# Islamic identity and religious support system for Muslim homelessness

## *[Identiti Islam dan sokongan agama terhadap gelandangan Muslim]*

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| Keywords: | ABSTRACT |
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| *Islamic Identity; Religiosity; Support System; Homeless; Authorities* | *Approach and effort to strengthen the Muslim identity who are dealing with the social issue by developing a balanced attitude and behaviour within homeless circles are found to be less effective because of personality traits and religious factors. Identity crisis due to static thinking and lower resilience does give rise to homeless clusters. Thus, this writing is aiming at identifying factors that are found significant to the rise in homelessness in Kuala Lumpur. This study applies a qualitative method using a thematic approach in data analysis. The data collection method is according to the observation of the homeless and unstructured interviews with 10 informants who are Muslim homeless to construct relevant data. The findings of the study indicate the establishment of the identity concept for those who encounter social problems, especially those who are homeless is less effective. Such shortcomings are attributed to the misconception of religious aspects and Islamic belief (‘aqīdah) that hinder the implementation from the Muslim perspective in terms of basic practice in their life. Psycho-religious support among the same social groups also contributes to no change in their life. Besides, negative thinking and loafing around, which are deemed normal, have a significant connection with the homeless phenomenon. This study has theoretical implications for the development of a better identity for homeless groups. This can help the authorities to carry out more effective initiatives to help the homeless in Malaysia in its entirety.* |

| Kata Kunci: | ABSTRAK |
|---|---|
| Identiti Islam; Religiositi; Sistem Sokongan; Gelandangan; Pihak Berautoriti | Tindakan dan usaha bagi pengukuhan identiti Muslim golongan bermasalah menerusi pembentukan sikap dan tingkahlaku yang seimbang dalam kalangan gelandangan didapati kurang berjaya kerana wujudnya faktor tret personaliti dan religiositi. Kecelaruan identiti daripada gaya pemikiran yang statik dan ketahanan diri yang lemah juga didakwa menyumbang kepada bertambahnya kelompok gelandangan. Justeru, penulisan ini bertujuan mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang didapati signifikan terhadap pertambahan jumlah gelandangan di Kuala Lumpur. Kajian ini berbentuk kualitatif yang menggunakan pendekatan tematik dalam penganalisisan data. Metode pengumpulan data adalah berdasarkan kaedah observasi terhadap gelandangan dan temu bual secara tidak |

berstruktur ke atas sepuluh (10) orang informan yang terdiri daripada gelandangan Muslim. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan pengukuhan terhadap konsep identiti golongan bermasalah khususnya gelandangan adalah kurang berkesan. Kekurangan tersebut disebabkan oleh kurangnya kefahaman terhadap aspek agama dan kepercayaan akidah yang merencatkan penghayatan Islam sebagai amalan asas seseorang dalam kehidupan. Sokongan psiko-agama dalam kalangan kumpulan sosial yang sama juga turut menyumbang kepada kehidupan yang tidak berubah. Selain itu, pemikiran negatif dan budaya melepak yang dianggap pada awalnya sebagai perkara biasa mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan fenomena gelandangan. Kajian ini memberi implikasi secara teoritikal terhadap perkembangan pengukuhan identiti golongan gelandangan Muslim secara umumnya dan boleh membantu pihak berautoriti menjalankan inisiatif yang lebih berkesan dalam membantu golongan gelandangan di Malaysia secara keseluruhannya.

## 1. Introduction

A prosperous life is claimed by scholars Erikson (1950), Gazalba (1982), Jenkins (1996), and King (2003) to have a significant bearing on the development of each individual's identity. However, studies related to the concept of homeless identity still need further study in Malaysia, especially as it has become a phenomenon and attracted public attention, thus causing social problems. This exploratory study explores the factors found to be significant in the increase of homeless groups, generally in the Klang Valley, especially in Malaysia. The increase associated with the development of identity is said to differ from one individual to another.

When talking about homelessness, Alhabshi and Abdul Manan (2012) said that contributing to a person's homeless status are loss of jobs, poverty, involvement with drug or alcohol addiction, rejection from family, and mental health issues. However, all of these factors are associated with early childhood self-development. For example, Othman (1995) said religious education applied since childhood can develop adolescents who have good values in soul and can reject the elements contrary to religious teachings. Relationships, help children evaluate and interpret themselves, which is a risk or an asset for healthy learning and development processes. The influence with regards to the processes can be seen throughout generations, where we can assess the benefits and risks. Therefore, it has a significant impact on a child's self-concept (Osher et al., 2010).

Yahaya (2005) describes a self-concept as another person's assessment of himself or how he shows himself, positively or negatively. The dimensions found the self-concept available in physical self-sufficiency, ethical self-reliance, cognitive self-esteem, family relationship, social self, cognitive behaviour, cognitive self-identity and self-satisfaction. In other words, we can say a self-identity is divided into positive and negative self-sufficiency types. All self-concept in interpretation as action turns out to be a factor in positive or negative development.

