RESEARCH ARTICLE

The dynamics of self-identity among Habib lovers: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Indonesian Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the self-identity dynamics of Generation Z *habib* lovers in Indonesia. *Habib* (sing.) or *habaib* (pl.) is the preachers who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The data were collected through 60 to 120 minutes of in-depth interviews with ten members of Habib-led assemblies identified as part of Generation Z (aged 12-27 years) selected through a purposive sampling technique. A qualitative approach was chosen, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with the help of NVivo12 software to organize the data. Three subordinate themes emerged: the motivation to become a *habib* lover, searching for self-identity, and cohesiveness towards the *habaib* assembly. These themes are related to the formation of self-identity in Generation Z. This study concludes that the self-identity of the youth members of the community is shaped and catalyzed by the meaning of holiness of the *habaib* as prophet's descents. The findings contribute to developing the concept of Muslim youth self-identity through empirical studies on adolescent self-identity formation.

INTRODUCTION

Identity formation is one of the most essential phases in a person's life. This process is generally experienced during adolescence but continues into early adulthood as cognitive abilities develop to think abstractly and perform complex reasoning. This development has implications for the emergence of identity crisis points in this development phase, especially since this phase is the gateway to the transition from childhood to adulthood (emerging adulthood). In this phase, post-formal thinking begins to form a more mature form of thinking determined by the subjectivity of experience, logic, and intuition to solve ambiguity, uncertainty, and inconsistency of life problems to face the future (Papalia & Feldman, 2014). Guidance from a more mature figure is needed to guide the formation of self-identity so as not to lose orientation toward identity.

Self-identity is an exclusive individual process with essential functions in life (Papalia et al., 2008), personal awareness of unity and continuity and beliefs that are relatively stable over a person's life span (Desmita, 2008), and is the arrangement of drives, abilities, beliefs, and experiences into a stable self-image, including the capacity to select and make decisions (Woolfolk, in Yusuf, 2011). Individual efforts to provide inner meaning (self-definition) shift substantially in the younger generation. Changes in intellectual abilities and biological and social factors affect role transformation and awareness of self and environment (Steinberg, 2002).

Erikson (in Hurlock, 2003) argues that the central role in the adolescent phase is the achievement of an established self-identity through searching and exploring oneself and one's social environment. The search for self-identity during this period is fundamental because this is the foundation for psychosocial and interpersonal relationship formation. In addition, the obstacles and challenges of identity search difficulties and identity formation in adolescents have often been considered the masterminds of behavioral deviations (Grotevant, 1998). This identity formation generally includes issues related to career choice, sexual orientation, political views, and religious relations. Career and religious problems are usually the two central issues that draw attention to the matters associated with youth identity.

The complexity of the problem of searching for self-identity in young people has attracted the attention of many researchers. One of the most interesting is a study conducted by Peek (2005), which examines the process of religious identity formation for second-generation American Muslims. By means of observations and individuals in Muslim student groups in New York and Colorado, it appears that there are three phases of religiousness in humans: religion as an identity brought from birth, religion as a chosen identity, and religion as a declared identity. The study conducted by Adela and Azis (2020), qualitative research involving three informants, seeks to obtain a description of the self-identity and religiosity of teenage online game addicts. Another case is Jati (2015), who reviews forming a middle-class Muslim identity in Indonesia through the implementation of Islamic popular culture.

In the last three years, the religious trend of young people in Langsa has changed. The presence of two sermon groups led by *habaib*, namely Majelis Anwarul Habib (Anwarul Habib Assembly) led by Habib Fahmi Assegaf and Majelis Azzabidie (Azzabidie Assembly) led by Habib Haikal Al-Athas has given a new style. The two *habaib* who graduated from Yemen present a sermon group model and content that attracts attention compared to the mainstream sermon group, which was initially dominated by a traditional *dayah* (Aceh traditional Islamic school) assembly. Unlike the *dayah*-style sermon group, which presents studies in the form of *tawhid* (theology), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *tasawwuf* (mysticism), the main content of these *habaib* sermon groups is salawat (prayer for the Prophet). The sermons begin with the recitation of the book of Maulid (*story of Prophet Muhammad's birth)* and *salawat* accompanied by *hadrah* (Arabic acoustic) music, then interspersed with short preaching and continued again with the recitation of *salawat* and then closed with prayer. In addition, another unique sight in this sermon group is the burning of *bukhur* (fragrance) and perfume during the recitation procession, one of the traditions believed to have originated from the Prophet Muhammad.

