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Faith, Ritual, and Social Boundaries: An Analysis of Religious Behavior in the An-Nadzir Community of South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the religious behavior of the An – Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The focus of the research is directed at the dimensions of religious behavior, influencing factors, and its social implications in the context of the local community. The research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in – depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of five key informants consisting of religious figures, community leaders, and ordinary members. Data analysis was conducted using thematic methods, complemented by source and method triangulation techniques to maintain validity. The results show that the religious behavior of the An – Nadzir community includes a cognitive dimension in the form of belief in the importance of upholding Allah's law and the sunnah of the Prophet; an emotional dimension that brings peace and spiritual experience to members; and a behavioral dimension in the form of the Latiful Akbar dhikr ritual, distinctive prayer procedures, and outward symbols such as turbans, veils, and blond hair. The community structure is organized through hierarchical leadership centered on an amir. Interactions with the outside community are relatively harmonious through mutual cooperation and economic engagement, although the community often faces stigma and criticism. The study's conclusions confirm that the An – Nadzir community is able to survive as a minority religious group through internal solidarity, social openness, and resilience in maintaining its religious identity. These findings contribute to the literature on minority religiosity in Indonesia and offer practical implications for strengthening pluralism and social tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Religious behavior is an important aspect in the study of the sociology of religion and the anthropology of religion because it reflects the relationship between beliefs, rituals, and the accompanying social dynamics. Religious behavior is not only limited to the formal ritual dimension, but also includes daily practices that shape individual and community identity. Theoretical studies show that religious behavior can be understood through various dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, which are closely related to beliefs, religious emotional experiences, and concrete actions such as prayer, worship, or engaging in social activities based on religious values (Aman et al., 2019; Chen & VanderWeele, 2018). Through this approach, religious behavior can be analyzed not only as an expression of personal faith, but also as a social construction that continuously interacts with culture, the environment, and the dynamics of the wider society. Therefore, research on religious behavior has not only academic but also practical relevance, especially in understanding how certain social groups maintain their identity and solidarity through religious practices.

The dimensions of religious behavior, as described in various literature, demonstrate the diversity of aspects that shape it. The cognitive dimension encompasses theological beliefs and understanding, the emotional dimension



relates to religious feelings and spiritual comfort, while the behavioral dimension reflects concrete practices such as prayer, communal worship, and social participation. Indicators of religious behavior can also include frequency of worship, involvement in socio-religious activities, and adherence to religious norms (Graafland, 2015; Iyer, 2016). Several studies also show that religious behavior contributes to psychological and social well-being, for example through religious coping mechanisms in the face of crises, increased solidarity, and strengthened group identity (AbdAleati et al., 2014; Pirutinsky et al., 2020). Thus, religious behavior cannot be separated from the socio-cultural reality in which it develops, so that each community has its own unique expressions that reflect the relationship between religious beliefs and their social context.

Studies on minority religious communities in Indonesia demonstrate complex dynamics, given that Indonesia is a country with a high diversity of beliefs. Minority groups often face stigma and discrimination, both in social spaces and public policy, which impacts their strategies for maintaining their identity and the continuity of religious practices (Fauk et al., 2021). Minority communities are often characterized by unique religious practices, both in rituals and social interactions, which serve as a means of resistance to external pressures and strengthen internal solidarity (Vanany et al., 2019). Furthermore, socio-political influences and state policies also shape the experiences of minority groups, encouraging them to build strong internal networks and develop coping mechanisms through religious practices (Aten et al., 2019; Chen & VanderWeele, 2018). Therefore, research on minority communities goes beyond simply examining religious practices, but also understanding how these communities build identity, resilience, and relationships with the wider community.

