RELIGIOSITY AND NATIONALISM OF GEN Z MUSLIMS:
Aspirations and Challenges for Indonesia's Future

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Abstract: The correlation between religiosity and nationalism has been a paramount issue, particularly in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia. Maintaining the spirits of Islam and Indonesia is an arduous effort for young people. This article is based on research into the perceptions and practices of Gen Z Muslims in two prominent tourist islands, Bali and Lombok. The study employed a mixed-method approach, collecting data through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with young Muslim activists. The study demonstrates the high level of religiosity and nationalism among young Muslims and a positive correlation between these two values. Religiosity and nationalism support and reinforce each other. Gen Z's vision of Indonesia's future also shows synergistic ideas of religiosity and nationalism. Therefore, excessive apprehension about a clash between religiosity and nationalism is futile. However, continuous efforts to maintain a balanced spirit of religiosity and nationalism are imperative to prevent extreme religious nationalism, which hampers the development of democracy.

Keywords: Bali, Lombok, religiosity, nationalism, Gen-Z, Muslim

Introduction

IN COUNTRIES where Muslims have a large population and significant political power, such as Indonesia,[1] two aspirations have to be considered. The first is the desire to maintain, strengthen, and bequeath Islam to the next generation. The second is the need to enforce the pillars of modern and democratic

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[1] According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, as of the end of 2022, out of Indonesia's population of 273.32 million, 241.7 million people, or 87.02%, are Muslims.

nationhood. People are often confronted with dichotomous choices between loyalty to their nation and their religion.[2] The relationship between religion and nation has been a subject of continuous and dynamic debate.

According to Anderson,[3] a nation is an imagined community with sovereignty. In a nation, individuals declare and unite themselves into a unity even though they have never met or known each other. Renan defines, "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle, a grand solidarity." He adds, "A nation is not eternal."[4] The high level of nationalist spirit of the people of a nation greatly influences its existence.

People's nationalism occurs dynamically. Nationalism fluctuates in response to various factors. The fluctuation of the level of nationalism is intertwined with people's religiosity. Religious doctrines, experiences, and practices shape the colors and patterns of a state's nationalism. Furthermore, religious thoughts and movements, which influence people's religiosity, derive from within and abroad.

Vavreck's study compares the youth's nationalism to that of the previous generation. He affirms that Gen Z in the USA has demonstrated diminishing nationalist awareness and patriotism.[5] Therefore, many people recommend paying greater attention to

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[2] For further explanation on religious radicalism in Indonesia, see Muh Khamdan, "Pengembangan Nasionalisme Keagamaan Sebagai Strategi Penanganan Potensi Radikalisme Islam Transnasional," *Addin* 10, no. 1 (2016): 207–32, https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v10i1.1135.

[3] Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1986). See also Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism," in *The New Social Theory Reader*, ed. Steven Seidman and Jeffrey C. Alexander, Benedict R. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1986) (London: Routledge, 2020), 282–88.

[4] Budiawan, *Nasion & Nasionalisme: Jelajah Ringkas Teoretis* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2017).

[5] Lynn Vavreck, "Younger Americans Are Less Patriotic. At Least, in Some Ways." The Upshot, *The New York Times*, July 4, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/upshot/younger-americans-are-less-patriotic-at-least-in-some-ways.html.

Gen Z, who is considered less nationalistic than the Millennial (for example, Gen X).[6]

In the Indonesian context, previous studies confirmed the parallel condition. There has been a decreasing trend in the nationalism of Gen Z and their predecessors, the Millennial.[7] The decline in national and state awareness of Gen Millennial and Gen Z, as well as the lack of understanding of the state's ideology, is allegedly attributed to their exposure to foreign ideologies. Such ideological exposure occurs through the Internet. A 2017 survey by PPIM UIN Jakarta revealed that the Internet has a significant impact on the rise of radicalism and intolerance among young people.[8] On the contrary, Gen Zers, who do not have an addiction to the Internet, demonstrate higher nationalism.[9] According to Yulianto, Gen Zers, who have an addiction to the Internet, are lightly exposed to its contents that discourage nationalist commitments. Some social media contents potentially undermine patriotism and raises religious radicalism.

Regarding the Archipelagic State of the Indonesian Republic, Yulianto found that most Gen Zers believe that statehood and democracy are the best forms of governance for the Indonesian people. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed that Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia do not contradict Islamic values. Eighty-five percent approved democracy as the best form of governance. Ninety-two percent expressed their disagreement against the statement accusing the Indonesian

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[6] Scott Timberg, "Patriotism Is for Winners: Why Millennials and Gen X Are Rejecting the National Pride of Their Parents," Salon.Com, July 6, 2015, https://www.salon.com/2015/07/06/patriotism_is_for_winners_why_millennials_and_gen_x_are_rejecting_the_national_pride_of_their_parents/.