The exciting thing about this sermon group is that the congregation is dominated by young people under 30. When viewed from the generation theory, these young people belong to Generation Z. Generation Z is a group of people born between 1995 and 2010, meaning that Generation Z ranges from 12 to 27 years old. Santrock (2003) states that this age range is from early adolescence to early adulthood. This phenomenon is undoubtedly attractive to conduct further research considering the life of Generation Z, which tends to want freedom and practicality, is often antithetical to religious life

that seems rigid and has many rules. Young people now tend to be easily influenced by negative things from the social environment, especially from their cyberspace activities, which have implications for the emergence of behavior that destroys the religious and moral norms adopted. This article explores the self-identity dynamics of Generation Z, who are *habaib* lovers in two *alawiyin* (a term for a people or group of people who claim to be related to the Prophet Muhammad) patterned sermon groups.

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This participant-focused technique allows research participants to freely express their experiences without pressure and distortion (Alase, 2017). Six research participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique with inclusion criteria: Indonesian Muslim youth aged 12-27 years old, self-reported as a congregation of *habib*-led sermon groups, and volunteered to be involved in this study. All participants were required to provide informed consent before participating in the research. The following are the study participants' identities.

Table 1. Research participants' identity

Category	Participants				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Age (year)	20	18	21	27	22
Sex	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female
Time length of joining the assembly	Five years	Three years	Four years	Three years	Three years
Name of assembly	Azzabidie	Anwarul Habib	Azzabidie	Anwarul Habib	Anwarul Habib
Domicile	Langsa, Aceh	Langsa, Aceh	Langsa, Aceh	Langsa, Aceh	Langsa, Aceh

The primary data were obtained through interviews and then supplemented with participatory observation data in the field. The interview protocol addressed the process of their introduction to Habib's sermon group, their memorable experiences as a congregation, and the process of searching for self-identity and the changes they felt. Various types of questions were used to capture the detailed experiences of the participants, such as: "When and how did you get to know the sermon group? What experiences did you have while joining and being part of the congregation? and How did the leaders influence and change you?" The duration of each interview session ranges from 60 to 120 minutes. Each interview was 45 to 120 minutes. Data collection was conducted in two phases: initial and inquiry. The data-collecting phases ran from April to September 2022.

The initial stage was gathering data from primary sources of information. In the subsequent step, the data inquiry phase aimed to obtain sufficient data on one new participant and the four participants from the initial stage (P1, P2, P3, and P4) to achieve data saturation (P5). All participants provided written informed consent, and pseudonyms were employed to allude to specific persons. The primary data utilized in the study consisted of recordings derived from the interviews. Microsoft Word documents were transcribed from the interview recordings. The data were analyzed using the phases of interpretive phenomenological analysis (La Kahija, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). We meticulously examined each verbatim transcript and recorded preliminary observations (La Kahija, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). Utilizing the code system function of NVivo 12, we identified viable data segments based on the pertinent theme. We classified emergent themes as superordinate themes by differentiating the codes; for instance, we categorized a collection of emergent themes as "cohesiveness, "commitment," and "exploration." To determine which themes were unique to a particular participant and shared by all, the concluding phase identified patterns between cases and individuals (La Kahija, 2018; Smith et al., 2009).

To verify the compatibility of the code systems utilized in the study analysis that generated emergent themes into superordinate themes, we furnished a code book that exhaustively detailed all code phrases and topics. The research's trustworthiness was evaluated using Ephocé (La Kahija, 2018; Smith et al., 2009) and member-checking. To operationalize self-identity, as mentioned above, is supported by the following theories: Identity style theory (Berzonsky, 1989, 1994; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000, 2005); Dynamics of identity theory by Crocetti et al. (2008); and Identity status theory (Marcia (1966, 1993).

