



The Role Of Religious Figures In The Quality Of Religiousness In Cirebon

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze how religious leaders can play a role in improving the quality of life in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency, from a religious perspective. Religious quality is measured through aspects of knowledge, practice, and appreciation of religious values. Using qualitative methods with a case study approach, data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. In collecting data for this study, two religious leaders and one community member acted as a supporting informant. The research object is to examine how religious leaders play a role in efforts to improve the quality of life in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency. Improving the quality of religious practice in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency. The study found that religious leaders play a crucial role in improving the quality of religious practice through preaching, education, and role models. However, challenges such as lack of community participation and limited resources hinder the optimal implementation of the role of religious leaders. This study concludes that collaboration between religious leaders, the community, and the government is necessary to improve the quality of religious practice holistically.

Keywords: Religious figures, religious quality, preaching.

INTRODUCTION

In social life, the role of religious leaders is needed to shape individual values, morals, and behavior. The quality of religion, which includes understanding, appreciation, and practice of religious teachings, is influenced by many factors, including the role of religious leaders. In the current context, religious leaders are understood as religious actors who have religious authority as well as socio-cultural influence in a digital-global society. They function as interpreters (interpreters of religious values in a complex era), influencers (formers of religious public opinion), and bridge builders (connectors between religions and generations).

Amidst the challenges of modernization, globalization, and the rapid flow of information, the quality of religious life in society is experiencing complex dynamics. In this context, the role of religious leaders becomes increasingly crucial in maintaining the purity of teachings and guiding the congregation in understanding and practicing religious teachings in a contextual and moderate manner. Religious leaders are expected not only to teach dogma but also to embody universal religious values such as tolerance, justice, compassion, and solidarity.

According to Hasan Hadsri and Rahman Fuad (2018), religious quality is an indicator used to form a society that has morals and peace. Religious figures, as respected figures, have a strategic role. However, modern social and cultural dynamics often obscure the understanding of religion, so serious efforts are needed from religious figures to improve the quality of religion in society. The characteristics of individuals who have good religious qualities according to Golden Allport, a psychologist, are having good differentiation abilities, having a dynamic character in religion, having moral consistency, having a broad religious attitude, being able to combine religion with other aspects of life, having a heuristic nature or having a way of thinking that he still has many shortcomings and trying to improve it.

Saputra and Erwin (2020) stated in their journal, that religious figures today encompass not only clerics, pastors, or traditional religious leaders, but also digital influencers, activists, and public intellectuals who reframe religious narratives. According to the Great Indonesian Dictionary, a figure is defined as an influential or

prominent person. According to the Great Indonesian Dictionary, a religious figure is someone who is respected, prominent, and has played a significant role in developing Islamic teachings and values .

A religious figure can be seen as having the same caste /rank as a ulama, kiai, or ustaz. This view is not so deviate or wrong , because a religious figure Their duties both cover the context of preaching. Religious figures are respected and trusted individuals in the community . because of several things such as the educational history achieved and the religious spirituality that he practices. In the religious process, kiai and ustaz play a very dominant role. (Eliwati, et al., 2022)

This study aims to analyze the extent to which religious leaders contribute. The focus of the study is on the forms of religious leaders' roles, the strategies they use to guide their congregations, and various factors that can contribute. be a supporter or an obstacle to The effectiveness of this role. By understanding the relationship between religious figures and the quality of religious practice, it is hoped that strategic efforts can be formulated to strengthen the role of religious figures in building a higher quality religious life amidst changing times.

Jatipura Village is a village in Susukan District, Cirebon Regency. This village boasts a strong religious heritage, distinguishing it from other villages bordering it. This is evident in the community's vibrant social and religious life, supported by various religious activities. The community's social life demonstrates a strong sense of mutual support, evident in activities such as the collaborative work to renovate mosques and madrasas, and the implementation of charitable programs like the Friday Blessings program and the " Ngemani " (caring for orphans) held every Friday.

Based on a pre-survey conducted through a religious figure and his family regarding the condition of religious activities taking place in Jatipura village, Susukan sub-district, Cirebon regency, there are religious activities starting from children's educational institutions in the Islamic context such as the Al-Qur'an Kindergarten (TKQ), Al-Qur'an Education Park (TPQ) and madrasas which are implemented as an effort to instill Islamic teachings from an early age and are given religious lessons such as regarding practices in worship introduced since childhood, Yasinan and reading of the Maulid and there are religious studies after Maghrib at the homes of religious figures and prayer rooms.

