslim Minorities in the Middle Ages: The Path to Invisibility,” *Hamsa* 7, no. 7 (June 22, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4000/hamsa.1103>; Maarten Bosker, Eltjo Buringh, and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “From Baghdad to London: Unraveling Urban Development in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, 800–1800,” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 95, no. 4 (October 1, 2013): 1418–37, https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00284; Deri Wanto et al., “Asserting Religiosity in Indonesian Muslim Urban Communities through Islamic Education: An Experience of Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 2 (October 11, 2022): 116–35, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.122.09>.

³³ Moghadasi and Keikavoosi-Arani, “Investigating the Factors Influencing Students’ Academic Enthusiasm for a Shift of Paradigm among Education Managers Shaping Academic Pedagogy.”

³⁴ Elisabeth Roberts et al., “Rural resilience in a digital society: Editorial,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 54 (August 2017): 355–59, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.06.010>.

²⁹ Aini, (Entrepreneur) *Interview* (March 21, 2024).

³⁰ Beta, “Hijabers: How Young Urban Muslim Women Redefine Themselves in Indonesia”; Dru Gladney, “Making Muslims in China: Education, Islamicization and Representation,” in *China’s National Minority Education* (Routledge, 2013, 55–94).

³¹ Istiqamah, (Entrepreneur) *Interview* (November 10, 2024).

education and economy, and are active in formal sectors or professions.³⁵ This profession is a logical consequence of a good level of education and work ethic. They can transform themselves from traditional rural life situations in Indonesia to modern procedures represented by formal behavior. This middle sector in the digital society is abundant and can only be filled by those with good formal education status. The spirit of achieving this status is found in individuals from rural areas who have the drive to change their fate out of the agricultural lifestyle system.³⁶ The next habit of communalism is faced with a pragmatic, professional, and efficient urban atmosphere. As Yusuf (45 years old) said, employees of State-Owned Enterprises with a farmer family background, previously residing in Kaliputih Village, ± 40 Km from the center of Purwokerto.

"Village people like me have a great spirit of changing fortunes. The method is through formal education. Thus, the chances of getting a better job are possible. Life in a village with an agricultural pattern cannot be expected to develop its potential. So, moving to urban areas became one of our ideals. To avoid becoming a new burden, traveling to the city must be prepared as well as possible. Education and formal employment are important things to have"³⁷

Supracoyo (43 years old), a private employee in Purwokerto from Temanggung Regency, Central Java, conveyed a more basic thing. According to him, pursuing agriculture in Indonesia could be a lot better. The choice to look for another profession is a demand for everyone who wants a better quality of life.

³⁵ Echevarría Arsuaga, "Urban Development and Muslim Minorities in the Middle Ages: The Path to Invisibility."

³⁶ John Sender, "Women's Struggle to Escape Rural Poverty in South Africa," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 2, no. 1 (January 16, 2002): 1-49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0366.00023>.

³⁷ Yusuf, (Employee of State-Owned Enterprise) *Interview* (December 5, 2023).

Moving to cities with formal jobs outside of agriculture is a necessity.

"My family in the countryside pursued agriculture, and I felt how difficult it was. Alone, taking a high education, just like eating, my family often has difficulties. Choosing a profession outside of agriculture and moving away from the village became my way out of poverty."³⁸

Relationships between individuals in functional communities characterize the urban social atmosphere.³⁹ They are bound by dependence on each other to realize common interests and goals. Every community's interests and goals require some psychological function that can only be played out if its members have different roles. In this situation, cooperation becomes a demand that the distributed specialization of roles in each individual can move systemically towards achieving the goals set. The pattern of urban life is very different from that of rural areas, which are still communal and mechanistic.⁴⁰ Relationships between individuals are based on equality of goals and interests, function uniformity, and heterogeneity reduction. Collectivity is done by suppressing differences and concentrating control on elites.

The tradition of communalism, as it occurs in rural life, does not support urban communities in building their social existence.⁴¹ They must transform into modern patterns through interdependent functional relationships and form organic groups. Forming this organic group takes

³⁸ Supracoyo, (Private Employee) *Interview* (November 11, 2023).

³⁹ Tanya Jakimow, "A Moral Atmosphere of Development as a Share: Consequences for Urban Development in Indonesia," *World Development* 108 (2018): 47-56; Karin Peters, Birgit Elands, and Arjen Buijs, "Social Interactions in Urban Parks: Stimulating Social Cohesion?," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 9, 2 (2010): 93-100.