RESULT

Motivations to be a *habib* lover

There are various variants and versions of the stories told by the interviewees about the beginning of their encounters with these two assemblies. However, at least the multiple variants of the initial meeting story can be described in 3 kinds of patterns: unplanned encounters, peer conformity, and social media exposure. Several interviewees mentioned that their introduction to these assemblies began with a spontaneous meeting. Participant P1's unique introduction story to this assembly in 2019 started by accident. He said that he felt exhausted that night. Shortly after that, he started his motorcycle and looked for a place he could stop by to find an escape from the fatigue he was feeling. He admitted that the chants of *salawat* (prayer for the Prophet) performed by the *munsheed* (one who sings Islamic verses) brought calmness to him, who was tired at the time.

This unplanned meeting was also conveyed by Participant P2, one of the congregants who still faithfully participates in Majelis Anwarul Habib's activities. His presence at the assembly began with his neighbor inviting Habib Fahmi Assegaf and his congregation to carry out *Maulid Arbain* (*maulid* celebrations for 40 consecutive nights) in 2020. The crowd invited his attention to join, considering he claimed not to have any agenda then. At first, when he joined the group of worshipers, he was a bit awkward. However, after identifying some of the faces of worshipers he knew, he felt he was not alone.

Participant P3 was introduced to Majelis Azzabidie in 2019 through a friend. Her friend was an active worshipper at the assembly for a long time, about one year before her. Before getting information from his friend, he admitted that he had never known about the existence of this assembly. Before declaring his willingness to join, his friend had invited him several times. However, because he felt uncomfortable refusing again, he accepted the invitation for the fourth time. He explained that on the way to the location of the event at that time, he felt sorry for agreeing to his friend's invitation because he imagined that the sermon group was a dull place, only listening to what was delivered by the teacher in front. The assumption is that the sermon group is always filled with older people.

Likewise, participant P2, telling the story of his first encounter with the Majelis Anwarul Habib, also began with an invitation from a friend. At that time, one of his friends who went to boarding school invited him to accompany him to attend a *salawat* assembly. He explained that, just like him, at that time, not many people knew the identity and existence of the group. However, because he attended with a friend, He did not feel awkward to participate in.

Apart from the two patterns above, most congregants were introduced to the assembly through cyberspace channels. Participant P4 said he first learned about Majelis Anwarul Habib through social media. In the interview, he explained:

"Saya tahu Anwarul Habib itu dari Instagram. Awalnya dari repost Instagram orang yang saya follow di Instagram. Saya buka [akunnya]. Instagramnya kan cukup aktif itu. Saya lihat postingan-postingannya. Bertanya-tanya saya, ini pengajian apa ya Terus saya lihat ada Youtubenya juga ternyata. Saya tonton beberapa video rekaman live streaming. Mantap juga pengajiannya, aktif di medsos. Dari situ lah, saya beranikan diri datang ke majelis. Alhamdulillah, sampai sekarang masih istiqamah ke majelis." (I know Anwarul Habib from Instagram. At first it was from an Instagram repost of someone I follow on Instagram. I opened [his account]. His Instagram is quite active. I saw his posts. I wondered, what is this sermon group? Then I saw that there was a YouTube too. I watched some live streaming video recordings. The sermon group is also good, active on social media. From there, I dared to come to the assembly. Alhamdulillah, until now I am still faithful to the assembly.)" (P4).

The narrative of Participant P5, who claimed to have first known Majelis Anwarul Habib from his friend's post in the class WhatsApp Group. The post received various comments from his friends who had attended the assembly activities. The remarks attracted his attention to dig deeper into information related to the assembly, and the platform that became his primary source of information was Instagram.

Self-identity process through *habib* sermon groups

In the search for self-identity, Participant P1 admitted that he had explored many places to study, jumping from one sermon group to another before finally becoming a regular worshipper at Majelis Azzabidie. After exploring various sources of information, there were at least two main reasons for considering making Majelis Azzabidie a new part of his life. The first is that Majelis Azzabidie can introduce the figure of the Prophet Muhammad as a figure close to him. He explained that:

"Sebelum ikut di Majelis Azzabidie ini, saya merasa kalau Nabi Muhammad itu jauh sekali dari hidup saya. Saya sering dengar tentang syafaat nabi dari dulu saat ikut ngaji di sana sini, tapi saya menganggap apa lah syafaat itu. Orang-orang tertentu saja yang bisa dapat. Kalau saya ini, manalah mungkin. Tapi setelah beberapa kali mendengarkan ceramah dari Habib, saya merasa Rasulullah itu dekat kali dengan saya. Bisa saya rasakan kerinduan Nabi itu ke saya saat Nabi panggil 'ummati, ummati, ummati.' Mungkin kedengarannya rada lebay, tapi begitulah yang saya rasakan. Saya cari ilmu dari sana sini, pelan-pelan saya ikuti apa yang disukai Nabi. Ya walaupun saya masih banyak kurangnya. Pelan-pelan saya pede untuk pakai gamis, Shalat Jumat pakai imamah, karena saya sekarang kalau tahu itu sunnah." (Before joining the Azzabidie Assembly, I felt that the Prophet Muhammad was very far from my life. I often heard about the intercession of the prophet from the past when I participated in the Qur'an here and there, but I considered what the intercession was. Only certain people can get it. As for me, it's impossible. But after listening to several lectures from Habib, I feel that the Prophet is close to me. I can feel the Prophet's longing for me when the Prophet calls 'my followers, my followers, my followers.' Maybe it sounds a bit exaggerated, but that's how I felt. I seek knowledge from here and there, slowly I follow what the Prophet likes. Yes, although I still lack a lot. I'm slowly becoming more confident to wear a robe, to pray Friday prayers in an *imamah* (turban), because now I know it's sunnah.) (P1)

Participant P3 shared his experience from another source before feeling that Majelis Anwarul Habib was a place that was "really me." He had tried to attend various other assemblies. In fact, at first, he admitted that he strongly questioned the tradition of burning *bukhur*, which he used to perceive as a burning incense ceremony commonly practiced by shamans. His curiosity eventually led him to discover more about *bukhur* by googling and watching videos on Youtube.

This commitment can be identified from confidence in choosing this assembly as their social group. The most easily recognizable identity commitment is through clothing in their daily lives. Almost all interviewees used the *thawb* as their costume, even though they met in coffee shops or cafes. *Thawb* is an overalls shirt that almost touches the ankles worn by men. Usually, the *thawb* is designed with plain and neutral colors and minimal patterns. Some people also call it a *gamis* or robe. In female members, there is also a change in clothing with the use of a niqab. Muslimah admitted that she is now determined to use the niqab after attending several congregations at Majelis Azzabidie. In her explanation to the researcher that the use of the niqab, which she believes is a form of *uswah* (good example), the family life of the Prophet Muhammad Saw, which, according to her, all women in the Prophet's family use.

Another unique expression that became the identity of the informants that the researchers met was kissing the interlocutor's hand. Kissing the other person's hand is a tradition that the people of Langsa often practice as a form of respect for elders or people considered more knowledgeable. But compared to the custom, the way of kissing the hand practiced by these informants is slightly different. The interlocutor's hand is greeted with both hands while bowing, then the upper palm of the interlocutor is inhaled and then kissed with the lips. When the researcher confirmed this to the informants, they similarly explained that kissing hands is ethical to elders, especially to more knowledgeable ones. Participant P2 also said Habib emphasized morals in every discussion and gave direct examples to his congregation.

Furthermore, this established commitment is also expressed by the young congregation through the symbol of the Prophet's sandals on the attributes they use. This symbol of the Prophet is synonymous with the assemblies initiated by the *habaib*. This symbol is usually pinned on a cap, shirt, *habwah* (sitting belt), or pin and even designed as a sticker attached to their smartphone.

Besides being discussion partners, advice-givers, and motivators, the *habaib* also inspires. Many interviewees confirmed that they admire the leaders of their assemblies as inspirers of life, especially in the aspect of ethics to teachers and elders and ethics to knowledge. When interacting with the *habaib*, these young worshipers feel like they are getting an objective reference on expressing affection for their families through the ethics displayed by these *habaib* when they are with their families.

Meanwhile, apart from being a means of studying and a place of worship, the younger generation uses the *habaib* assembly to explore their hobbies and talents. Apart from that, the *habaib* assembly is also a public space to interact socially with fellow worshipers. Discussing, chatting, and drinking coffee together are sights that researchers always find as the routine of these two assemblies outside of the routine agenda they have scheduled.