[7] Djunaedi Saripurnawan, "Menakar Rasa Nasionalisme Generasi Muda Indonesia (Measuring the Sense of Nationalism of Indonesian Young Generation)," *Masyarakat Indonesia* 45, no. 1 (2019): 93–105, https://doi.org/10.14203/jmi.v45i1.825.

[8] Yunita Faela Nisa et al., *Gen Z: Kegalauan Identitas Keagamaan*, ed. Didin Syafruddin and Ismatu Ropi (Jakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat, 2018).

[9] Johny Eko Yulianto, "Studi Komparatif Identitas Nasional Pada Remaja Generasi Z Ditinjau Dari Intensitas Penggunaan Internet," *Humanitas* 13, no. 2 (March 2017): 149–59, https://doi.org/10.26555/humanitas.v13i2.6070.

government of being infidels (*kafir*) and tyrannical and demonic (*thagut*).[10]

The previous studies bring good news and boost optimism about the high level of nationalism amongst Gen Z Muslims. Their nationalist commitment is adequately high despite poor governance, economic recovery, and law enforcement. Nevertheless, the findings of previous studies fall short of providing a comprehensive explanation for the trend of religiosity and nationalism. The views, thoughts, and attitudes of activists of religious-based student organizations have not been explored comprehensively.

To fill this gap, the fieldwork was deliberately conducted in Bali and Lombok, two areas with significant exposure to foreign cultures, religious understandings, and ideologies, as they are primary tourist destinations. This research focused on studying and describing the intensity of religiosity and nationalism among Gen Z Islamic activists, examining the correlation between these two aspects, and identifying and explaining their vision and dreams for Indonesia's future.

This study utilized a mixed-method research design[11] and collected both quantitative data through questionnaires and qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions. The study included 319 respondents, consisting of high school and college Muslim students from Bali and Lombok. Of the total respondents, 85 were from Bali and 234 were from Lombok. Additionally, the study also involved 22 young Muslim activists who participated in focus group discussions (FGD). The FGD participants were members of religious-based student organizations such as Ikatan Pelajar NU (IPNU), Ikatan Pelajar Putri NU (IPPNU), Pemuda Muhammadiyah, Fatayat NU, and Pemuda NW, as well as college student organizations such as Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI, Islamic Students Association),

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[10] Yulianto, 149–59.

[11] John W. Creswell, "Mixed-Method Research: Introduction and Application," in *Handbook of Educational Policy*, ed. Gregory J. Cizek (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999), 455–72. See also John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Mixed Methods Research: Developments, Debates, and Dilemmas* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005).

Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII, Indonesian Muslim Student Movement), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM, Muhammadiyah Student Association), Himpunan Mahasiswa Nahdlatul Wathan (Himmah NW, Nahdlatul Wathan Students Association), and Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia (KAMMI, The Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union).[12]

The Essence of Religiosity and Nationalism

From a sociological and anthropological perspective, religion encompasses a multitude of dimensions. Smart[13] mentions seven elements of religion. First, religious rituals are forms and orders of ceremonies, either private or public. Second, religious narratives and myths include stories on several levels. Third, religious experiences and emotions encompass a range of emotions, including fear, guilt, amazement, mystery, devotion, liberation, and inner peace. Fourth, religious, social, and institutional rules encompass the regulations governing the identification of membership and community participation. Fifth, religion comprises ethics and laws. Sixth, doctrines and philosophies entail a coherent and systematic formulation of religious teachings. Seventh, religious materials encompass objects and spaces as symbols and manifestations of transcendent and holy matters. Glock and Stark[14] divide religiosity aspects into belief, understanding, knowledge, and practice. Similarly, Koentjaraningrat explains five facets of religion: religious emotion,

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[12] Young activists from various Islamic organizations need to be engaged. These organizations play a crucial role in shaping the religious identities and national ideologies of young Muslims. For further insights, refer to Abdul Wahid and Atun Wardatun, "'Digital Resources Are Not Reliable': Peer-Group-Based Intellectualism among Muslim Youth Activists in Bima, Eastern Indonesia," *Religions* 14, no. 8 (August 2023): 1001, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14081001.

[13] See Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984). The book was published three times, in 1969, 1976, and 1984. An interesting review of this book can be read in R. Naughton, "Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind (Book Review)," *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 33, no. 4 (1969): 783.