Approach to the concept refers to an individual's tendency to develop the relevant self-personality trait and the sense of belonging as an individual. Such characteristics vary in differences in social roles (Donahue et al., 1993). Moreover, an analysis conducted by Abdul Jalil et al. (2017) found that three elements affect self-concept that is, from a) an individual's perception of himself, b) other people's observations of him and; c) his appraisal of other people's perceptions of him.

Besides that, research evidence indicates a relationship between homelessness and mental problems as failure to treat psychological problems leads the homeless to act habitually in the next social environment, limiting their integration into society (Habanik, 2018). Thus, we conclude there is a need for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to take part in the mission of helping the homeless by providing the necessary help in a range of methods, including religious support so that the homeless can keep moving through a prosperous identity approach.

## 2. Literature Review

An effort to improve the troubled group's self-concept applied by authorities' institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to form a balanced attitude and identity is said to be less successful because there are personality trait factors among them. The existence of these homeless people results from a social system failure, a lack of support services, and the attitude of the homeless themselves. The findings also reveal that the homeless suffer from a variety of cognitive disorders and are frequently confronted with negative daily life situations (Shazwani, 2016). This includes portraying the homeless as powerless, lazy, and non-religious (Cohen & Wegner, 1992), which cause resulting in fostering a weak personality and crisis identity.

The cause of a person's attitude of wandering or living on the streets has been identified through various causes. Synonymously, based on factors such as the homeless's poor education, use of illicit substances (drugs and alcohol), personal issues (unemployment or family strife), and social and environmental that exacerbate poverty, hunger, loneliness, and other negative aspects of life lead the homeless to not practice the religion (Alowaimer, 2018; Drani 2016; Drani et al., 2020; Ramli & Sheikh Dawood, 2019), which sustains the status of homeless people.

Homelessness requires three dimensions: residential network, family support network, as well as roles and self-values that include the formation of a prosperous identity. Residence refers to a permanent housing shortage or emergency Shelters, and it is usually the beginning of how a person is defined as homeless. They focus on existing support for those who are homeless around them from their family and friends. Self-value refers to the role of the homeless or sense of self, particularly when interacting with others. The homeless dignity and self-esteem may be negatively affected by the situation (Snow & Andersson, 1993). From the perspective of a homeless people, their identities are translated by scholars in pairs, which refers to their nature in terms of pros and cons, such as the able vs. unable, the hardworking vs. lazy, honest vs. untrustworthy, good vs. bad, motivated vs. unmotivated, friendly vs. unfriendly and independent vs. not independent. People will choose different adjectives to describe those dimensional pairs (Parker, 2012).

Hence, various parties were also identified to take part in social work in order to assist the government in addressing the problem of homelessness. NGOs included are those who have active participation. According to Mohamed (2015), the involvement of authorities, institutions and NGOs in supporting the homeless is crucial as a building support system for the homeless in terms of religious and social. Moreover, Jasni et al. (2020) state that the support offered should make use of effective interaction via a prudent approach, such as using appropriate language. The beginning of a conversation is essential to making a good impression because it shows support and creates a sense of ease in the conversation. Non-verbal communication should be used appropriately, and refraining from using punitive language against the homeless was highly beneficial to them.

## 3. Research Methodology

In this study, the data was collected using two different methods to obtain data triangulation for reliability in finding, which are observation of the homeless and unstructured interviews with informants. Darussalam & Hussin (2018) state observations are made to see all of the activities, events, or situations for yourself, or when a new perspective is required, or when the informant is unable or unwilling to discuss the research topic. Thus, this observation is done to obtain an accurate method for field work-study because we will get a true picture to the initial hypothesis. We collect the data on Muslim homeless religious practices and *'aqīdah* as well as their implementation based on the pillars of Islam and Faith to get the actual findings. Both data were analysed using the thematic approach through which the emerging themes were carefully identified. Data from unstructured interviews were applied to 10 informants to obtain as many views without being bound by any questions only to ensure that the data correlation succeeds in achieving the goal of the appreciation of Islamic identity and *'aqīdah* of Muslim homeless. Similarly, to get the factor of increasing the overall number of homeless, the interview was conducted through the selected method to achieve the objectives of this paper.

## 4. Findings & Discussions

There are three stages of observation about religious practices among Muslim homeless; religious understanding of Muslim homeless and; religious recognition of Muslim homeless. Getting the results involves observing the understanding of *'aqīdah,* which has six characteristics based on the pillars of Iman. A study on homeless life using the participant observation method shows that if they understand the *'aqīdah*, they will understand why they were created and perform responsibilities as good Muslims. Next, they will learn about self-characteristics that can be improved in social roles. However, life will continue to be homeless. These findings were significant to Mohamed et al. (2018), who found that lack of religious practice can expose individuals to problematic risks; the need for homelessness to religious support creates a sense of motivation in themselves (Mohamed et al., 2017). Observations conducted on Muslim homelessness found that the identities formed have a significantly low appreciation of the pillars of faith, Islam, and Islamic Morals that shape their identities.