Cohesiveness toward *habib* assembly

The cohesiveness in the group is expressed in various ways. One form is by becoming a *khidmat* team. The *khidmat* team is a term for the congregation preparing all the needs before the sermon or *maulid* activities are carried out. They have already arrived at the event's location by bringing *hadrah* instruments, a complete set of sound systems, and loudspeakers. They set the volume and good quality of the amplifier, which will be used as a loudspeaker for the *hadrah* instruments accompanying the *maulid* and *nasheed* (Islamic songs) recitation. When the event begins, the *khidmat* team will share tasks according to their capacity, competence, and the agreed division of duties. Inside the event location, some are assigned as *hadrah* players and *munsheed*. Some serve as cameramen, photographers, and videographers responsible for covering and live streaming on various social media

platforms. All of these activities were not rewarded in any form. All work done is perceived as student devotion to a teacher and an expression of love and sacrifice to the Prophet Muhammad. Participant P2 explained that:

> "*Kami tidak ada yang minta bayaran. Bisa bantu Habib yang sudah banyak ngasih ilmu sama kita. Habib pun ga pernah minta bayar apapun kalau diundang kegiatan. Semuanya suka rela. Walaupun kalau arba'in itu nonstop kita empat puluh hari keliling dari rumah ke rumah, rasanya senang saja, ada yang bisa kita buat untuk membesarkan maulid nabi. Semoga nanti bisa dapat syafaat dari nabi di hari kiamat.*" (We do not ask for payment. We can help Habib who has given us a lot of knowledge. He also never asks to pay anything if invited to activities. Everything is voluntary. Even though if *Arbain* is non-stop, we are forty days traveling from house to house, it feels good, there is something we can do to raise the prophet's *maulid*. Hopefully later we can get the intercession of the prophet on the Day of Judgment.) (P2).

Loyalty is also evident when the *habaib* gets invitations to *maulid* activities or lectures outside the city. The *khidmat* team faithfully accompanied the *habaib* to the event's location, even though they had to sacrifice their other activities.

Participant P5, who likes the world of poster design, expressed interest in the flyer post posted on the official Instagram account of Majelis Anwarul Habib with the expression:

> "*...keren-keren flyer dakwahnya. Jarang ada majelis yang habibnya sendiri yang jago desain dan bikin sendiri flyernya*" (What an excellent da'wah flyer. It's rare to find an assembly where the *habib* himself is good at designing and making his flyers.) (P5).

Participant P4 explained:

> "*Selain dapat ilmu agama, dari Habib kami banyak dapat ilmu lain. Beliau itu jago buat desain grafis. Semua flyer postingan di IG majelis itu beliau sendiri yang buat. Video yang diputar saat penutupan arba'in itu juga konsepnya dari beliau. Live streaming di Youtube juga beliau yang ajarin. Banyak tentang teknik desain, fotografi dan bikin video yang kami dapatkan dari beliau. Anak-anak majelis ini juga banyak yang datang bukan Cuma belajar agama, tapi belajar itu juga. Jarang yang begitu. Biasanya kalau orangnya jago tentang agama, ya tentang itu aja dia bisanya. Bisa kita bilang Habib itu guru agama paket lengkap.*" (Apart from getting religious knowledge, from Habib we got a lot of other knowledge. He is good at making graphic designs. He made all the flyers posted on the IG assembly himself. The video that was played at the closing of *Arbain* was also his concept. He also taught me about live streaming on YouTube. We learned a lot about design techniques, photography and making videos from him. There are also many children who come to this assembly not only to learn religion, but also to learn that. That's rare. Usually, if someone is good at religion, that's all he can do. We can say that Habib is a complete package religious teacher.)" (P4).