[14] Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965).

belief system, ritual system, religious ceremonies, ritual and ceremony instruments, and people.[15]

Religion as an ultimate concern is substantial for its loyal adherents. Religion is a source of inspiration for doing kindness and a hindrance to evil. In Islam, referring to the Prophet Muhammad's teachings, the essence of religious guidance can be generally formulated into three aspects that must be understood and practiced simultaneously: belief (*aqidah*); the management of feelings, emotions, and moods (*akhlaq)*; and behavior (*syariah*). These three dimensions are widely developed intellectually and sociologically into various understandings and social institutions. All aspects of religion impact its followers and thus they bring about perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors either personally or socially.

Nationalism is the understanding or teaching of loving one's country and state. Being a nationalist Indonesian means inspiring oneself as part of the Indonesian nation. Nationalism also means the consciousness of being a member of a nation, so that one commits to maintaining, strengthening, and affirming the identity and spirit of their national prosperity and power. Nationalism means a strong nationalist spirit.[16] Kohn defines nationalism as a perception of an individual's loyalty to their national state.[17] Smith understands nationalism as an ideological movement aimed at achieving and preserving the autonomy, unity, and identity of a group, and is determined to establish a nation.[18] Tjahyadi provides a more detailed explanation of the values of nationalism as follows: (a) prioritizing national unity, oneness, interest, and safety before personal and group interest; (b) demonstrating willingness to sacrifice for the nation and state; (c) feeling proud of

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[15] Koentjaraningrat, *Sejarah Teori Antropologi I* (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press, 1987), 80.

[16] *KBBI VI Daring*, "Nasionalisme" (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia, 2016), https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/nasionalisme.

[17] Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1955).

[18] Anthony D. Smith, "Authenticity, Antiquity and Archaeology," *Nations and Nationalism* 7, no. 4 (2001): 441–49, https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00026.

being an Indonesian and having Indonesia as one's country; (d) acknowledging equality of degrees, rights, and obligations of all Indonesian people so that mutual love grows; (e) building tolerance; (f) avoiding arbitrary actions towards others; (g) loving humanity activities; (h) appreciating humanity values; (i) advocating righteousness and justice; (k) having awareness of Indonesia's being a part of humankind; (l) and developing mutual respect and cooperation with other nations.[19]

A further question arises about the relationship between religiosity and nationalism. Does Islam strengthen or weaken nationalism? In Indonesian history, Islam initially became a spirit for Indonesian warriors to liberate their country from colonization and defend it. The values of justice and anti-colonialism were derived from Islam. National heroes such as Soekarno, Hatta, Soetan Syahrir, HOS Tjokro Aminoto, and Jenderal Soedirman were famous Muslim fighters during the Independence War. Similarly, when the Dutch and their allies intended to regain their occupation of Indonesia, Muslim fighters called out nationalist spirits—a jihad resolution fatwa issued by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and a national hero, was a concrete example of Islam's strong influence on the Indonesian Republic's struggle for independence.

However, in the contemporary era, Islamic spirits that previously raised nationalism and patriotism have shifted. This is due to the influence of transnational Islamic movements that advocate for a *khilafah* concept and refute nationalism. Islamic values are thus not aimed at building nationalism or patriotism but at developing a global unity of Muslim-majority countries under one flag of *khilafah*. The existence of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), which promotes the *khilafah* movement, has decreased nationalism.[20] Although the Indonesian government dispersed this

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[19] Sindung Tjahyadi, *Nasionalisme Dan Pembangunan Karakter Bangsa* (Yogyakarta: Pusat Studi Pancasila UGM, 2010).

[20] Fahlesa Munabari, "Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia: The Rhetorical Struggle for Survival," in *Islam in Contention: Rethinking Islam and State in Indonesia*, ed. Ota Atsushi, Okamoto Masaaki, and Ahmad Suaedy (Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, 2010), 169–213. See also Ilyya Muhsin, Nikmah Rochmawati, and Muhammad Chairul Huda, "Revolution of Islamic Proselytizing Organization: From Islamism

organization, its influence has been manifest in the young generation who objects to Indonesian democratic practices, which do not create improvement for the quality of life of Indonesian Muslims.