The An-Nadzir community in Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, is a religious group that is interesting to study from this perspective. This community is known for its unique characteristics, both in terms of doctrine, history, and religious practices. Rooted in Islamic tradition with influences from Sufism, An-Nadzir emphasizes spirituality, community unity, and religious ethics in daily life. Their long history and consistency in maintaining their religious identity distinguish this community from mainstream Islamic groups, both in appearance, practices, and social interactions with the surrounding community. Their religious behavior is reflected in shared rituals, adherence to community norms, and the application of religious values in social relations. However, literature specifically examining the An-Nadzir community is still limited, making this study important in providing a more in-depth empirical picture of this phenomenon.

From a theoretical perspective, the study of the An-Nadzir community can be enriched with approaches from the sociology of religion, social identity theory, and symbolic interactionism. The sociology of religion theory emphasizes the role of religion as a social institution that regulates societal behavior and norms (Kelly, 2016; VanderWeele et al., 2016). Meanwhile, social identity theory highlights how religious group identity shapes individual behavior, strengthens internal solidarity, and influences relations with external groups (Lüsel et al., 2018; Mason & Wronski,

2018). The symbolic interactionist perspective emphasizes the meaning of religious symbols and practices in everyday life, including how rituals strengthen collective identity (Molteni et al., 2020; Shariff et al., 2015). Thus, the use of this theoretical framework allows research to reveal how An–Nadzir's religious behavior is not only an expression of personal faith, but also a social construction that is continuously negotiated within the local cultural and social context.

Although a wide range of literature has discussed religious behavior and the dynamics of minority communities, specific research on the An–Nadzir community remains very limited. Most studies focus more on the dynamics of minority communities in general Click or tap here to enter text., the relationship between religiosity and psychological well–being (Pirutinsky et al., 2020; Schwalm et al., 2021), or the influence of religiosity on social and moral behavior (Peoples et al., 2016; Purzycki et al., 2016). This has given rise to research A gap exists, namely the lack of in–depth studies focusing on how the An–Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa forms and expresses its religious behavior in relation to the local socio–cultural context. Understanding this is crucial for highlighting the uniqueness and significance of this community within Indonesia's religious landscape and enriching the literature on the dynamics of minority religious groups.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing the religious behavior of the An–Nadzir community in the local context of Romang Lompoa, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency. The originality of this research is evident in its effort to combine theoretical approaches from the sociology of religion, social identity, and symbolic interactionism to explain the dynamics of religiosity in the An–Nadzir community, a study that is rarely done. Furthermore, this research not only identifies ritual practices but also analyzes the relationship between religious values, community identity, and the social responses of the surrounding community. Thus, this research contributes to the development of literature on minority religious communities in Indonesia while expanding the understanding of how religion plays a role in shaping community identity and solidarity.

Based on the description, the purpose of this study is to analyze the religious behavior of the An–Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, by emphasizing the dimensions of religious behavior, the factors that influence it, and its implications for social relations with the surrounding community. The formulation of the problem raised in this study is: *"How is the religious behavior of the An-Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, formed and practiced in the local socio-cultural context?"* With this problem formulation, the study is expected to be able to provide theoretical and practical contributions, both in the development of academic studies on religious behavior and in understanding the dynamics of minority communities within the framework of the plurality of Indonesian society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative design with a case study approach because its main focus is to deeply understand the religious behavior of the An – Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to explore religious phenomena comprehensively through direct interaction with community members in their socio – cultural context. This qualitative approach is relevant to the theoretical framework of the sociology of religion, social identity theory, and symbolic interactionism which emphasizes meaning, symbols, and social interaction as the basis for analysis (Mason & Wronski, 2018; Molteni et al., 2020). Thus, this research design not only aims to describe, but also analyze how religious behavior is formed and interpreted by the community in everyday life.

The research subjects were members of the An – Nadzir community residing in Romang Lompoa Village, with the main criteria being active involvement in community religious activities such as communal worship, religious study, and social religious activities. The informant selection technique was carried out using purposive sampling, namely selecting participants based on their relevance to the research objectives. Informants consisted of religious figures, community leaders, and ordinary members with varying ages and social roles to obtain a comprehensive picture of their religious practices. The number of informants was not strictly determined but followed the principle of reaching the point of data saturation, namely when the information obtained no longer yields new findings (Fauk et al., 2021; Pirutinsky et al., 2020). This approach ensures a diverse and in – depth narrative representation of the community's religious experiences.