Although during the participatory observation that the researcher conducted, no conversations and discussions related to automotive were found, uniquely, the results of the researcher's search for several worshipers who have a special closeness to Habib Haikal conveyed that before leaving to study in Yemen Habib Haikal was an active person in road racing. Participant P3 revealed:

> "*Kalau kita cerita tentang kereta (sepeda motor), habib paham betul. Enak kita ngobrolnya. Walaupun sekarang agak jarang bahas itu. Lebih sering bahas masalah sirah.*" (If we talk about motorcycles, he understands very well. We have a good conversation. Although now it is rather rare to discuss it. More often, we discuss the stories of the prophets.)" (P3)

Participant P2 termed Habib and his congregation "still on the same frequency" because the age difference was not too far. Meanwhile, he elaborated in more detail:

"...karena umur Habib dengan anggota majelis kan nggak terlalu beda jauh. Jadi kami lebih enak rasanya. Kalau di dayah kan teungkunya rata-rata sudah lebih berumur. Jadi lebih segan." (...because Habib's age and the assembly members are not too far apart. So, we feel more comfortable. In the dayah, the teungkunya is, on average, older. So, they are more reluctant.) (P2)

This age gap factor triggers the closeness between Habib as the central actor of the assembly and his congregation. Participant P2 describes the resemblance between the assembly leader and his community through intensive communication:

"Mungkin karena umur dengan Habib nggak jauh beda, jadi rasanya lebih dekat. Kalau mau cerita apa-apa pun lebih nyaman. Lagi pula, Habib juga orangnya nggak kayak teungku di dayah. Lagi-lagi mungkin karena umur ya. Kalau teungku itu kan rasanya kayak harus dita'zhimkan kali. Tapi kalau sama Habib, kadang-kadang Habib yang menghubungi kami duluan. Tanya kabar kalau kami beberapa hari nggak kelihatan di majelis. Kalau kelihatan agak kurang semangat, Habib perhatian langsung nanya, 'Ente kenapa? Murung amat?' Habib tempat curhat yang enak kalau kami sedang ada masalah." (Maybe it's because I'm not that different in age from Habib, so it feels closer. If you want to tell me anything, it's more comfortable. Besides, Habib is also not like a teacher in *dayah*. Again, maybe it's because of age. If it's a teacher, it feels like you have to be respected. But with Habib, he sometimes contacts us first. He asks how we're doing if we haven't been seen in the assembly for a few days. If it looks a bit lackluster, Habib's attention immediately asks, 'What's wrong with you? Are you very sad?' Habib is a good place to vent if we are having problems.)" (P2)

In the few times researchers attended routine *maulid* events in these two assemblies after the reading of the *maulid* was over, Habib often invited their congregation to sit together in a coffee shop. The conversation is built in a friendly atmosphere interspersed with laughter typical of friendship. Researchers see that the relationship between teachers and students becomes a close relationship displayed in these interactions. In addition, Habib is often invited to eat with the *hadrah* players.

DISCUSSION

This article aims to provide an overview of the dynamics of the search for self-identity of young people who identify as lovers of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. The search process begins with an introduction to the assembly, where they explore knowledge and identify as part of the group. With different variations and versions, this pattern of following along was also told by several other complementary sources that researchers met during several *salawat* gathering activities at Anwarul Habib and Azzabidie. From the findings above, using social media in da'wah activities has proven effective in attracting the attention of Generation Z, the target of da'wah, a group of young people. This finding is reinforced by previously conducted studies (Maghfirah et al., 2021; Muthohirin, 2021; Nurdin, 2019; Zulhazmi & Hastuti, 2018), which found that social media is an effective tool as a medium for da'wah.

In the process of self-identity formation, social environmental factors play a huge influence (Crossley, 2000; Thoits, 2013). Furthermore, the role of the central figure in the community is a stimulant in the formation of religiosity (Afiatin, 2016), in this case, the leader of the assembly. In this last section, the researcher examines the habaib assembly's contribution to forming self-identity and religiosity. This discussion will focus on two main issues, namely the role played by the leadership of the community and the use of the group as a space for Generation Z exploration in forming their self-identity and religiosity. This finding aligns with Rijal's research (2018, 2020a), which states that the

habib assembly is a stage for young people's exploration and expression of piety, apart from being a public space for learning religion.