⁴⁰ Seongyeon Auh and Christine C Cook, "Quality of Community Life among Rural Residents: An Integrated Model," *Social Indicators Research* 94 (2009): 377-89.

⁴¹ Nancy Duxbury and Heather Campbell, "Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities through Arts and Culture," *Small Cities Imprint* 3, 1 (2011): 16-32.

the social community a relatively long time, especially in communicating the collective needs and what social roles will be distributed to each subject. This is because urban groups were previously shaped by communal traditions that were all mechanized.⁴² However, there is a capital generally owned by every urban group subject, namely religiosity.⁴³ In rural traditions, religiosity is commonly seen in worship activities, religious learning, and holiday commemorations. This tradition becomes a collective capital to build their social existence in public spaces while negotiating for adequate social access. As Yusuf (45 years old) conveyed, religiosity is a meeting point with other individuals in the city who are both from the countryside.

“Religiosity is our hallmark in urban areas. This characteristic is a habit when living in the village through participation in various religious activities. Religion or activities associated with it are the easiest way to build communication between individuals from rural areas”⁴⁴

The organic group formation phase occurs when urban communities join formal primary school educational institutions. This is because they can be included in the category of young families with an average age under 40. This young family has children between the ages of 3 and 12 and is in elementary school. In addition to carrying out their professional activities, they carry out daily activities to pick up and drop off their children's schools, indirectly bringing them together in intensive informal situations.⁴⁵ Through this primary school framework, they form new communities with the social capital of

religiosity in a simple sense that tends to lead to attributions such as appearance, group activity, and the development of new idioms identified with religion.⁴⁶ This tendency will only be accommodated if they become part of institutions that are relatively not under state control. This condition is quite dominant in affecting urban Muslim families preferring Islam-based private elementary schools. Istiqamah (42 years old) admitted that she had been encouraged to display her Islamic identity through a group of guardians of religious-based school students.

“Private Islamic-based schools give freedom to students' guardians to carry out activities collectively. Even the school is happy because it can form a good image”⁴⁷

Tabel. 1. Idioms and Designations in Social Interaction at School

No	Idioms	Meaning/Association
1	Silaturahmi	Parent-guardian meeting
2	Rihlah	Recreation
3	Ta'aruf	New student orientation
4	Milad	Anniversary
5	Ta'awun	Social gathering/donation
6	Pejuang Subuh	Roving down prayer
7	Hijrah	Switch styles
8	Syahriaah	Tuition fees
9	Ustaz/Ustazah	Teacher
10	Sadaqah	Voluntary donation

Intensive family involvement in providing basic education significantly influences.⁴⁸ Functionally, Islamic-based private primary schools gain an image as institutions with a strong religious character. This they obtain through the

⁴² Auh and Cook, “Quality of Community Life among Rural Residents: An Integrated Model?”

⁴³ Sandra L Hofferth and John Iceland, “Social Capital in Rural and Urban Communities 1,” *Rural Sociology* 63, no. 4 (December 17, 1998): 574–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.1998.tb00693.x>.

⁴⁴ Yusuf, (Employee of State-Owned Enterprises) *Interview* (March 10, 2024).

⁴⁵ Wei Zhang and Gillian Lawson, “Meeting and Greeting: Activities in Public Outdoor Spaces Outside High-Density Urban Residential Communities,” *Urban Design International* 14, no. 1 (2009): 207–14.

⁴⁶ Hofferth and Iceland, “Social Capital in Rural and Urban Communities 1.”

⁴⁷ Istiqamah, (Entrepreneur).

⁴⁸ Michael Batty, J. Michael Collins, and Elizabeth Odders-White, “Experimental Evidence on the Effects of Financial Education on Elementary School Students’ Knowledge, Behavior, and Attitudes,” *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 49, no. 1 (March 29, 2015): 69–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12058>; Margaret Sherrard Sherraden et al, “Financial Capability in Children: Effects of Participation in a School-Based Financial Education and Savings Program,” *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 32 (2011): 385–99.

activities of parents both as guardians of students and outside the school context, which is always synonymous with Islam. The performance of these parents then provides an overview and representation of Islamic-based private elementary schools in public spaces. In addition, with parents' relatively well-established economic conditions, schools receive adequate material support.⁴⁹ On the other hand, parents benefit from targeted group affiliation through their involvement with Islamic-based private schools. They can claim their communities as an exclusive part of modern Islamic education that flourishes in urban areas. These exclusive claims form the basis for interacting and negotiating with other previously established groups.