The primary instrument of this research was the researcher herself, assisted by semi – structured interview guidelines, observation notes, and documentation. Semi – structured interviews were used to provide flexibility in exploring the informants' religious experiences while maintaining a focus on aspects of religious behavior such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. (Aman et al., 2019; Krok, 2014) Participatory observation was conducted during community activities such as congregational prayer, religious study groups, and Islamic holiday celebrations to capture concrete expressions of religious behavior. Documentation in the form of photo archives, community records, and local literature was used to strengthen the empirical data obtained in the field. This combination of instruments is expected to produce valid, in – depth, and context – rich data.

The data collection procedure was carried out in several stages. The first stage was initial observation (pre – fieldwork) by establishing communication with community leaders and obtaining permission to conduct the research. The second stage was participant observation, in which the researcher was present at community religious activities to record patterns of interaction, symbols, and rituals performed Click or tap here to enter text.. The third stage was in – depth interviews, conducted face – to – face with selected informants using an interview guide covering topics regarding their beliefs, practices, and spiritual experiences.

The final stage was documentation of religious activities and community records. All data obtained were recorded in detail and compiled into transcripts and field notes.

The data analysis method used was thematic analysis, which was conducted by in-depth reading of all interview transcripts and field notes, then identifying the main themes related to religious behavior. This analysis was conducted through several steps: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated readings, (2) initial coding of meaning units, (3) grouping codes into main themes, (4) reviewing themes to ensure consistency with the data, and (5) interpreting the results within the theoretical framework of the sociology of religion, social identity, and symbolic interactionism (Mason & Wronski, 2018; Molteni et al., 2020). To increase the validity of the data, the study used triangulation techniques, both source triangulation (figures, members, and documents) and method triangulation (observation, interviews, documentation). The validity of the research results was also maintained through member checking, namely confirming temporary findings with informants to ensure they match their experiences.

With this research design, sample, instruments, procedures, and analytical methods, this study is designed to be replicable by other researchers in similar contexts. However, the uniqueness of this study lies in the depth of interaction with the An-Nadzir community and its focus on the relationship between religious behavior and the local socio-cultural context in Gowa. This approach is expected to produce a picture that is not only descriptive but also analytical, thus making a significant contribution to the literature on the religious behavior of minority groups in Indonesia.

RESEARCH RESULT

Overview of Research Location

This research was conducted in Romang Lompoa Village, Bontomarannu District, Gowa Regency, South Sulawesi, which is the center of the An-Nadzir community. This location is known as a relatively isolated village, with a communal and religious social life. The An-Nadzir community organizes its life with a unique social and religious structure, including ritual practices, hierarchical leadership, and religious activities that differ from mainstream Muslims in Indonesia. The community environment is characterized by togetherness, mutual cooperation, and adherence to the teachings of their religious leaders.

Informant Profile

Five key informants were interviewed in this study, with varying social backgrounds and positions within the community. The informants' initials are used to maintain confidentiality:

- **A** (52 years old), a community treasurer, actively leads Friday night dhikr.
- **R** (51 years old), a housewife, initially refused but finally joined after having a spiritual experience through a dream.

- **S** (58 years), leader of the An–Nadzir community, with long experience in preaching and teaching.
- **I** (44 years old), a housewife who joined due to family influence.
- **F** (46 years old), a male member of the congregation who is active in worship and community social activities.

Their presence in the interviews provided a comprehensive picture of the religious life, social structure, and dynamics of the An–Nadzir community.

