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MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS AND THE ISLAMIC IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT OF TARAI BANGUN, RIAU



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Abstract

Rapid urbanization and social heterogeneity in urban areas frequently trigger dynamics of religious identity crises among adolescents. This study aims to describe the forms of Islamic identity crisis, analyze its contributing factors, and explore the adaptation strategies employed by Muslim youths in Tarai Bangun Village, Kampar Regency. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The findings reveal that the identity crisis experienced by adolescents is not a rejection of Islamic teachings, but rather a dynamic transition from a normative, family-inherited identity toward a reflective Islamic identity constructed through exploration, negotiation, and commitment to Islamic values. This identity development evolves through three distinct stages: normative understanding (ages 12–14), social-moral expansion (ages 15–17), and reflective internalizations (ages 17–18). The primary drivers of this crisis include value discrepancies between home, school, and peer environments, exacerbated by urbanization, social media exposure, peer pressure, and a lack of supportive mentorship. This study underscores the need for comprehensive adaptation strategies that integrate Islamic digital literacy, family guidance, community support, and Islamic psychological approaches to foster an adaptive socio-religious identity amid modern challenges.

Abstrak

Perkembangan urbanisasi dan heterogenitas sosial di wilayah urban kerap memicu dinamika krisis identitas keagamaan pada remaja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk krisis identitas keislaman, menganalisis faktor-faktor penyebabnya, serta menggali strategi adaptasi remaja Muslim di Desa Tarai Bangun, Kabupaten Kampar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan diskusi kelompok terarah (Focus Group Discussion). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa krisis identitas yang dialami remaja bukanlah bentuk penolakan terhadap ajaran Islam, melainkan proses transisi dinamis dari identitas normatif yang diwariskan keluarga menuju identitas reflektif yang dibentuk melalui eksplorasi dan negosiasi nilai. Perkembangan identitas keislaman ini berlangsung secara bertahap: pemahaman normatif (usia 12–14 tahun), perluasan sosial-moral (usia 15–17 tahun), dan pemaknaan reflektif (usia 17–18 tahun). Faktor utama pemicu krisis mencakup diskrepansi nilai antara lingkungan keluarga, sekolah, dan pergaulan, yang diperparah oleh arus urbanisasi, paparan media sosial, tekanan teman sebaya (peer pressure), serta minimnya pendampingan yang konstruktif. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan strategi adaptasi komprehensif berbasis penguatan literasi digital Islami, pendampingan keluarga, peran aktif tokoh agama, serta pendekatan psikologis Islami untuk membentuk identitas sosial-religius yang adaptif terhadap modernitas.



Background

The rapid expansion of urbanization and digital technology has fundamentally transformed the social and religious lives of Muslim adolescents.¹ Contemporary societies are increasingly characterized by what Manuel Castells describes as a network society, in which social interactions, cultural exchanges, and identity formation are mediated through information and communication technologies.² Within this networked environment, young people are continuously exposed to diverse religious interpretations, lifestyles, and value systems that transcend geographical boundaries. While these developments provide greater opportunities for learning and self-expression, they also challenge traditional institutions of religious socialization, such as families, schools, and mosques, which have historically played a central role in shaping Islamic identity.

Previous studies have demonstrated that social media, globalization, and urbanization significantly influence adolescents' religious identity and moral development.³ Existing scholarship has shown that digital platforms facilitate access to diverse religious discourses while simultaneously exposing young Muslims to competing ideological influences, resulting in uncertainty regarding religious beliefs and practices.⁴ However, most of these studies have concentrated either on adolescents living in large metropolitan areas or on general discussions of online religious engagement. Consequently, limited attention has been devoted to Muslim adolescents residing in transitional peri-urban communities, where traditional rural values and rapidly expanding urban cultures intersect. The experiences of youth in these liminal settings remain insufficiently understood, particularly regarding how

¹ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 567–70.

² Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, vol. 1, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 476.

³ Imron Rosidi, "Anak Muda Muslim Di Pekanbaru: Konsumsi, Identitas Dan Globalisasi," *MADANIA: Jurnal-Jurnal Keislaman* 10, no. 2 (2020): 67–72, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jiik.v10i2.11436>; Alwin Dani, Balhaqi Nukman, and Zaidan Hasan, "Dynamics of Religious Identity of Muslim Students in a Multicultural Environment," *Journal on Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2025): 67–77, <https://doi.org/10.35335/k8mjwp37>; Najib Aulia Rahman and Aisha Azzahra, "The Role of Islamic Education in Preserving Cultural Identity amidst Global Modernity," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 4 (2024): 257–71, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v2i4.707>.

⁴ Khotimah Khotimah, Imron Rosidi, and Rahimah Embong, "The Quest for Islamic Identity among Muslim University Students in Riau, Indonesia," *Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture, and Social Studies* 5, no. 2 (2025): 180–96, <https://doi.org/10.53754/ft8w0z82>; Ubaidillah Ubaidillah and Irmak Sude Girel, "Multiculturalism and Islamic Education in Western Contexts: Navigating Identity, Faith, and Citizenship," *MUMTAZ: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 2 (2025): 379–92, <https://doi.org/10.69552/mumtaz.v5i2.3249>.

they negotiate Islamic identity amid simultaneous pressures from local traditions, urban lifestyles, and digital culture.