Apart from positive achievements, there are still many negative and less good things happening in the community that still require the role of religious figures, such as the rise in juvenile delinquency, several problems that do not use religious grounds and arguments, the rise in provocation and ethics and morals in society that still require guidance from religious figures.

Based on the explanation above, the problem can be identified that how religious leaders play an active role in efforts to improve the quality of religion in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency is very interesting to be studied further and encourages this research to be carried out with the title The role of religious leaders in improving the quality of religion in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used this type of research Field research and qualitative approaches are the approaches used in this research . Religious and community leaders in Jatipura, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency were used as subjects in this study and the object of this study was the role of religious leaders in improving the quality of religion in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency.

This journal contains both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from interviews with local figures and community members, while secondary data was obtained by the researcher through literature studies, both from books and journals. The data collection technique used by researchers in this study uses The observation study technique was conducted by directly observing and interviewing religious leaders and the community in Jatipura village . The data processing technique used in this study collected data from interviews and observations , then analyzed descriptively the main themes and basic concepts of the role of religious leaders in improving the quality of religion in Jatipura village, Sususkan District, Cirebon Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of religious figures in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency

Based on the results of interviews and observation activities during research regarding the role of religious figures in improving the quality of religion in Jatipura village, researchers can analyze that the presence of religious figures in in the community has a positive influence on the quality of religion in the Jatipura village community.

According to Soerjono Soekamto, role is a dynamic indicator of position, meaning that someone who carries out obligations in accordance with their position has carried out their duties. (Samuel S and Tumonglo, 2023) Brontowijoyo (2014) also argues that the role of religious leaders has four main tasks, namely: conveying the teachings of monotheism, explaining the teachings of Allah, providing assistance in community problems by referring to religious values, and being role models and examples in accordance with religious values. Religious leaders in Jatipura village have an active role in Jatipura village community, including :

The role of religious figures as teachers and motivators

Religious leaders play a dominant role as teachers and motivators in Jatipura village. These activities include regular religious study sessions held at the mosque and at the religious leaders' homes after Friday prayers, monthly religious study sessions every Wednesday, and special religious study sessions during Ramadan, which impart knowledge, particularly religious understanding, and motivate people to consistently do good deeds in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Based on the findings above, Neliwati, Samsul Rizal, and Hemawati (2022) also explained in the journal *Islamic Religious Education* that religious leaders can disseminate their knowledge to the general public and model good behavior based on their abilities. As heirs of the Prophet, religious leaders have several functions, including Tabligh (conveying religious messages and teachings); Tibyan (explaining issues from a religious perspective); and Tahkim (referring to the Quran as a guide in making decisions).

In line with the theory above, a religious figure has a role in increasing the knowledge and religious motivation of the community through various methods or religious routines as an effort to invite, provide and call for goodness to realize good religious quality in his environment.

Religious figures have carried out their roles well through religious activities carried out in their surrounding environment, but in this situation, strong encouragement is needed from all levels of society in Jatipura village to spread Islamic teachings to other communities.

According to Quraish Shihab, the aim of Islamic education is to educate humans who are God's creations, both individually and collectively, so that they can carry out their duties as servants and caliphs, with the aim of building the world according to the concepts that God recommends. (Muhammad Zaim:2019)

The role of religious figures as mediators

Religious leaders in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency, can mediate community issues, both within and outside of the religious context. Religious leaders are also capable of liaising with various parties, such as community-school disputes, family disputes over inheritance, and much more. One religious leader stated in an interview, " If a community member complains about a problem, it's appropriate for a religious leader to help, even if only by offering their perspective or even directly participating, depending on their abilities. "

Shintia Lola Sari Barutu (2024) explains the above in her journal, explaining that besides being religious leaders, religious figures can also act as mediators in social problems and conflicts. Mediators can also be seen as mediators and facilitators in conflicts and issues, and can restore strained relationships. Religious figures use their moral authority to resolve these issues.

We can understand that the role of religious figures as mediators is in accordance with the theory above, although in research religious figures can help in providing views from a religious perspective for every problem that occurs in society.

The role of religious figures in cadre development

In Jatipura village, Susukan district, Cirebon Regency, religious leaders play a role in the cadre development process. They provide space for youth and motivate them in leadership.

This is evidenced by the space given to young people to participate in the management of organizations and activities such as the management of the Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM), the management of the Al-Quran Education Park (TPQ), the management of the Al-Quran Kindergarten (TKQ), the management of madrasahs, zakat management, the qurban committee, the charity committee, and many more. This is not merely a matter of religious figures being incapable, but rather a form of social learning for the next generation.