School managers find collecting donations for developing facilities and learning support activities relatively easier if they use diction or terms synonymous with Islam. Shahriah's diction *replaces the term Education Financing Contribution, or sadaqah*, to describe the mobilization of voluntary donations. Parents will be more moved to participate in material contributions if the programs offered are packaged in religious terms. They will feel that performing acts of worship and obtaining good rewards are the two main projections of religious activities.

In addition to strengthening the relationship between Islamic-based private elementary schools and urban Muslim communities, collaborative involvement fosters a shared purpose and identity. This partnership creates a positive image for these schools as esteemed Islamic educational institutions, which is further enhanced by the substantial material support they receive. This advantageous positioning builds public trust and allows schools to articulate and implement a more targeted educational approach. These institutions reinforce their educational objectives and contextualize the learning experience by defining

⁴⁹ Batty, Collins, and Odders-White, "Experimental Evidence on the Effects of Financial Education on Elementary School Students' Knowledge, Behavior, and Attitudes."

a specific student segment. This strategic segmentation is crucial for instilling character and values effectively. Furthermore, for urban Muslim communities, institutional affiliation goes beyond just educational considerations, serving as a cornerstone for fostering interaction and connectivity among community members.

More fundamentally, the involvement above points to 2 indicators: mutualistic relations between Islamic-based private elementary schools and urban Muslim communities. The school received a positive image as an Islamic educational institution and adequate material support. These two advantages are crucial for schools in institutional competition to gain public trust in providing quality and character education. This belief is the basis for schools to formulate a more specific segment of students.⁵⁰ This segment is important to reinforce the purpose and contextualization of education held. For urban Muslim communities, institutional affiliation is a basic issue of building interaction between existing communities. Islamic-based private primary schools give a basic identity so that they are not assumed to be an ahistorical group.

Second, the atmosphere of primary schools is a phase of transforming urban Muslim communities that are generally young families. Relatively independent students need parental assistance even though they are already in the school environment. Therefore, parents often allocate time to more than just "shuttles," building communication and socializing.⁵¹ Even for young families, elementary schools become public spaces that are used to show professional achievements and economic stability. The activities produced are simple and have no strategic value. However, they were able to mobilize these activities and

⁵⁰ Magdalena Kohout-Diaz, "School Marketing and Segmentation: A Comparative Study in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic," *International Journal of Educational Research* 90. 2 (2018): 87–94.

⁵¹ Gert Biesta, "Becoming Public: Public Pedagogy, Citizenship and the Public Sphere," *Social & Cultural Geography* 13, no. 7 (November 2012): 683–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2012.723736>.

their financing massively so that they could be held with great fanfare. The commemoration of Islamic holidays such as the Hijri New Year and compensation every Friday is lively. They need a different space of expression to show their transformation process. The changes they show prove they have certain achievements for their social struggles.

In addition to the two things above, elementary school age is a crucial phase for children to acquire basic knowledge to form character.⁵² Islam is a source of knowledge that has the power to compel every subject who studies it to submit and follow various provisions in it. This is because Islam is believed to have absolute truth and requires its followers to obey. In character education, compelling forces are needed to form daily habituation. Islam, with its constant pattern and rhythm of worship, meets the criteria as an instrument and an orientation of character education to students. This logic is generally the motivation for urban Muslim groups to have high enthusiasm for choosing Islam-based schools for basic education for their children.

The view that the crucial phase of character education occurs at primary school age affects the performance and enthusiasm of the urban Muslim community at the next school level. At the secondary education level, the dominant urban Muslim community uses pragmatic calculations such as costs, prospects for further education, and school status.⁵³ This calculation is a common consideration as society obscures theological foundations, social affiliations, and the construction of the image of modern Muslims. Urban Muslims do not build exclusive communities that actively promote middle-class values and lifestyles. Instead, they mingle,

socialize, and do activities with other parents without the Islamic identity they previously held.