This study addresses that gap by focusing on Tarai Bangun Village, Kampar Regency—an area long known as *Bumi Serambi Mekkah* (the Veranda of Mecca) that has functionally become a suburban extension of Pekanbaru, creating a distinctive setting where rural Islamic traditions meet urban heterogeneity and digital connectivity. As a result, Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun occupy a unique transitional space. Unlike adolescents in rural communities, whose religious identity is reinforced by relatively homogeneous social environments, or those in established urban areas, who often have access to diverse youth-oriented Islamic organizations and religious communities, adolescents in Tarai Bangun must navigate a fluid social landscape in which traditional religious institutions are gradually losing influence. In contrast, new urban and digital cultures continue to expand.⁵ This makes Tarai Bangun an important setting for examining how Islamic identity is constructed and negotiated within contemporary peri-urban society. The selection of Tarai Bangun is therefore based on analytical rather than statistical considerations. As a peri-urban community experiencing accelerated urbanization while maintaining strong religious traditions, Tarai Bangun provides an opportunity to observe the interaction between local Islamic values and global cultural influences in ways that are particularly visible and theoretically informative. Although similar processes occur in many suburban areas across Indonesia, Tarai Bangun offers a concentrated illustration of these dynamics because urban expansion has occurred within a community whose religious identity has historically been strongly embedded in Islamic institutions and Malay culture. Examining this setting enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which Muslim adolescents negotiate religious identity under conditions of rapid socio-cultural transformation.

Theoretically, Castells' concept of the network society provides an appropriate framework for understanding these transformations.⁶ The increasing interconnectedness enabled by digital communication technologies has reshaped the processes through which adolescents acquire religious knowledge, construct identities, and engage with broader Muslim communities. Rather than relying exclusively on local religious authorities, Muslim youth increasingly encounter religious teachings through social media, online influencers, and digital networks, creating multiple and sometimes competing sources of religious authority. These dynamics are especially evident in peri-urban communities such as Tarai Bangun,

⁵ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 120 – 25.

⁶ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1996.

where technological connectivity accelerates cultural change while traditional mechanisms of religious guidance remain in transition.

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore how Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun negotiate and maintain their Islamic identity amid rapid urbanization and digital transformation. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten purposively selected informants, including Muslim adolescents aged 13–18 years, mosque administrators, and community leaders, supported by participant observation and focus group discussions. By examining the lived experiences of Muslim adolescents in a semi-urban transitional community, this study extends existing scholarship beyond the dominant metropolitan perspective. It contributes to the sociology of religion and Islamic youth studies by demonstrating how Islamic identity is negotiated within peri-urban settings and by proposing context-sensitive strategies for strengthening religious guidance (*da'wah*) among Muslim youth facing the challenges of contemporary technological and social change.

Concept of Identity Crisis: a Theoretical Framework

Religious identity, particularly Islamic identity, constitutes a central dimension of adolescent identity formation. Islamic identity extends beyond merely identifying oneself as a Muslim; it encompasses the internalization of Islamic beliefs (*iman*), the observance of religious practices (*ibadah*), adherence to Islamic moral values (*akhlak*), and commitment to Islamic teachings as guiding principles in everyday life. Thus, Islamic identity is reflected not only in religious affiliation but also in the extent to which Islamic values shape adolescents' worldview, behavior, social relationships, and decision-making. During adolescence, when individuals actively seek answers to questions about who they are and what they believe, religious identity becomes an important source of meaning, belonging, and moral orientation. Consequently, Islamic identity is continuously negotiated through interactions between personal convictions, family upbringing, peer relationships, educational institutions, and the broader socio-cultural environment.

An Islamic identity crisis emerges when adolescents experience uncertainty or conflict in integrating Islamic beliefs, religious practices, and moral commitments into their developing sense of self. This condition is characterized by confusion regarding which religious values should be maintained and how Islamic teachings should be practiced amid competing social expectations. Both external and internal influences shape such uncertainty. Externally, globalization, urbanization, and digital technologies expose adolescents to diverse lifestyles, belief systems, and cultural values that may differ from or even contradict Islamic norms. Social media, in particular, provides unrestricted access to multiple religious narratives as well as secular and popular cultures, creating competing sources of identity and authority.

Adolescents may therefore experience tension between conforming to global cultural trends and maintaining commitment to Islamic principles. The peer environment and increasingly heterogeneous urban communities further intensify these pressures by encouraging social conformity that may not always align with religious values. Internally, adolescents' religious knowledge, spiritual experiences, and personal reflections influence how they interpret and practice Islam. Likewise, parental guidance, family harmony, and consistent religious education play significant roles in strengthening or weakening adolescents' Islamic identity.

The concept of identity crisis was first introduced by Erikson⁷, who argued that adolescence represents a critical stage of psychosocial development during which individuals strive to establish a coherent sense of self by developing commitments regarding their values, beliefs, and future roles. According to Erikson, failure to resolve this developmental task results in identity confusion. Within the context of this study, Islamic identity constitutes one of the most significant domains through which Muslim adolescents seek coherence between their religious beliefs, personal aspirations, and social environment. Consequently, the challenges Muslim adolescents face in maintaining Islamic commitments amid rapid social change can be understood as part of Erikson's broader process of identity formation.⁸

Building upon Erikson's theory, Marcia⁹ proposed the identity status model based on two interrelated dimensions: exploration and commitment. Exploration refers to the active process of seeking information, questioning, and evaluating alternative values, beliefs, and life choices before making identity-related decisions. Applied to Islamic identity, this involves adolescents deepening their understanding of Islamic teachings, comparing religious perspectives encountered offline and online, and reflecting on Islamic influences from family, peers, schools, and digital media—observable through indicators such as actively seeking religious knowledge, weighing alternative interpretations, and experiencing emotional responses (confidence, doubt, or anxiety) during this process. These indicators demonstrate the extent to which adolescents actively construct their Islamic identity rather than merely inheriting it.