Based on the above description, Haryadi provides insights into cadre formation in his journal. The process of developing cadres for young people is not only about improving spiritual understanding but also supporting them in participating in community activities, both religious and social. Furthermore, young people who participate in cadre formation have greater potential to become good leaders in the future.

The role of da'wah

In Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency, religious leaders play a role in community outreach, inviting, calling, and encouraging the community to do good and practice Islamic teachings. Observations revealed numerous outreach activities by religious leaders in Jatipura Village, including the "Friday Blessings" movement and the holding of religious sermons (ngaji kuping) in mosques and several prayer rooms.

Based on the description above, Muhammad Halif Asroful Bahana (2025) in the journal of applied Islamic law stated that da'wah is an integral part of Islamic teachings which aims to spread Islamic values. Which in accordance with the principles of sharia and Islamic teachings . Arkiang et al. (2019) also argue that da'wah itself is a concrete form of a Muslim who has the task of conveying messages in the form of conditioning efforts so that individuals or communities can know, understand, believe in and practice Islamic teachings as a teaching and way of life .

Based on this theory, there is harmony between theory and application. Religious leaders contribute to the spread of Islamic preaching within the community to create a society that is safe, peaceful, moral, and possesses good religious qualities.

According to the view of Golden Allport, a psychologist in the contextual journal written by Hadri Hasan and Fuad Rahman, he provides a view related to religious quality , namely the characteristics of individuals who have religious quality or religious maturity, including having good differentiation abilities towards religion objectively, thinking openly, realistically and not having a dogmatic perspective , having a dynamic character in religion , having moral consistency between Islamic values and teachings that are applied through actions , having a broad religious attitude and being able to accept differences or tolerance , being integral in religion and having a heuristic nature or having a way of thinking that he still has many shortcomings so that he has the will and enthusiasm to add to it.

Role as a moral guide

Religious leaders in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency, have a significant responsibility. In addition to serving as motivators, teachers, and cadres, moral development and role models are essential. Morality is the primary basis for assessing the good and bad of a community. Religious leaders indirectly provide moral guidance in their communities through their daily behavior and actions.

Based on the above description, in line with Rubini's (2019) point, religious leaders are responsible for the morals of the communities within their communities. Moral education can make someone more moral, and most importantly, it can help them adapt to social life.

During an interview with one of the Jatipura village residents, he said, " In addition to providing knowledge, religious leaders should also provide good examples to the community, because there are some people who do not understand the explanations of religious leaders but understand them through the habits and behavior of religious leaders in their daily lives . "

Based on the statement above, Kandari Arfandi (2021) also gave his view that a religious figure has value as a role model, role models and examples for their environment . So , there are standards related to personal qualities that must be achieved , as mentioned. As an example and role model for community, religious figures will also get the spotlight from the people around him .

The quality of religion in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency

Based on observations, the quality of religious practices in Jatipura Village, Susukan District, Cirebon Regency, is already a step ahead of surrounding villages . This is evident in several aspects that support religious quality, such as education, social activities, activities, culture, and so on.

Educational Aspects

Education in Jatipura village has experienced rapid development, particularly in religious education. Observations show a wide range of educational processes, including early childhood education (PAUD), kindergartens (TKQ), TPQ, and madrasas, which are highly sought after by local villagers. Not only young people, but even the elderly experience the quality of religious activities in Jatipura village, including weekly religious studies held in every prayer room (musholla), after Friday prayers, monthly religious studies every Wednesday Kliwon , and special Ramadan religious studies.

In line with the above description, Nurul Hidayati (2016) argues that education is a proven aspect of societal quality. Education can be an indicator of a developed society, where education, society, and citizens mutually influence each other . Through education, humans acquire knowledge, critical, creative, and high-quality thinking, ultimately leading to positive outcomes, particularly in religious matters.

Based on our data, in an effort to improve religious education, many children and youth in Jatipura village are studying at Islamic boarding schools, both within the city and outside, such as in Tanggir, Bojonegoro, Babakan, Lirboyo, Pandanaran, Kempek, and many others. This is done to improve religious understanding and foster good character and realize the goal of education, which is to become a perfect human being .