Unlike Islamic transnational movements that advocate for a *khilafah* and refute nationalism, religion coexists with nationalism, and thus, religious nationalism emerges in several countries.[21] It is new nationalism that defies secular nationalism. There are various definitions of religious nationalism. Rieffer defines religious nationalism as an indivisible fusion of nationalism and religion.[22] Some define it as a form of social identification, organizational ways, and social segmentation.[23] Religious nationalism relies on religious identity and myth to define its nation and objectives.[24]

Religious nationalism emerges to revive an ideal nation based on God's rules. There is a religious fundamentalist zest, which is not restricted to Islam, covered by nationalism. Religious fundamentalism justifies violence to dismiss people who are considered infidels, sinners, and deviants from the primary belief. For example, the Catholic youths joining the Proud Boys have targeted Black people in the USA,[25] The Communist Party has jeopardized Uyghur Muslims in China, Buddhists have attacked

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to Moderate," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 7, no. 1 (June 2019): 45, https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.5076.

[21] Religious nationalism is not a new phenomenon. It has existed since the 1970s and has been reinforced recently. See Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Nationalism in a Global World," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (February 2019): 97, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10020097.

[22] Barbara-Ann J. Rieffer, "Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship," *Ethnicities* 3, no. 2 (June 2003): 225, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796803003002003.

[23] Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (January 2012): 4, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00486.x.

[24] Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Religious Nationalism and Religious Influence*, ed. Paul A. Djupe, Mark J. Rozell, and Ted G. Jelen (Oxford University Press, April 23, 2020), https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-813.

[25] Margo Kitts, "Proud Boys, Nationalism, and Religion," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 9, no. 1 (2021): 12–32, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27212335.

Muslims in Myanmar, Hindutva adherents have targeted Muslims in India, and ISIS has attacked the USA and its allies.[26]

Does such a decline in nationalism also occur among Gen Z Muslims in Bali and Lombok? What are the features and patterns of nationalism and religiosity in those two islands? Does religious nationalism emerge amongst Gen Z Muslims? The answers to the aforementioned questions can be read in the following subsections.

Religiosity and Nationalism of Generation Z

Generation Z (Gen Z or Zoomers) refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2010.[27] They were born during the rapid development of information and communication technologies, so they are familiar with digital devices. They are known as digital natives.[28] They have access to state-of-the-art digital devices, which the millennial generation had not previously experienced. Gen Z is constantly updated and connected to information. Innovation, persistence, and curiosity are general characteristics of Gen Z.

This research found that Gen Z Muslims in Bali and Lombok demonstrate a high level of religious perception, understanding, and practices. Ninety-three percent of the research respondents said that practicing religious teaching results in contentment and peace of mind. They also stated that observing religious rules is not a burden, but rather a pleasure and an enlightening experience.

Righteous practicing of Islam is not merely believing its teachings or declaring loyalty verbally, but also observing its rules. Ninety-one percent of the research respondents claimed that they perform daily five-time prayers intensely and regret neglecting

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[26] Margo Kitts, "Religion, Nationalism, and Violence Introduction to Journal of Religion and Violence 9(1)," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 9, no. 1 (2021): 1–11, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27212334.

[27] Chloe Combi, *Generation Z: Their Voices, Their Lives* (London: Random House, 2015).

[28] Sandra Schamroth Abrams, "Zombies, Boys, and Videogames: Problems and Possibilities in an Assessment Culture," in *Generation Z*, ed. Victoria Carrington et al., Cultural Studies and Transdisciplinarity in Education (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2016), 131–42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-934-9_10.

them. They also believe that God will help them if they practice Islamic teachings well. Young Muslim activists continually strive to deepen their understanding of the holy book and Islam. Seventy-nine percent consistently build a good relationship with Muslim scholars and figures to maintain their religious spirits.

The findings above show a similar trend to national data. PPIM's survey showed that 89.40% of Muslim students at secondary schools and colleges admitted that they have learned Islam since their childhood. Forty-eight percent thought that they are adequately religious, 32.84% are very religious, and 18.45% are less or not religious."[29]

The beauty and gratification of religious life should not be experienced exclusively or individually, but should be shared with as many people as possible. Therefore, believers should commit to participating in religious proselytization by their capacity, expertise, and role. Eighty percent of the respondents reported being actively involved in religious proselytization.

Ideally, religiosity should not make people sectarian and exclusive but inclusive in life within the society. A high number of respondents (82.1%) viewed that helping followers of other religions, even in religious activities, should not be problematized as long as it is not related to the primary elements of theological rituals and is restricted to social life, such as security issues and the provision of public facilities and infrastructure.