Commitment, meanwhile, refers to the extent to which adolescents internalize Islamic beliefs and consistently express them through religious practices, moral conduct, and everyday decision-making despite external social pressures. The

⁷ Nur Hidayah and Huriati, "Krisis Identitas Diri Pada Remaja 'Identity Crisis of Adolescents,'" *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman* 10, no. 1 (2016): 49–62, <https://doi.org/10.24252/v10i1.1851>.

⁸ Jess Feist, Gregory J Feist, and Tomi-Ann Roberts, *Theories of Personality*, 9th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2017).

⁹ James E Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3, no. 5 (1966): 551–58, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>.

interaction between exploration and commitment determines whether adolescents develop a stable Islamic identity or experience uncertainty and identity crisis: strong commitment generally provides greater clarity in guiding personal behavior. In contrast, weak commitment leaves adolescents more vulnerable to identity confusion. Following Marcia (as cited in Purwadi), commitment thus represents the psychological stability achieved after the exploration process and serves as an important indicator of mature Islamic identity.

In general, identity refers to an individual's understanding of who they are, developed through self-reflection and social interaction. Identity is not formed solely through internal psychological processes but is continuously shaped by social relationships, cultural values, and community expectations. Religious identity, therefore, develops through ongoing interaction between personal religious convictions and the surrounding social environment. For Muslim adolescents, Islamic identity evolves through continuous negotiation between inherited religious traditions and the changing realities of contemporary society. This dynamic process often involves periods of uncertainty, exploration, and commitment before a stable religious identity is achieved.

Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village confront the challenges of maintaining their Islamic identity amid rapid urbanization and the expansion of digital culture. In this study, Islamic identity is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing several interconnected dimensions, namely religious beliefs (*aqidah*), reflected in adolescents' understanding of and confidence in Islamic doctrines; religious practices (*ibadah*), including the performance of daily prayers, Qur'anic recitation, mosque attendance, and participation in religious activities; Islamic moral and ethical values (*akhlak*), expressed through behavior consistent with Islamic principles in interactions with family, peers, and society; a sense of belonging to the Muslim community (*ummah*), demonstrated through identification with and participation in Islamic social and religious networks; as well as commitment to Islamic teachings, reflected in the extent to which Islamic values guide adolescents' everyday decisions, lifestyles, and responses to contemporary social challenges. An Islamic identity crisis is understood as uncertainty, inconsistency, or conflict experienced by adolescents as they integrate these dimensions into a coherent sense of self. Both internal and external factors shape such dynamics. Internal factors include adolescents' religious knowledge, spiritual experiences, and personal reflections. In contrast, external factors encompass parental guidance, peer influence, social media exposure, educational environments, and the broader social transformations occurring within the community. Consequently, the Islamic identity crisis is not merely a matter of declining religiosity but also reflects adolescents' ongoing efforts to negotiate religious beliefs, practices, moral commitments, and

social belonging while balancing the demands of Islamic teachings with the realities of life in a rapidly changing semi-urban society.¹⁰

Tarai Bangun: Local, Global and Islam

Tarai Bangun Village is located in Tambang District, Kampar Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia, and forms part of the rapidly expanding suburban corridor surrounding Pekanbaru, the provincial capital. Although administratively classified as a village within Kampar Regency, Tarai Bangun has undergone profound spatial and demographic transformation due to the outward expansion of Pekanbaru over the past two decades. Improved transportation infrastructure, large-scale residential development, and increasing economic integration with the city have accelerated population growth and urbanization. Geographically, Tarai Bangun occupies a strategic position as a transitional peri-urban area where rural landscapes coexist with new housing estates, commercial centers, educational institutions, and modern public facilities. This dual character has made the village an important destination for migrants from various parts of Riau and other Indonesian provinces, resulting in a socially heterogeneous community that differs markedly from the relatively homogeneous Malay-Muslim villages traditionally associated with Kampar Regency.¹¹

The demographic composition of Tarai Bangun reflects this process of socio-cultural transformation. While the indigenous Malay community remains an important cultural group, the village is now inhabited by migrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak, Bugis, and other ethnic communities. Islam is the dominant religion and the primary cultural framework shaping public life, social interaction, and communal values. Mosques, *majelis taklim* (Islamic study circles), Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and Qur'anic education centers (*TPQ*) continue to play significant roles in religious socialization and community life. Nevertheless, increasing cultural diversity and the rapid diffusion of digital media have introduced new lifestyles, religious interpretations, and social values that coexist with long-established Malay-Islamic traditions. This interaction between local Islamic customs and global cultural influences creates a distinctive socio-religious environment in which adolescents negotiate their religious identities amid multiple, sometimes competing, sources of authority.

¹⁰ Amelia Nugraeni, "Peran Media Sosial Dalam Pembentukan Identitas Sosial Anak Muda," *LANCAH: Jurnal Inovasi Dan Tren* 2, no. 1 (2024): 142–47, <https://doi.org/10.35870/ljit.v2i1.2247>.

¹¹ Arfa Fadhillah, Rosyetti, and Taryono, "Analisis Transformasi Sosial Ekonomi Wilayah Peri Urban Di Kabupaten Kampar (Studi Kasus Desa Tarai Bangun Kecamatan Tambang)," *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa (JOM) Bidang Ilmu Ekonomi* 4, no. 1 (2017): 201–13.