According to Manfred Ziemek explained that Islamic boarding schools are multi-disciplinary institutions. functional which is not only concerned with the development of Islamic education , but also plays a very important role for the progress of environmental development. (Atsmarina Awanis, 2018)

In addition to religious education, religious leaders in Jatipura village also provide motivation and encouragement for people to pursue general education, as evidenced by the increasing number of general education graduates each year. According to interviews with religious leaders, " I hope the people of Jatipura don't just pursue religious education or Islamic boarding schools. Please pursue general education, hopefully, even to college, so you can achieve a balance between this world and the afterlife. "

In line with this statement, Al-Ghazali provides a view on the balance between intellectual and spiritual. Al-Ghazali emphasizes holistic education that combines spiritual and intellectual values. He criticizes education that only focuses on intellectuality and does not justify education that only focuses on the spiritual without paying attention to the intellectual. (Nazila Mumtaza Zamhariroh, et al., 2024)

Social Activities

In the process of improving the quality of religiousness itself, many aspects need to be reviewed, including social aspects, in addition to spiritual activities such as dhikr, establishing prayer, paying zakat, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, performing religious duties, and much more. Social concepts must be developed to achieve quality in religion, including character and behavior in society, norms, and attitudes toward others.

Based on the results of field research, the social conditions in Jatipura village are very good, as evidenced by the existence of educational assistance and basic food packages for orphans, assistance for the poor and elderly, and the active role of the zakat collection unit (UPZ) at the village level which plays a role in social activities.

According to Agung Setiyawan (2016), there are differences in understanding of religion in society. as a result of human efforts to make their religion into function in life, by linking it to the problems that exist around it and the application of religious teachings in daily life , this is what is called the essence of religious quality.

Based on the description above, the role and touch of religious figures are needed to disseminate the teachings and values of Islam to the entire community, can provide examples of good behavior or *uswatun hasanah* to the community, in addition to having a good religious understanding, they must also have good ethics, manners and behavior as a concrete step to achieve good social aspects.

Customary and cultural aspects

As time goes by, shifts in cultural values are also inevitable. In Jatipura village, Susukan sub-district, Cirebon Regency, one of the villages that still holds fast to its culture. Based on observations, its cultural aspects are still in accordance with religious values, such as the earth alms and *numpeng* (harvest thanksgiving) held once a year and filled with *tahlil* and communal prayer which takes place in the village cemetery complex, *memitu* (thanksgiving for 7 months of pregnancy) is done with *tahlil* and reading the Qur'an from Surah Lukman and *Tahlil*/praying for the deceased. The role of religious leaders is very necessary so that traditional and cultural activities do not deviate from religious values and teachings.

This was also conveyed by Putri and Nawangsih (2024) that a religion Islam is a part integral in life man. The role of Islam is not limited to its spiritual side , but also has a significant influence in shaping the values , customs, culture and norms of social society.

Religious activities

Based on observations, religious activities in Jatipura village are numerous. These include commemorations of Islamic holidays (PHBI), qori training for young people, hadroh training, Barzanji reading training, religious seminars, pilgrimages, and visits to religious leaders from across Cirebon Regency during the holy month of Ramadan. These activities have become a tradition and a manifestation of their love for religion. They also demonstrate the positive collaboration between the government and the community, particularly the role of religious leaders.

According to Riska Porawouw (2016), religious figures or community leaders are an integral part of society itself and are a closely related indicator of its development , particularly in rural areas . This role is a concrete factor in influencing all aspects , thus increasing community participation .

Supporting factors and inhibiting factors of the role of religious leaders in improving the quality of religion in Jatipura Village, Susukan District , Cirebon Regency.

Inhibiting and supporting factors are conditions that can influence the success or failure of achieving a goal, carrying out an activity, or implementing a policy (Khaerul Safaat, et al., 2025). Supporting factors are an element that encourage positive behavior in an activity , while inhibiting factors are elements that hinder the process (Andi Khalbi, et al., 2025). From this statement, the supporting factors and inhibiting factors in the process of preaching to improve the quality of religion in Jatipura village, based on interviews with several religious figures, can be summarized as follows:

Supporting factors

- a. The high level of personal interest and enthusiasm of the community in religion
- b. There are many places and activities that can be used as a means of learning religious knowledge.
- c. Village government support for religious activities
- d. The community's human resources (HR) are quite good

Inhibiting factors

- a. Personal shame
- b. Social dynamics that result in low public interest in participating in religious activities.
- c. There is still a lack of public attention and understanding of the importance of religious knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Religious leaders in Jatipura village play a central role in improving the quality of community religious practice through preaching and leading by example. However, optimizing this role requires support from various parties, including the community and the government. Effective collaboration between religious leaders, the community, and the government can create a conducive environment for improving the quality of community religious practice. The presence of inhibiting factors is natural; we need to evaluate and address these inhibiting factors together with all stakeholders , especially religious leaders, to achieve quality religious practice in the community.

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