However, the participants in the FGD, who were all Muslim college student activists, noticed a declining trend in Gen Z's religious spirit based on their observations of social phenomena in their environment and residences. In comparison to the previous era, religiosity decline is manifest in several phenomena, such as (1) diminishing or decreasing Qur'an-learning tradition. Very few Gen Z communities diligently observe religious activities, such as reading and learning the Qur'an, and other forms of worship. Second, religious exclusivism grows in line with the establishment of small sectarian and militant communities amongst young Muslims. Third, many parents reported their difficulties in motivating their children to perform prayers and other rituals

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[29] Nisa et al., *Gen Z: Kegalauan Identitas Keagamaan*.

diligently. Fourth, the motivation for learning about religion is low, despite the advanced technologies in transportation, information, and social media that facilitate it.

The FGD also revealed several factors that hinder the development of religiosity. First, Gen Z Muslims have an interest in accessing harmful social media contents, including pornography, online gambling, drugs, and verbal or nonverbal violence, which are relentlessly available through smartphones. Second, family and community environments are no longer religious. Gen Z Muslims have lived with more liberty after they graduated from elementary school until they grew up. Religious values and teachings no longer capture their attention. Third, social control and concern diminish. Some parents may have made efforts to provide their children with good religious education. However, when they live independently in a new environment far from their parents, it tends to change and weaken their religious commitment. Fourth, some Gen Zers perceive religion as solely rituals, not a holistic way of life. Therefore, they experience a relatively free life, without religious restrictions in many aspects, except for rituals. Fifth, parents' supervision of their children's religious lives tends to decrease.

The FGD participants proposed several recommendations for the concerns above. First, every believer, including Gen Z, should strive to improve their prayers and other religious rituals, and then pursue their worldly dreams. Second, Gen Z Muslims should create and be involved in healthy and religious circles. Gen Z Muslims should maintain congregational religious worship to build a healthy and religious socialization. Third, Gen Z Muslims should establish healthy, enlightening, and productive friendship communities, such as a no-smoking community, digital literacy initiatives, and sports clubs. Fourth, the older generation should foster a good and active relationship with the younger ones, enabling Gen Z Muslims to feel comfortable in interactions, share their thoughts, and engage in communication. Fifth, educators and elder community members should provide sincere mentorship to younger people who need it. Sixth, they should also deliver their religious messages through social media contents in ways that appeal to netizens, particularly Gen Z. Seventh, youth social

organizations should develop their members through various activities that cater to their needs and personalities, enabling them to gain knowledge and broaden their perspectives on Islam and societal life.

Regarding nationalism, Gen Z Muslims in Bali and Lombok show high patriotism. This study shows the positive attitudes of Gen Z Muslims in Lombok and Bali toward NKRI. They are grateful for the NKRI as a blessing from God. The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*, abbreviated as *NKRI*) is regarded as the best state for the Indonesian people. A unitary, not federal, state is the most ideal choice because the country needs unity and oneness of all areas to defend its sovereignty. Indonesia has numerous islands spread extensively from Sabang in the west to Merauke in the East. Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of separate islands, different from the United States or Australia. Indonesian archipelagic geography has a frictional risk. Therefore, a unitary state is the most effective form of state.

The pride in NKRI has grown among Gen Z Muslims because it has been developed through formal education from elementary to higher education. Indonesian patriotism has been taught through civic education, the celebration of Indonesian Independence Day, and propagation on television and radio. However, some Gen Z Muslims display diminishing nationalism due to several factors.

Faizal, an activist of the Indonesian Muslim College Student Movement, who was involved in the FGD of this study, conveyed several factors contributing to the decline of nationalism. First, Gen Z Muslims lack knowledge of Indonesian history and its diverse cultures. Second, Indonesian society is generally consumptive and prefers foreign products to domestic ones. To tackle these issues, nationalism should be reinforced in education by teaching more contents on local cultures in schools. Furthermore, parents and individuals knowledgeable about cultures should support and encourage young people to participate in cultural activities.[30]

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[30] Interview with Faizal, May 27, 2023.

The other indicators of nationalism are pride in being an Indonesian and gratitude for being born in Indonesia. Eighty-six percent of the research respondents stated that they love their country, and 86.3% expressed gratitude for being born in Indonesia. Other indicators of nationalism include the following.