Historically, Tarai Bangun developed as an agrarian settlement within Kampar Regency, a region widely recognized as *Bumi Serambi Mekkah* (the Veranda of Mecca)¹² because of its strong Islamic heritage and the close integration of Malay customs (*adat*) with Islamic teachings. However, its proximity to Pekanbaru has gradually transformed the village into one of the province's fastest-growing suburban areas, accompanied by changes in local governance, political participation, educational opportunities, and social interaction patterns. Politically, the community reflects the democratic dynamics typical of contemporary Indonesia, with local leadership, religious organizations, and community associations actively participating in development initiatives and public decision-making. Educationally, Tarai Bangun has experienced substantial growth through the establishment of public and private schools, Islamic educational institutions, and its proximity to several higher education institutions in Pekanbaru. These developments have broadened adolescents' educational aspirations and expanded their access to digital technologies and diverse sources of knowledge. Consequently, Tarai Bangun represents more than a rapidly urbanizing locality; it constitutes a strategic peri-urban setting where local Islamic traditions, national development, and global cultural flows converge, making it a valuable case for examining how Muslim adolescents negotiate Islamic identity in contemporary Indonesia.

The Role of Urban Communities in Shaping Adolescents' Islamic Identity

Urban communities constitute important social spaces where diverse cultures, lifestyles, and value systems interact, significantly influencing adolescents' identity formation. Rapid urbanization, modernization, and digitalization have transformed the social environments in which Muslim adolescents develop their religious identity. Compared with traditional rural communities, urban settings are characterized by greater social heterogeneity, increased cultural mobility, and wider exposure to global ideas and lifestyles. Consequently, adolescents must negotiate between the religious values acquired through family and community socialization and the alternative values encountered in contemporary urban life. This process often generates tensions between maintaining Islamic commitments and adapting to the demands of modern society.

The increasing influence of digital technology further intensifies these challenges. Social media and internet-based communication have become major sources of religious knowledge and social interaction among adolescents. While digital platforms provide opportunities to access Islamic learning and connect with

¹² Ellya Roza et al., "History of Jami' Mosque Air Tiris: Cultural Symbol of Kampar Religious Tourism Destination as Serambi Mecca in Riau," *Sosial Budaya* 20, no. 1 (2023): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.24014/sb.v20i1.21863>.

broader Muslim communities, they also expose adolescents to diverse ideological perspectives, secular lifestyles, and competing interpretations of Islam.¹³ The abundance of online information, combined with adolescents' limited capacity to evaluate religious content critically, may create uncertainty about religious beliefs, practices, and moral values. Consequently, the formation of Islamic identity can no longer be understood solely through traditional institutions such as families, schools, and mosques. Still, it must also consider the expanding influence of digital networks within contemporary society.

Religious education remains a fundamental factor in strengthening adolescents' Islamic identity. Formal religious education provides essential knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices; however, existing studies suggest that school-based religious instruction often emphasizes doctrinal knowledge while paying insufficient attention to the everyday challenges adolescents face in rapidly changing social environments. As a result, many adolescents struggle to connect religious teachings with contemporary issues such as peer pressure, digital culture, and urban lifestyles. Non-formal religious education, including mosque-based study circles, youth religious organizations, and community discussion groups, can complement formal education by providing opportunities for dialogue, spiritual development, and practical religious engagement. Nevertheless, in many urban and peri-urban communities these institutions are either limited or less attractive to young people, encouraging adolescents to seek religious guidance from online sources whose credibility and ideological orientation vary considerably.¹⁴

The family likewise remains the primary agent of religious socialization during adolescence. Parents who consistently model Islamic values, encourage religious practices, and provide supportive religious education contribute significantly to the development of stable Islamic identities among their children. Conversely, limited parental involvement, family conflict, or inadequate religious guidance may weaken adolescents' religious foundations and increase their vulnerability to identity confusion. These challenges are often amplified in urban communities, where demanding work schedules, economic pressures, and changing family structures reduce opportunities for sustained religious mentoring within the household. Consequently, adolescents increasingly rely on peers, social media influencers, and online communities as alternative sources of religious knowledge and identity formation.

¹³ Imron Rosidi, Mhd. Ismail bin Sulaiman, and Irhason, "Asymmetric Hybridity: Glocalization, Deterritorialized Islam, and Malay Muslim Identity in Pekanbaru," *Penamas* 39, no. 1 (2026): 48 – 62, <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v39i1.1046>.

¹⁴ Nuryani, "Sikap Bahasa Remaja Urban Terhadap Bahasa Indonesia Di Era Milenial," *Kandai* 15, no. 1 (2019): 1 – 12, <https://doi.org/10.26499/jk.v15i1.1266>.