In reviewing identity status, Generation Z worshipers of the *habaib* assembly are classified variously. Young congregants who become the *khidmat* team have generally achieved achievement status. Commitment to the group is strongly reflected in their contribution, obedience, and loyalty to the assembly's leadership and the institution of the group. Meanwhile, relatively new community members are still in the moratorium and diffusion stages. Those in these two statuses still have not achieved commitment and are undergoing stages of self-exploration from various sources. Habib Fahmi explained that those still in the introduction and search stages are still not regularly attending the assembly, even though they have joined the WhatsApp Group that has been facilitated. In more detail, Habib explained that those in this phase predominantly like celebratory activities on a large scale rather than routine activities. They attend peak events, such as the 12th night of *Maulid Arbain* and its closing night.

Generation Z's dedication to these two assemblies did not come out of nowhere. Habib Fahmi's interests and talents in design, photography, and videography attract and bind young worshipers at Majelis Anwarul Habib. In contrast to Majelis Anwarul Habib, the young congregation of Majelis Azzabidie is dominated by automotive enthusiasts. Apart from the similarity of interests, the congregation's cohesiveness is due to an insignificant age difference. This cohesiveness is further strengthened by the position of the Habib as a noble descendant of the Prophet Muhammad as a catalyst. This finding is reinforced by Rijal (2020b), who states that *habaib* gain their religious authority and popularity through commodifying status as descendants of the Prophet.

The closeness of the relationship causes the *habaib* to have full access to very personal matters. Young members do not infrequently pour out their hearts and consult regarding privacy issues. This proximity also allows the *habaib* to play the role of guardian in searching for self-identity. Not even a few have undergone drastic changes. Young people are the most vulnerable group to be influenced and carried away by the current trend. Because of their exploratory behavior, Generation Z can easily choose and like something. But their flexibility makes it easy for them to leave what they love and move on to something else.

Unlike the young members at Majelis Anwarul Habib and Majelis Azzabidie, we will find different scenes in Generation Z in these two communities. The cohesiveness of the youth in these two assemblies is expressed explicitly. There are at least two patterns of attraction that motivate the participation of this young generation, namely: 1) similarity and 2) closeness. The factor of common interest between the leaders of the assembly and the congregation became the catalyst for forming the intimacy of Generation Z with these two assemblies.

According to Ikbar et al. (2019), the eating tradition often represented by Tablighi Jamaat indicates high group cohesiveness. The researchers also captured this closeness through several video clips of WhatsApp posts of youths on vacation with Habib to places. It was seen that the interaction between them was pretty close. The two motivations researchers found in this assembly strengthen DeVito's (2007) theory of attractiveness, which concludes that at least three main factors form an interest in interpersonal relationships: similarity, proximity, and physical beauty. The search for self-identity becomes essential for an individual to know its meaning and important role in life. The character of Generation Z, who is independent, open-minded, and multi-tasking (Pandit, 2015), leads them to become exploratory individuals and not awkward to get to know and try new things. Although with varied patterns, in general, the self-identity of Generation Z members is explored in an informative style.

When viewed from the identity dimension, the young members of the two *habaib* assemblies have been in the commitment phase after experiencing an exploration phase. This exploration phase is passed by looking for comparative information from various sources. The closeness of Generation Z to the digital world makes information through internet channels the primary source of information checking.

CONCLUSION

The attendance of Generation Z members at both assemblies can be attributed to an intrinsic motivation to gain a more profound understanding of religion despite the influence of various circumstances and moments. However, the group was chosen as a spiritual destination because of the similarity between the two assembly leaders and Generation Z, which comprises most of the congregation. Gen Z undergoes an informative self-identity exploration phase before the commitment phase. During this phase, they gather and compare information from various media sources to decide on their identity. New members are relatively in the moratorium and diffusion phases.

In contrast, those acquainted with and actively engaged in assembly activities for an extended period have attained an established status (achievement) of identity. After becoming members of the two *habaib* assemblies, Generation Z's religiosity has undergone various discernible transformations, particularly regarding prophethood-related matters of knowledge, practice, beliefs, and experience. This shift also influences the assessment of the environmental repercussions experienced by Generation Z in religiosity. In Generation Z's quest for self-identity and religiosity, the assembly's leadership is an active reference for religious science and provides guidance, inspiration, and a forum for discussion. The group serves as a venue for religious observance and intellectual discourse and a platform for congregation members to engage in cordial social exchanges by sharing interests and abilities.

Data access statement

The data described in this article can be obtained by contacting the corresponding author.

Declaration of interest's statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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