No.	Questions	%
1	Grateful and glad to be born as an Indonesian	87,3
2	Proud of being a part of the Indonesian nation	87,5
3	Proud of having Pancasila as the national unification	88,4
4	Proud of national symbols such as national songs and the flag	85,5
5	Proud of wearing *batik* as a national attire	81.3
6	Proud of the eagle as a symbol of the country's strength	86.0
7	Appreciating diverse ethnicities and national cultures	88,4
8	Agreeing on a cooperative agenda between followers of diverse religions in societal fields for mutual communal benefits	82,9

Gen Z Muslims demonstrate a high level of pride in *batik. Batik* is a traditional fabric originating from Indonesia. Such *batik* pride is essential. In recent years, the reinforcement of Islamic symbols has become increasingly prevalent in Indonesia. Islamic attire refers to Arabian clothing, such as a plain white robe. On the other hand, an Indonesian domestic product like *batik* is considered less Islamic. Such strong propagation does not have a significant impact on the appreciation of Gen Z Muslims towards Indonesian original fabrics, such as *batik.*

Furthermore, the table above illustrates Gen Z Muslims' affection and pride in national symbols, such as the eagle and the red and white flag. However, a few Gen Z Muslims lack respect for and even hate national symbols because of their religious doctrines and inappropriate socialization. An Islamic boarding school in East Lombok prohibits its students from saluting the national flag, which is red and white in color. They argue that true honor is solely for God and saluting a national flag displays honor to others than God, which is considered forbidden *syirk*. We discuss this issue with all the teachers and students in that Islamic boarding school through various approaches, and eventually, they are compliant to salute the national red and white flag.

Pride in Indonesian culture among Gen Z Muslims should be acknowledged and celebrated. In addition to the survey result,

such pride is observable through several protests. The Indonesian government and people launched several protests and demonstrations when Malaysia used *the pendet* dance, originally from Bali, to promote its tourism and claimed *the reog* Ponorogo as their own.

The research result in Bali and Lombok reflects the national trend. PPIM Jakarta surveyed in 2017 and found that most Gen Zers believe in NKRI and democracy as the best for Indonesia. Ninety percent of the respondents, comprising high school and college students, stated that Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution are not contradictory to Islamic teachings. Eighty-five percent declared that democracy is the best form of governance for Indonesia. The percentage of people accepting Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution at the national level is higher than that in Bali and Lombok.[31]

Gen Zers also value the diversity of Indonesian society as a national wealth that should be appreciated. Indonesia is a big country with multiple ethnicities, cultures, and religions. There are 1,331 ethnic groups[32] living in this country, which spans an area of 1.9 million square kilometers.[33] The Indonesian people use 652 different languages for their daily communication. The Indonesian language as a national language strengthens the unity and oneness of the Indonesian nation.

In addition, the respondents mentioned that pluralities are inevitable, and that not only Indonesians but also all global citizens must accept them. Diversity is a *sunnatullah* (divine law). Yusuf, the chief of Himmah NW of Mataram, stated that the youths have to be accustomed to diversity. A youth can no longer be closed-minded or exclusive.[34] Yusron, a UIN Mataram HMI activist, confirmed Yusuf's statement and argued that college students can no longer live a solitary life.[35] The advances in

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[31] Nisa et al., *Gen Z: Kegalauan Identitas Keagamaan*.

[32] According to the 2020 Population Census conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia has a staggering 1,331 ethnic groups.

[33] The Ministry of Education and Culture cites the total area of Indonesia as 5,193,250 km², which includes 1,919,440 km² of land and 3,273,810 km² of sea.

[34] Interview with Yusuf, May 27, 2023.

[35] Interview with Yusron, May 27, 2023.

information and communication technologies should not let college students and young people become asocial. Lombok society comprises a diverse array of ethnic groups and religious adherents. They live in harmony despite the diversity.

However, Najam, an HMI activist from Alor NTT, warned that the ideal concept of nationalism without discrimination could not be enforced well often. A majority ethnic group does not protect the minority one. He said, "We find it difficult to unify differences of a national concept. The minority sometimes suffers from discrimination from the superior majority."[36]

The superiority of a particular ethnic group and religious followers results in a lot of discriminatory practices. The existence of minority groups is often overlooked and even looked down upon in a particular situation. The minority must comply with the aspirations of the majority, or they will be excluded from participation. These FGD findings align with the survey results, which indicate that the respondents' appreciation for all elements of the Indonesian people reached only 76.7%.