Community Religious Behavior Patterns

1. The Beginning of Joining An-Nadzir

The informants had different experiences in getting to know this community. Some joined because of personal experience, some due to family influence, and still others due to religious leaders. Informant **A** stated: *"Before joining my heart was uneasy, after joining it became the ultimate goal."* Meanwhile, informant **R** explained that she initially refused, but then joined after having a dream that she considered a guide: *"At first, I was against it, but after having the dream and it aligned with An-Nadzir's characteristics, I finally joined, especially since my husband had joined earlier."*

Community leader, informant **S**, shared his longer experience: *"Taught by a teacher in the 70s in Kalimantan, Riau, Singapore, and Thailand. In 1998, he took a da'wah safari to South Sulawesi, received an extraordinary response, and formed An-Nadzir in 2001."* Informant **I** joined due to the influence of close family: *"At that time, I was still in college, starting from a relative who participated in tabiyah activities."* Meanwhile, informant **F** stated that since 2004 he has known An–Nadzir because its teachings emphasize the Sunnah of the Prophet: *"It was first introduced in 2004, because it was different from other mass organizations that did not prioritize the teachings of the Sunnah of the Prophet."*

2. Religious Rituals and Practices

The An–Nadzir community has a distinctive routine ritual. Informant **A** explained the dhikr activity: *"Every Friday night, we hold Latiful Akbar or dhikr after Isha, led by ourselves for prayers of safety."* Informant **R** added: *"Reading dhikr Latiful Akbar is held every Thursday for women and Friday night for men."*

In addition to dhikr, this community has a different prayer method from the majority of Muslims. Informant **R** said: *"The prayer is straight, without folding the arms and without qunut. The characteristic is that men wear turbans and women wear niqabs."* Informant **F** added: *"In An-Nadzir there are three prayer times based on sunrise and sunset, the call to prayer is also different, namely in between the call to prayer they say hayya 'ala khairil amal."*

Informant **S** emphasized that their religious rituals were always discussed and led by a religious teacher: *"There is a leader or religious teacher who is respected and listened to, so that carrying out religious practices is easy."*

3. Social Structure and Leadership

The An – Nadzir community has a clear organizational structure. Informant **A** mentioned a leader and a treasurer, while informant **F** stated: *"The Amir is the leader, the Baitul Mal is the treasurer, and there is a secretary."* According to the community leader (**S**): *"There is a leader, a treasurer, and other stakeholders. In addition, there is a foundation to develop education, agriculture, trade, industry, health, and defense."*

This structure serves to ensure the orderly running of religious and social activities. All members tend to focus on the leader as the center of authority, as **A** stated: *"What the leader says is heard and obeyed."*

4. Interaction with the Outside Community

Informants explained that relations with the outside community are relatively good. Informant **A** said: *"Interactions with people outside An-Nadzir are still good, and mutual cooperation is also carried out."* Informant **I** added that he maintains contact with the surrounding community through his work: *"I provide a sewing service, and usually people bring in sewing from outside the community, but our place is open to the public."*

However, differences often give rise to minor conflicts. Informant **A** stated, *"I once had a conflict with a sibling who didn't share my views."* Meanwhile, informant **F** emphasized, *"It was a tough challenge at first because I was at odds with the general public, like my own family. But after consistent practice, it turned out there was nothing wrong with An-Nadzir."*

5. Response to Criticism

The An – Nadzir community has its own way of dealing with criticism. Informant **A** stated: *"The way to respond to criticism is by providing evidence."* Informant **R** added: *"An-Nadzir conveys it well."* Meanwhile, informant **F** said: *"The response remains positive because it is all considered slander, a strategy of discussion or debate is used to determine what is true."*

The community leader (**S**) explained that their strength lies in unity: *"The key is in the unity of An-Nadzir which the main strength is."*

6. Social and Personal Change

Almost all informants experienced changes after joining this community. Informant **A** said: *"My wife and children have changed, both in terms of clothing."* Informant **I** said: *"The change in myself is wearing more covered clothing."*

Informant **F** acknowledged the challenges at the beginning but felt calm: "*The challenges were tough at the beginning, but after consistency, there is nothing wrong with An-Nadzir because it teaches goodness.*"

The community leader (**S**) confirmed a major change in his life: "*Before meeting the great teacher, he was still wandering, but finally he stopped wandering and focused on teaching Allah's law at An-Nadzir.*"