Despite these challenges, adolescents should not be viewed merely as passive recipients of external influences. Previous research demonstrates that many Muslim adolescents actively develop strategies to preserve and strengthen their religious identity amid rapid social change. These strategies include participating in mosque-based youth activities, joining Islamic study groups, selecting peer networks that share similar religious values, and critically engaging with digital religious content that promotes moderate Islamic teachings. Such adaptive behaviors illustrate adolescents' agency in negotiating their religious identity while responding to the opportunities and challenges presented by contemporary urban society.¹⁵

As previously conceptualized, Islamic identity in this study encompasses five interconnected dimensions—*aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlaq*, *ummah* belonging, and commitment—each shaped through continuous interaction with family, peers, schools, and digital media within the urban context described above. An Islamic identity crisis occurs when adolescents experience uncertainty or conflict in integrating these dimensions into their personal identity. Such a crisis may be reflected in inconsistencies between religious beliefs and everyday behavior, declining participation in religious practices, uncertainty regarding Islamic moral values, weakened attachment to the Muslim community, and fluctuating commitment to Islamic teachings, rather than representing merely a decline in religiosity, an Islamic identity crisis reflects adolescents' ongoing struggle to reconcile their religious identity with the competing expectations of family, peers, urban culture, and digital society.¹⁶

As outlined earlier, the present study interprets these dynamics through Erikson's Identity versus Role Confusion¹⁷ and Marcia's exploration-commitment framework. Applied to Muslim adolescents, unresolved tension between exploration and commitment manifests specifically through the urban pressures discussed above—competing digital religious narratives, peer conformity, and inconsistent institutional guidance.

From this perspective, adolescents experiencing an Islamic identity crisis typically exhibit uncertainty regarding personal and religious values, greater susceptibility to peer influence, inconsistency in religious practices and lifestyle choices, emotional distress arising from conflicting social expectations, withdrawal

¹⁵ Mohammad Muqronul Faiz, "Religious in Secularcapex: Adaptasi Identitas Santri Dalam Ruang Sekuler Di Mato Kopi," *Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 9, no. 2 (2024): 213 – 38.

¹⁶ Yusuf Kurniawan and Ajat Sudrajat, "Peran Teman Sebaya Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa Madrasah Tsanawiyah," *SOCIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 15, no. 2 (2018): 149 – 63, <https://doi.org/10.21831/socia.v15i2.22674>.

¹⁷ Erik H Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968).

from family or religious communities, weakened self-confidence, rejection of parental or religious authority, and, in some cases, the search for identity through extreme ideological groups. These indicators should not be interpreted as clinical symptoms but rather as analytical manifestations of adolescents' difficulties in integrating the core dimensions of Islamic identity into a coherent and stable sense of self.

Adolescence represents a particularly significant stage for examining these processes because it is a developmental period characterized by profound biological, psychological, emotional, and social transformations.¹⁸ During this transitional stage, individuals actively seek meaning, social recognition, and personal identity while simultaneously responding to increasing external influences. As Santrock argues¹⁹, adolescence serves as the bridge between childhood and adulthood, whereas Ali and Asrori emphasize that adolescents gradually perceive themselves as socially and psychologically equal to adults. Because identity formation reaches its most intensive phase during adolescence, this period is especially vulnerable to the competing influences of urbanization, globalization, and digitalization. Consequently, understanding how Muslim adolescents negotiate their Islamic identity within rapidly transforming semi-urban communities such as Tarai Bangun Village provides important insights into the broader relationship between religion, youth, and social change in contemporary Muslim societies.

Islamic Identity Crisis among Muslim Adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village

Findings show that the Islamic identity crisis among adolescents in Tarai Bangun reflects Erikson's²⁰ and Marcia's²¹ frameworks in practice: rather than rejecting Islam, participants exhibited varying degrees of exploration and commitment as they negotiated between inherited religious values and emerging social expectations. Their experiences indicate that Islamic identity develops progressively through interaction with family, peers, educational institutions, and digital media.

The first manifestation of the Islamic identity crisis appeared in adolescents' uncertainty regarding the practical expression of Islamic identity, particularly in relation to dress, religious appearance, and conformity to peer expectations. Younger participants (12–14 years) acknowledged experiencing confusion when comparing themselves with peers whose lifestyles appeared more compatible with contemporary

¹⁸ Robert E Alberti and Michael L Emmons, *Your Perfect Right* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2002).

¹⁹ John W Santrock, *Adolescence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998).

²⁰ Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 552–55.

²¹ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551–58.

youth culture.²² They reported being attracted to fashion trends and lifestyles encountered through social media because these were perceived as facilitating social acceptance among friends. Nevertheless, these adolescents consistently maintained that such uncertainty did not diminish their belief in Islam. Instead, their experiences reflected an early stage of identity exploration in which external social influences challenged previously unquestioned religious norms. This finding supports Marcia's argument²³ that identity development begins with exploration before stable commitments are established. It also illustrates Castells' proposition²⁴ that identity construction within the network society increasingly occurs through interactions between local socialization and global digital communication.

Identity negotiation became more complex during middle adolescence (15 – 17 years), when participants encountered greater cultural and religious diversity both offline and online. Several adolescents reported²⁵ experiencing uncertainty when interacting with non-Muslim peers or when observing different interpretations of Islamic practices among fellow Muslims, particularly regarding dress codes and religious observance. Rather than generating religious disengagement, these encounters encouraged adolescents to reflect critically on their own beliefs and religious commitments. Similar patterns emerged when participants questioned whether Islamic teachings could accommodate future career aspirations or modern lifestyles. Such concerns reflected adolescents' attempts to reconcile personal ambitions with religious obligations rather than abandoning Islamic values altogether. These findings suggest that identity confusion represents a process of religious reinterpretation, through which inherited beliefs gradually become personally internalized and meaningfully reconstructed.

Another prominent manifestation of the Islamic identity crisis involved the tension between religious commitment and peer acceptance. Participants described situations in which peer invitations to engage in activities that conflicted with parental expectations or Islamic teachings created feelings of internal conflict. Examples included invitations to socialize late at night, reluctance to perform prayers in public spaces because of fear of ridicule, and hesitation to express Islamic identity openly within school environments. Several adolescents admitted that they initially experienced embarrassment when practicing Islamic rituals or wearing visibly Islamic clothing because they feared being socially excluded. However, continued

²² An, "Interview with An (Adolescent, Age 15)," 2025; As, "Interview with As (Adolescent, Age 13)," 2025; F, "Interview with F (Adolescent, Age 17)," 2025.