The above view is seen in the tendency of people's choice towards their children's further education after primary school as follows:

Tabel. 2
Post-Primary Education Options Year 2023

No	School Name	Sum Graduating Students	MTs	%	Junior High School	%
1	MI DH	173	27	16	146	84
2	SDIT MD	130	22	17	108	83
3	SDIT IRS	166	15	9	151	91
	Sum	469	64	14	405	86

Banyumas Regency Education Office (2023)

Religion is a worship ordinance whose learning is sufficiently given to elementary school students. For urban Muslims, the needs of primary school-aged children are not in the field of professional or career development but in character building that identifies with religion. Entering the productive age, the main mainstream is general science and technology; on the contrary, religion tends to be marginalized because it is considered to have no direct relevance to the needs of modern society, which is more pragmatic. Through this understanding, Islam's faith-based educational institutions did not become the first choice in the secondary, upper, and tertiary education phases. This can be seen in the high competition among prospective Junior High School students, in contrast to public and private Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs).

Amin Karuniawan (40 years old), the parent of a student of a private integrated Islamic who works as an employee of one of the State-Owned Enterprises, stated that sending his child to junior high school after previously attending an Integrated Islamic Elementary School was purely a pragmatic technical consideration. She believes her son will find it difficult to compete for the next level of education if he remains in a faith-based school. The ability to gain knowledge will

⁵² Daniel K Lapsley and Darcia Narvaez, "Character Education," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, vol. 4. 2, 2006, 248–96; Balraj Singh, "Character Education in the 21st Century," *Journal of Social Studies (JSS)* 15, no. 1 (May 29, 2019): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.21831/jss.v15i1.25226>.

⁵³ James Amonoo, "Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of a Senior High School for Their Children," 2014.

be lower, potentially hindering further education for job needs.

"For religious education, it is enough in elementary school. Henceforth, I chose a public school because its future requires adequate technical science skills. If I stay in school for too long with a dominant religious learning base, I worry about making it less competitive. Children can carry out worship. I think it is enough"⁵⁴

In parallel with the decline in religious enthusiasm, the intensity of interaction and community activities of school parents at the secondary education level has decreased dramatically. They do not allocate time to socialize and build a community of fellow parents and guardians. The relationship between parents and guardians is normative and formal. High school-age children are relatively independent and do not require intensive parental assistance. High school students can carry out independent learning simply with the assistance or guidance of teachers. Likewise, fulfilling basic needs such as socializing, communicating, and playing is done independently based on their tendencies. Thus, the identity of the parent and guardian meeting in the context of learning and building a school atmosphere is irrelevant.

During times of decreased religious fervour, a significant transformation can be observed in the involvement patterns of parents during the secondary education stage. The previously strong community ties and interactive dynamics among school parents display a marked decrease, as evidenced by reduced socialization and community-building activities. The development of these networks adopts a strategic and technical approach to meet the evolving needs of a thriving community, emphasizing interdependence.

In addition, parents of high school students have had experience socializing, communicating, and building community while becoming primary education guardians. They can develop their social

networks by no longer basing on school zones as primary areas but expanding on communities based on professions or other productive activities. The development of social networks generally uses a strategic technical approach to dynamic growing needs. Social relationships in a thriving community are built on functional needs, where each other depends on and contributes. This condition is very different from the elementary school phase, where the relationship and communication between parents is emotional and ideological and tends to be existential.

Conclusion

The religious enthusiasm shown by parents when selecting primary educational institutions does not represent piety. Instead, it shows a strategic effort to build a self-image as a new Muslim group in urban communities. Affiliation to a basic education institution was made to reinforce its new identity due to losing opportunities to become part of an established social force. After this goal was achieved, this urban Muslim group did not reconsolidate but then spread and joined other professional-based communities that had already existed. Emotional factors and previously visible ideologies slowly blurred and transformed into pragmatism.

In addition to not indicating piety, this religious enthusiasm shows social competition in urban areas. Every social and religious entity shows symptoms of competition that lead to the struggle for resources in the social, political, and economic fields. They take advantage of the existence of mainstream institutions and then exercise control over the potential emergence of competitors. The urban Muslim community does not use mainstream attributes but identifies with modern Islam in its simplest form. Subsequently, modern Islam was commodified into performance, entertainment, and collective identity.

For faith-based basic education institutions, parents' enthusiasm is a potential opportunity for institutional development and improving the

⁵⁴ Amin Karuniawan, (Employee of State-Owned Enterprises) *Interview* (November 12, 2023).

quality of learning. The phase of identity formation and development as an existential need of parents can be utilized by increasing their transformation into more instrumental social capital. This opportunity is important to take advantage of because the phase is very limited. After elementary school, parents will be separated and will form a new community that has no emotional and ideological connection with before. They build a more pragmatic identity within the frame of professionalism.

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