7. Hope for the Future

The informants expressed hope that the An-Nadzir community would be increasingly accepted and developed. Informant **A** stated: "*I hope education will continue to develop, even though there is no prohibition on studying abroad, and I hope the An-Nadzir village will not be left behind again.*" Informant **R** added: "*I hope An-Nadzir will be even better in the future.*"

Informant **F** hopes that the public will not misunderstand: "*I hope that people will not consider An-Nadzir as a heretical teaching, because its teachings are based on the Prophet.*" The community leader (**S**) emphasized the role of tolerance and communication: "*An-Nadzir understands tolerance and there is a Ministry of Religion that facilitates communication forums for religious communities.*"

DISCUSSION

1. Religious Behavior of the An-Nadzir Community from the Perspective of Sociology and Anthropology of Religion

The results of the study show that the religious behavior of the An-Nadzir community in Romang Lompoa is not merely an individual religious expression, but is a complex social construction, containing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions as described in the literature. The cognitive dimension is seen in their belief in the importance of upholding Allah's law and following the Prophet's sunnah without compromise, as emphasized by informant **F** : "*The goal is to follow the teachings of the Prophet.*" This is in line with the understanding that the cognitive aspect of religiosity includes belief and interpretation of religious texts (Aman et al., 2019; Krok, 2014).

The emotional dimension of this community is reflected in the spiritual experiences of some members, as expressed by **R**, who admitted to joining after having a dream believed to be divine guidance. This emotional experience strengthened inner peace, as **S** stated: "*I felt calmer and more peaceful after joining.*" This is consistent with literature showing that religiosity functions as a coping mechanism in the face of crisis and can improve psychological well-being (AbdAleati et al., 2014; Pirutinsky et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the behavioral dimension is seen in routine worship practices such as dhikr. Latiful Akbar, distinctive prayer procedures, the use of outward symbols

such as turbans, veils, and blond hair, and mutual cooperation in social activities. These dimensions align with the category of religious behavior that emphasizes concrete actions in the form of worship and social activities Klik atau ketuk di sini untuk memasukkan teks.. Thus, the research results indicate that the An – Nadzir community integrates all dimensions of religious behavior as described in the literature.

2. Dynamics of Minority Religious Communities in Indonesia

The findings of this study also support the literature on the dynamics of religious minority communities in Indonesia. As a non – mainstream group, An – Nadzir often faces stigma and negative judgment from outsiders, even being accused of heresy. Informant F acknowledged the significant challenges of initially joining due to rejection from family and the general public: *"The challenges were significant at the beginning because it conflicted with the general public."* This aligns with studies that suggest minority groups often experience discrimination and stigma, leading them to develop adaptive strategies to maintain their existence (Fauk et al., 2021).

However, the An – Nadzir community demonstrates adaptive capabilities by maintaining good social relations with the surrounding community through mutual cooperation and open interactions, as expressed by A: *"Interactions with people outside An-Nadzir are still good, mutual cooperation is also carried out."* This practice reflects the resilience pattern of minority communities in the face of social pressure, where the continuity of religious identity is maintained without severing broader social relations (Aten et al., 2019). Thus, An – Nadzir can be seen as an example of a minority community that is able to manage the tension between maintaining the uniqueness of religious identity and the need for social acceptance in a pluralistic society.

3. Social Identity Theory and Community Solidarity

The informants' experiences indicate that collective identity plays a crucial role in strengthening community solidarity. Informant S asserted: *"The key lies in the unity of An-Nadzir, which is the main force."* This can be explained by social identity theory, which states that individuals gain a sense of identity through membership in a particular social group, and this identity shapes collective behavior and strengthens group loyalty (Lüsel et al., 2018; Mason & Wronski, 2018).