²³ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58.

²⁴ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 7 – 12.

²⁵ T, "Interview with T (Adolescent, Age 18)," 2025; I, "Interview with I (Adolescent, Age 17)," 2025.

encouragement from parents, teachers, and religious mentors gradually strengthened their confidence to maintain Islamic practices despite social pressure. These experiences closely correspond to Erikson's notion that identity develops through resolving conflicts between individual commitments and external expectations. At the same time, they demonstrate that adolescents actively negotiate social belonging without necessarily compromising their religious identity.

Adolescents increasingly moved from normative religiosity toward reflective religiosity. During early adolescence, religious practices were generally performed because parents or the surrounding community expected them. As adolescents matured, however, many participants reported developing a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying Islamic teachings and becoming more capable of making independent religious decisions. Rather than merely complying with religious obligations, they began to perceive prayer, modesty, honesty, and ethical conduct as personally meaningful expressions of their identity. This progression reflects a transition from externally regulated religious behavior toward internally grounded religious commitment, consistent with Marcia's concept of identity achievement.²⁶

Therefore, the Islamic identity crisis among Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village is expressed through three interrelated dimensions of Islamic identity. The first concerns adolescents' relationship with Allah (*ḥablun min Allāh*), reflected in their commitment to obligatory worship, religious devotion, and personal spirituality. The second involves their relationship with other people (*ḥablun min al-nās*), expressed through Islamic moral values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, and social solidarity.²⁷ The third relates to adolescents' aspirations for the future, including educational achievement, career development, and responsible participation in contemporary society while remaining committed to Islamic principles. These dimensions are continuously shaped through interactions with family, schools, religious institutions, peer groups, and digital media, demonstrating that Islamic identity is simultaneously a personal, social, and religious construction.²⁸ Consequently, the Islamic identity crisis should be understood not as evidence of weakening religiosity but as a dynamic process of exploration, negotiation, and identity maturation, through which Muslim adolescents construct a coherent Islamic identity within an increasingly urbanized and digitally connected society.²⁹

²⁶ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58.

²⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2002), 23 – 37; John L Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44 – 52.

²⁸ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2010, 6 – 12; Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 128 – 35.

²⁹ Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, 24 – 31; Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58.

Factors Contributing to the Islamic Identity Crisis among Muslim Adolescents

The interaction of internal and external factors shapes the Islamic identity crisis experienced by Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village. Internal factors are associated with adolescents' personal understanding of Islam, religious experiences, and the development of commitment to Islamic values. In contrast, external factors originate from family socialization, peer relationships, educational settings, social media, and the changing socio-cultural environment. Rather than operating independently, these factors interact dynamically throughout adolescence and influence how young Muslims negotiate their religious beliefs, practices, and commitments. Recent studies similarly demonstrate that Islamic identity is continuously constructed through interactions between individual agency, religious institutions, digital media, and broader processes of globalization and urban social transformation.³⁰ Table 1 summarizes the major factors identified in this study.

Table 1. Major Factors Contributing to the Islamic Identity Crisis among Muslim Adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village

Dimension	Contributing Factor	Manifestation	Implications for Islamic Identity Formation
Internal	Identity exploration and self-confusion	Adolescents question religious beliefs, values, and personal identity, particularly during early and middle adolescence.	Creates uncertainty in integrating Islamic beliefs and personal aspirations, but may also stimulate deeper religious exploration.
Internal	Religious understanding and personal religious experience	Differences in religious knowledge, spiritual experiences, and personal reflection.	Stronger religious understanding promotes stable Islamic identity, whereas limited understanding increases vulnerability to identity confusion.
External	Family environment	Variations in parental supervision, religious education, and family harmony.	Supportive families strengthen religious commitment, while inconsistent guidance weakens adolescents' Islamic identity.
External	Peer influence	Pressure to conform to friendship groups and contemporary youth culture.	Adolescents often experience tension between maintaining Islamic values and gaining social acceptance.

³⁰ Dani, Nukman, and Hasan, "Dynamics of Religious Identity of Muslim Students in a Multicultural Environment," 67 – 77.

External	School and community environment	Differences in religious values across home, school, and neighborhood settings.	Inconsistent socialization creates conflicting expectations regarding religious behavior and identity.
External	Social media and digital technology	Exposure to diverse religious interpretations, secular lifestyles, and global cultural values.	Expands religious knowledge but also introduces competing ideologies that may generate confusion regarding Islamic identity.
External	Urbanization and socio-cultural change	Increasing cultural diversity and interaction with heterogeneous communities.	Encourages identity negotiation by exposing adolescents to multiple value systems beyond traditional Islamic communities.