Najam, who lived in Mataram for his college education, thought that he experienced exclusion because of his minority ethnic background. Fortunately, he joined a pluralist college student organization that involves members from diverse religious backgrounds, ethnic groups, areas, and religious cultures. In HMI, Najam receives equal treatment without any discrimination. Eventually, he was elected as the chief of the HMI commissariat, despite his background as a member of a minority ethnic group. Najam claimed, "Although I belong to a minority ethnic group, this is not problematic at all. We are brothers or sisters in this organization. There is no privilege for one group over the other. We are equal."[37]

Jayadi, an activist of NTB NU Lakpesdam, expressed a similar statement. He launched harsh criticism that religious leaders, as an older generation, should provide pacifying advice, but they do not play their role correctly.[38] In the case of Ahmadiyya members as a

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[36] Interview with Najam, May 28, 2023.
[37] Interview with Najam, May 28, 2023.
[38] Interview with Jayadi, August 12, 2023.

minority religious group, Jay added that they have still been evicted from their hometown and have not gained the appropriate attention from the religious leaders of the majority religious group.[39] The leaders of the majority religious groups, such as NU, NW, and Muhammadiyah, have not made any effort to help the Ahmadiyya community and have not shown their support for them. The Ahmadiyya case of NTB has been protracted and intractable. "Tolerance has been built only at the discourse level," said Jayadi.

Young religious activists tend to demonstrate greater open-mindedness and respect for diversity than their older counterparts. They have learned about diversity since their childhood. In the religious-based youth organizations such as IMM, HMI, PMII, and Himmah NW, the activists have been habituated to break the barriers of group exclusivism and fanaticism. Such religious-based youth organizations bridge ethnic and religious diversities.

Legal awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity are essential considerations. This study showed that only 76.1% of the respondents are willing to follow the national laws. Fifty-eight percent said that the Indonesian laws are contradictory to their values. Sixty-four percent also acknowledged that their behaviors do not conform to the state laws. In addition, many respondents, constituting 59.9% are confused about local cultural diversity.

Furthermore, 64.8% of the respondents disagreed with various traditional ceremonies and stated that they are incorrect. The data displayed a low level of acceptance and appreciation for Indonesian cultural richness. Similarly, the FGD results revealed the youth's sectarian mindsets, including a dislike for cultures from other areas and followers of other religions, as well as resistance against adherents of local religions, although this is relatively small. The lack of appreciation for cultural diversity potentially weakens social capital.

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[39]The fact that Muslims are more tolerant towards non-Muslims than Muslim minority groups such as Ahmadiya and Shia reminds us of Menchik's research several years ago. See Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Some FGD participants expressed the youth's fascination with foreign matters. The spread of the Korean-pop craze has shifted the youth's love for national culture and products, whose quality is comparable to that of foreign counterparts. Some informants said that nationalism does not merely mean love for national products. "Nationalism can not be understood only as pride in using national products. I love Indonesia, but if its products are not good enough, I cannot force myself to choose them," said Fitia, a Mataram IPPNU activist.[40] Gen Z is realistic in evaluating national products.

The Correlation between Religiosity and Nationalism

The religiosity and nationalism of Gen Z are related to their personal identity and societal background. They are associated with individuals' educational background, gender, socialization, environment, reading materials, and preferences for social media contents.

A democratic nationalist society believes in equality of rights and obligations for every citizen, regardless of their primordial background, which is constructed naturally, genealogically, and sociologically. The same parameters and fundamental ideas are required for all people. In the context of state and religious life, we require regulations to ensure equality in rights and obligations, as well as freedom to choose and practice religion, as stated in the Constitution and its derivative laws.

A further question is about the correlation between Gen Z nationalism and religiosity. This research found a positive correlation between the religiosity of Gen Z and their high level of nationalism, as described in the following table.

Correlations

		Religiosity	Nationalism
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	1	.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	319	319
Nationalism	Pearson Correlation	.219**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	319	319

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 (2-tailed).

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[40] Interview with Fitia, May 27, 2023

The analysis above shows a positive correlation between religiosity and nationalism, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.219$ and $p < 0.01$, indicating that as religiosity increases, nationalism also increases. The R demonstrates the strength or weakness of correlation. The R-value, either positive or negative, indicates the quality of the correlation. The value of r, 0.219, is closer to 0 than 1, demonstrating a weak correlation between religiosity and nationalism.

This finding is intriguing. There has been a common assumption that the strong religious revival amongst Gen Z Muslims exposes them to transnational ideologies easily. The high intensity of exclusive religious narratives from religious transnational movements in the virtual world potentially influences the religious and national orientation of Gen Z.

The data demonstrate that the enhancement of Gen Z's religiosity does not decrease their nationalism. They thought that being a religious youth does not necessarily mean having poor nationalism. Nevertheless, this finding requires further research, specifically by studying the religiosity patterns of Gen Z in broader research settings and social segments beyond Muslim activists.