Within the An – Nadzir community, social identity is constructed through distinctive symbols (clothing, hair, turbans), distinct worship practices, and obedience to leaders. This identity reinforces a sense of belonging and serves as a clear distinction from those outside the community. However, this distinction does not always lead to conflict, as the community strives to maintain healthy social interactions. This dynamic aligns with literature highlighting that religious group identity can be both a source of internal solidarity and a potential source of distance from external groups (Peoples et al., 2016).

4. Symbolic Interactionism and the Meaning of Rituals

religious behavior of the An-Nadzir community can also be understood through the perspective of symbolic interactionism, where symbols and rituals shape meaning in everyday life. Latiful Akbar, Friday prayers with distinctive procedures, and the use of outward symbols (robes, turbans, veils) are not only ritual acts, but also a means of strengthening collective identity and spiritual meaning. Informant **A** explained: *"Every Friday night there is a Latiful Akbar or dhikr after Isha for prayers for safety."* Meanwhile, **F** described a different Friday prayer: *"The first and second sermons are reading surahs, but there is no lecture in the sermon."*

These rituals not only affirm adherence to religious beliefs but also serve as symbolic interactions that bind community members together in a collective consciousness. This aligns with literature that emphasizes that rituals play a crucial role in building social cohesion, strengthening group identity, and providing meaning to life for its members Klik atau ketuk di sini untuk memasukkan teks.. Thus, the An-Nadzir ritual serves as a means of internalizing values, objectifying them in the form of social institutions and practices, and externalizing them through social religious expressions.

5. Relationship with Local Socio-Cultural Context

The research also shows that An-Nadzir's religious behavior cannot be separated from the local socio-cultural context. For example, their interactions with outsiders continue through economic activities, education, and mutual cooperation. Informant **I** explained, *"I offer a sewing service, and usually people bring in sewing from outside the community."* This demonstrates that despite their religious uniqueness, the community remains open to social interaction.

This condition is consistent with the literature stating that minority religious behavior is often influenced by the local context and the adaptation strategies developed to gain social acceptance (Aman et al., 2019; Kato, 2013). By maintaining internal traditions while building harmonious relationships with the outside community, An-Nadzir is able to manage the balance between maintaining religious identity and adapting to local social values.

6. Significance of Research Results

The findings of this study are significant because they demonstrate how minority religious communities in Indonesia form, maintain, and express their identities within a pluralistic society. These findings contribute to academic understanding of religious behavior in minority contexts, expanding the literature that has previously focused primarily on majority religiosity.

The practical significance of this research is that it provides the wider public and policymakers with a clear understanding that differences in religious expression are not always a threat but can contribute to social diversity as long as they are implemented within a framework of positive interactions. Thus, this

research helps open up space for interfaith dialogue and strengthen the principle of pluralism in Indonesia.

7. Research Implications

The implications of this research include three aspects. First, theoretical implications, namely strengthening the relevance of sociological theories of religion, social identity, and symbolic interactionism in understanding the dynamics of minority communities. Second, practical implications, namely the need for a dialogical approach between the government, society, and minority communities to reduce stigma and discrimination. Third, social implications, namely emphasizing the importance of internal solidarity and external openness for the sustainability of minority communities in a pluralistic society.

8. Research Limitations

While this study provides in-depth insights, there are limitations that should be noted. First, the number of informants was limited to five, so the findings may not necessarily represent the perspectives of all community members. Second, the study focused on a single location, so generalizations to the An-Nadzir community elsewhere should be approached with caution. Third, the data obtained relied on the subjective narratives of informants, so there is a potential for bias in the presentation of experiences.

This limitation also opens up opportunities for further research by expanding the number of informants, comparing with the An-Nadzir community in other regions, or using a long-term ethnographic approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This discussion confirms that the religious behavior of the An-Nadzir community is a complex phenomenon involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, with a strong foundation of social identity and symbolic interaction. The results of the study show that despite often facing stigma as a minority community, An-Nadzir is able to maintain their religious identity while establishing harmonious relationships with the surrounding community. This study contributes to the literature on minority religiosity in Indonesia and emphasizes the importance of an approach that respects diversity in understanding religious dynamics in pluralistic societies.

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