As shown in Table 1, the Islamic identity crisis does not emerge from a single factor but from the dynamic interaction between adolescents' psychosocial development and the rapidly changing socio-cultural environment. Consistent with Marcia's identity status model, the findings indicate that Muslim adolescents continuously move between exploration and commitment as they negotiate the meaning of being Muslim in contemporary society.³¹ Internally, identity confusion develops progressively across different stages of adolescence. During early adolescence (approximately 12–13 years), participants began questioning themselves as they compared their beliefs and lifestyles with those of their peers. During middle adolescence (14–15 years), this uncertainty intensified due to increasing exposure to social media, heterogeneous social environments, and external cultural influences. By the ages of 16–17 years, adolescents experienced more complex dilemmas concerning religious obligations, moral values, and the compatibility of Islamic teachings with modern lifestyles. Nevertheless, many respondents actively sought religious knowledge through parents, teachers, mosques, and digital Islamic resources to resolve these tensions. By late adolescence (around 18 years), Islamic identity generally became more stable and reflective. Participants demonstrated greater confidence in practicing their religion, accepted social diversity more openly, and increasingly viewed Islam as a comprehensive ethical framework for everyday life. This developmental trajectory illustrates a gradual transition from inherited religiosity toward reflective and personally negotiated religious commitment.

³¹ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58.

External influences were equally significant in shaping adolescents' Islamic identity. The findings reveal that family, schools, peer groups, and the wider community often transmit different—and sometimes competing—systems of values. Adolescents frequently experienced inconsistencies between the Islamic values promoted within the family, the social expectations encountered at school, and the behavioral norms prevailing within friendship networks. Rather than functioning as complementary agents of socialization, these institutions occasionally generated contradictory expectations, making it more difficult for adolescents to construct a coherent Islamic identity. This finding supports sociological perspectives that religious identity is socially constructed through continuous interaction with multiple institutions rather than being formed solely through individual belief.³²

Among the external influences, peer relationships and digital media emerged as the most influential factors. Adolescents frequently faced dilemmas between maintaining religious commitments and gaining acceptance within their friendship circles. Invitations to engage in activities inconsistent with Islamic norms, differences in religious practices among peers, and continuous exposure to secular, liberal, or highly diverse religious content on social media often generated psychological tension. At the same time, digital media functioned as a double-edged sword. While it exposed adolescents to competing religious authorities and global cultural values, it also provided access to reputable Islamic scholars, online Qur'anic learning, and moderate *da'wah* content that strengthened religious understanding, in which identity is increasingly constructed through digitally mediated networks rather than exclusively through local communities.³³ Contemporary Indonesian Muslim youth develop their religious identities through interactions between Islamic traditions, popular culture, consumer culture, and digital media, resulting in forms of religiosity that are increasingly reflexive and negotiated rather than merely inherited.³⁴

The rapid urbanization of Tarai Bangun Village further intensified these identity negotiations. The transformation of the village from a predominantly rural community into a peri-urban area has increased cultural diversity, social mobility, educational opportunities, and digital connectivity. Consequently, adolescents are required to negotiate Islamic values within a social environment characterized by multiple cultural references and competing moral frameworks. Unlike adolescents living in relatively homogeneous rural communities, participants in Tarai Bangun continuously interacted with heterogeneous populations and diverse lifestyles while

³² Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 149 – 73.

³³ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2010, 6 – 12.

³⁴ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229 – 50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>.

simultaneously maintaining strong attachments to local Islamic traditions. This finding demonstrates that peri-urban communities constitute distinctive arenas of religious identity formation, where local Islamic values and global cultural influences coexist and are continuously renegotiated.

Despite these challenges, the Islamic identity crisis identified in this study should not be interpreted as evidence of declining religiosity. Instead, it represents a developmental process through which Muslim adolescents actively reconstruct the meaning of Islam within contemporary social life. Indonesian Muslim youth increasingly experience Islam not simply as an inherited tradition but as an identity that must be consciously interpreted, negotiated, and performed within changing social contexts. Adolescents' engagement with diverse social environments encourages them to move beyond normative religious observance toward a more reflective understanding of Islamic beliefs, practices, and moral responsibilities. Consequently, Islamic identity evolves from being perceived as a source of uncertainty during early adolescence into a source of personal resilience, ethical orientation, and social responsibility in later adolescence. Theoretically, these findings extend Erikson's and Marcia's models³⁵ by demonstrating that identity formation among contemporary Muslim adolescents cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological process but must also be situated within the broader context of urbanization, digital networks, and the negotiation of religious authority in contemporary Indonesian society.

Adaptation Strategies of Muslim Adolescents in Maintaining Islamic Identity

Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village do not passively experience the challenges of Islamic identity formation. Rather, they actively develop various adaptive strategies to negotiate the tensions between Islamic values and the realities of an increasingly urbanized and digitally connected society. These strategies demonstrate that Islamic identity is continuously reconstructed through interactions with family, religious institutions, peer groups, and digital media. One of the most important adaptive strategies identified in this study is the strengthening of religious understanding through participation in mosque-based youth activities, *majelis taklim*, Qur'anic learning circles, and other community religious programs. These activities function not only as spaces for acquiring religious knowledge but also as environments that foster social belonging, moral guidance, and emotional support. However, there is a significant discontinuity in adolescent participation. Religious engagement is relatively high during childhood but declines considerably after the

³⁵ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58; Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 552 – 55.

age of twelve, precisely when identity exploration becomes more intensive. As one mosque administrator observed:

*"Adolescents in Dusun IV Tarab Mulia actively participated in mosque activities when they were children, but from around the age of twelve until they enter university, many gradually disappear from mosque activities."*³⁶

In this case, religious institutions have not yet adequately responded to the developmental needs of adolescents. Instead of relying primarily on programs designed for children or adults, mosques need to develop youth-oriented religious activities that combine Islamic learning with opportunities for dialogue, leadership, creativity, and social interaction. Such an approach corresponds to Marcia's proposition that meaningful identity commitment develops when adolescents are provided with opportunities for active exploration rather than passive acceptance.³⁷

In this context, local religious leaders—including *ustāz*, *ustāzah*, mosque imams, and administrators of *majelis taklim*—play an essential role in supporting adolescents' identity formation. Rather than functioning solely as transmitters of religious knowledge, they are perceived as trusted mentors whose personal examples provide practical models of Islamic living. Adolescents were more willing to discuss questions concerning faith, peer relationships, and contemporary social challenges when religious guidance was delivered through open dialogue rather than authoritative instruction. This finding reflects Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that values and behaviors are acquired through observation of credible role models.³⁸ It also supports Berger and Luckmann's argument³⁹ that religious identity is socially constructed through continuous interaction with significant others.