The development of religious and state political thoughts is indispensable to maintaining a synergetic relationship between religiosity and nationalism. Religious thought development is essential because some of the political thoughts of Muslim scholars in bygone eras may be irrelevant to contemporary society, which is more open and multicultural. Furthermore, State political concepts should also be developed to accommodate the advancement of societal aspirations and religious values. Otherwise, a clash of religion and politics may occur in the future. Religious authorities will be everlasting enemies of the state, and they will continuously delegitimize it for the sake of their religious truth. Conversely, the state will make efforts to subdue or even destroy all religious matters because they disturb and potentially overthrow its authority and power.

Suppose the tension between religious authorities and the state is not appropriately resolved, in that case, it will result in damaging social impacts from the loss of safety and security for

the people, the absence of peace in practicing worship, economic decline, ignorance, and environmental degradation, to ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter against innocent people. This may happen when religious authorities and the state use their power to fight against each other.

Future Nation: Hopes and Challenges

For believers, religion is the pivot of their life, while the state is a social institution that rules societal life. Therefore, both must be perceived as two entities that complement and protect each other. Religion serves as a source of inspiration for noble ideals and images of kindness and humanity. In contrast, the state functions as a communal home to build welfare and harmony, and to protect such high religious values.[41]

In the Indonesian context, the correlation between religion and the state is accommodated in the country's foundation, Pancasila, and the doctrine of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. Pancasila serves as a common platform in societal and national life, regardless of people's diverse backgrounds. Pancasila serves as a guiding principle for people to live in peace and harmony while practicing their religions. Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution are social bonds that unite all multicultural Indonesian citizens. Pancasila does not replace or erase religion from societal life, but it serves as a code of conduct for a peaceful, harmonious, dynamic, and productive life.

Eighty-seven percent of the respondents expressed pride in being part of the Indonesian nation. Eighty-eight percent accepted Pancasila as their view of life in the society and state. Nonetheless, the FGD participants reminded us of the need for building the harmonious relationship between religion and nation continuously, as Indonesia has various religions and social life continues to evolve in tandem with current development, presenting challenges and the tug of war between primordial

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[41] Imam Sutomo and Budihardjo Budihardjo, "The Rejection of Religious Nationalism towards the Secular State and the Islamic Caliphate: Indonesian Religious Figures' Perspective," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 1 (June 2021): 115–37, https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i1.115-137.

interests. The FGD participants proposed several recommendations for an ideal social and state life. First, theoretical concepts related to religion and politics should be developed. Religious understandings should be developed by nationalism, open-mindedness, and multiculturalism. Political thoughts should also be continuously developed to accommodate the dynamic aspirations of people, including those related to religion. Second, patriotism and love for the people should be instilled, particularly among the youths, through social activities, sports clubs, arts, and various communal events that involve diverse community members without any social barriers. Third, the system of statehood should be established to be free from corruption and injustice, and to improve people's welfare. Fourth, the entrepreneurship capacities and life skills of the youths should be enhanced so that they have independence and competitive advantages in international relations and the globalized world. Entrepreneurial skills are necessary due to the diminishing job opportunities in the formal sector resulting from industrialization and economic digitalization. Fifth, critical Internet and digital literacy should be strengthened so that the youths do not waste their valuable time on destructive and unproductive uses of social media.

Conclusion

This study found a favorable relationship between religiosity and a nationalist spirit, as well as the relationship between these two values, among Gen Z Muslims in Bali and Lombok. It is encouraging to know that Gen Z is proud of the NKRI and hopes that the beloved country will be united, its people will be more developed, and its citizens will be more religious. They argue that religious aspiration and state politics are not antagonistic, but complement, protect, and reinforce each other. However, some of Gen Z's narratives about their anxiety, fear, and challenges should be understood. The demographic bonus, which presents numerous opportunities and challenges in a global economic context and beyond, should be addressed appropriately so that the nation can face its future with confidence and optimism.

Challenges in religiosity originate from globalized worldviews and modern lifestyles that spread unruly in line with advances in information technology. They may cause Gen Z to stray from traditional religious values. Challenges in nationalism arise from the youth's deep disappointment with the older generation, who fail to manage the country effectively due to corruption and misuse of power. Furthermore, global cultural, economic, and political pressures and transnational ideology dissemination create people who try to take advantage of themselves and their groups by politicizing religious identity.

The findings of this research show that despite the high level of transnational Islamic movements, Gen Z Muslims demonstrate high nationalism and moderate religiosity. However, the sample of this research is limited. A further study on a larger scale, involving more diverse young people, is necessary to gain a clearer understanding of their religiosity and nationalism.

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