Another important adaptation strategy concerns the development of supportive peer relationships. Peer groups become increasingly influential during adolescence because they provide recognition, belonging, and emotional support.⁴⁰ Friendships characterized by shared religious values encouraged regular participation in worship, Islamic study circles, and community activities, whereas peer groups emphasizing secular lifestyles or permissive behaviors often intensified identity confusion. These findings suggest that peer networks function not merely as social environments but also as important arenas in which Islamic identity is negotiated and reinforced.

³⁶ Mosque Administrator of Dusun IV Tarab Mulia, "Interview with Mosque Administrator of Dusun IV Tarab Mulia (Key Informant)," September 2025.

³⁷ Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," 551 – 58.

³⁸ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 22 – 30.

³⁹ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 130 – 33.

⁴⁰ Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 130 – 33.

As noted earlier, digital media's dual role as both a source of confusion and a channel for reliable Islamic scholarship means effective adaptation requires more than technical competence—it demands the ability to evaluate online content from an Islamic ethical perspective critically. Contemporary Indonesian Muslim youth increasingly construct religious identity through interactions with digital media, Islamic popular culture, and multiple religious authorities, making identity formation a reflexive and negotiated process rather than a purely inherited tradition.⁴¹

Rather than perceiving religiosity and modern social participation as mutually exclusive, adolescents sought to integrate Islamic beliefs with educational aspirations, friendship networks, community participation, and digital engagement. This finding indicates that successful identity formation does not require withdrawal from modern society but rather the ability to negotiate religious commitments within diverse social contexts. Such negotiation reflects what Roy⁴² describes as the reconfiguration of Muslim identity under conditions of globalization, where religious commitment increasingly depends on conscious individual choice rather than inherited social structures.

The findings also reaffirm the central role of family and community support in strengthening adolescents' Islamic identity. Families remain the primary agents of religious socialization through parental guidance, emotional support, and role modeling, while schools, mosques, neighborhood organizations, and community leaders reinforce these values through everyday interaction. Adolescents consistently reported greater confidence in maintaining Islamic identity when parents encouraged open discussion concerning religious questions and contemporary social issues instead of relying exclusively on prescriptive instruction. These findings reinforce Berger and Luckmann's⁴³ proposition that identity is continuously maintained through processes of social interaction and institutional legitimation.

The empirical analysis further suggests that Islamic identity formation encompasses not only cognitive and behavioral dimensions but also spiritual and emotional development. This interpretation is consistent with Erikson's conception of identity development⁴⁴ as a process of integrating personal values into a coherent sense of self. It also supports the view that Islamic spirituality functions as an

⁴¹ Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," 229–50.

⁴² Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, 24–31.

⁴³ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 149–73.

⁴⁴ Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 128–35.

important source of psychological resilience and religious commitment among Muslim adolescents navigating contemporary social change.⁴⁵

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Islamic identity crisis experienced by Muslim adolescents in Tarai Bangun Village should not be understood as a rejection of Islam or a decline in religiosity. Rather, it represents a dynamic process of identity negotiation through which adolescents progressively integrate religious beliefs, worship practices, moral values, and social belonging into a coherent Islamic identity. The findings further show that this process is shaped by the interaction of internal factors—such as religious understanding and identity exploration—and external influences, including family, peer networks, schools, urbanization, digital media, and broader socio-cultural change. In response to these challenges, adolescents develop adaptive strategies by strengthening religious knowledge, engaging with supportive religious mentors and peers, enhancing Islamic digital literacy, and drawing upon family and community support.

The principal contribution of this study lies in reconceptualizing the Islamic identity crisis as a developmental and relational process rather than as evidence of weakening religious commitment. Contrary to perspectives that associate identity crises with religious decline, this study argues that periods of uncertainty constitute important moments through which Muslim adolescents reinterpret, negotiate, and ultimately strengthen their commitment to Islam while adapting to the realities of contemporary urban life. The case of Tarai Bangun further demonstrates that peri-urban communities provide a distinctive social context in which local Islamic traditions, urbanization, and digital culture intersect, creating unique patterns of religious identity formation that have received limited scholarly attention.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings extend Erikson's theory of identity formation and Marcia's concepts of exploration and commitment by demonstrating that Islamic identity development cannot be explained solely through individual psychological processes. Rather, identity formation is embedded within broader social transformations, including urbanization, digital communication, changing religious authority, and everyday social interaction. Islamic identity therefore emerges as a socially negotiated, contextually situated, and continuously evolving process, illustrating the mutual relationship between individual agency and structural change in contemporary Muslim societies.

This study is limited by its focus on a single peri-urban community and a relatively small number of participants. Future research should adopt comparative or

⁴⁵ Harold G Koenig, "Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications," *ISRN Psychiatry*, 2012, 11 – 19, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>.

longitudinal approaches to examine how Islamic identity is negotiated across different socio-cultural settings and stages of adolescence, thereby providing a broader understanding of the relationship between religion, youth, and social transformation.

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