A low level of religious appreciation among the homeless is also congruent with Ferguson et al. (2006), which proves the similarities between cities that provide services to the homeless are components of faith and self-efficiency. Differences emerge in the influence of socio-political contexts on service provision. Faith-based organisations offer recommendations to plan and improve services to homeless youth and street friends or among homelessness. This is an approach adapted to the culture of the homeless that has been proposed to deal with spirituality and religion by supporting the prevention of stimulant use and increasing HIV testing among them (Carrico et al., 2017). Even so, Agu et al. (2013) state that there is a correlation between religion and self-concept. The study also revealed that religion influenced girls' self-concepts more than boys. There are many components of self-concept, such as social, academic, physiological, and transpersonal. Religious beliefs influence every component of self-concept, belonging, and integration. Being a religious structure is critical in preparing for a better life.

Findings by Abu Bakar et al. (2017) demonstrate that aspects of religiosity are low among homeless people. All findings seem very significant with the observations taking part in the lives of Muslim homeless in the Klang Valley. In contrast, Hodge (2012) revealed that homeless women or single mothers use spirituality to survive life's stresses and misfortune that befalls them. These women admit that praying is among the common strategies to deal with difficulties because of homelessness (Meadows-Oliver, 2003). These findings support the core key to important spiritual feelings in the life of a homeless woman (Hurlbut & Ditmyer, 2016). Furthermore, Robiah et al. (2001) stated that religious beliefs are the most superior energy to face all negative elements which cause emotional and mental problems. For example, strong principles and stand based on Islamic teaching can prevent adolescents from being influenced by promiscuousness.

Through the questionnaire on an increasing number of homeless people in the Klang Valley, the study's findings: median=4. Perception ½ or 50 percent of study respondents directly involved with homelessness are on an ordinal scale of 3 to 5. The giving of food is one factor contributing to the rise in homeless people. Many factors contribute to the emergence and existence of homeless women in Malaysia, such as poverty, domestic and family violence, drug addiction, migration, family problems, and others. Among the causes of homelessness, there may be similarities seen in other countries around the world. However, some examples that arise from differences and changes in the environmental causes of homelessness in Malaysia differ from those in other countries in some places such as the United States or Australia (Mohd Adib et al., 2016).

McCarthy (2013) more critically discusses identity. He claims identity crises happen as a consequence of the development of origins and confusion in determining the specific individual identity, which is described as being diverse and complex. These findings are seen to be highly significant, with DiBlasio et al. (1993) showing a correlation between low self-esteem and depression, family relationships, goal achievement, disability, health, and even a lack of food as major contributors to homelessness activities. Analysing a variety of variables reveals that depression and poor health are the two most important variables that contribute to low self-esteem for homeless people. Hence, Hurlbut et al. (2011) view this as the medium with a positive correlation found among the spiritual well-being scale and subcategories. Health Dimensions Health Promotion II (physical activity, nutrition, spiritual growth, interpersonal relationships, and stress management). The result supports the importance of spirituality related to behaviours that promote health in women who lost their homes.

In addition, there are studies by Boydell et al. (2000) also reveal that homelessness creates identity problems, leaving the impression of a well-preserved positive identity. Here, the current identity is destroyed, and the future identity is shown. The identities of the past, present, and future are mixed as individuals' homelessness (for some aspects of the biography and its context) depending on how we represent the past or prepare for the future. Passive self-concept depends on reflective assessment. Self-identity is viewed as active
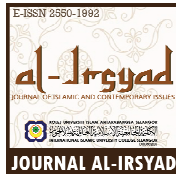
and rooted in emotions. Individuals with low self-esteem feel helpless and retired, and the homeless overcome feelings of inferiority by drawing negative comparisons to other relationships. Moreover, the concept of identity hierarchy is a threat-delay and response mechanism.

Thus, the concept of social interaction is critical in raising moral values between authorities, institutions and the homeless to have a good working relationship. Local governments and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work with homeless people were also included in the study. Significant emphasis is needed on social interaction to create a harmonious living community, whether it involves race, ethnicity or society with certain groups, including homeless people (Mohamed et al., 2018), through some religious approach and more conceptual spirituality related to physical and mental health. For example, closeness to God, religious orientation and motivation, and religious support (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Mat Nor & Ramli 2021). Although, as stated, there is some evidence that supports the benefits of federally funded transitional housing programmes by Luffborough III (2017). Even so, faith-based transitional housing programmes have been the subject of several studies. The programmes that run with limited resources must rely on social interaction and faith-based care to assist homeless people in achieving independence. Findings show that the attitudes and behaviours of the participating street men changes in a spiritual-based programme are possible, but a minimum of 9 months of consistency is required.

Piraino et al. (2014) findings on 22 hours per week through a one-hour program called time HOPE (Listening to Other People's Experiences) by working with poor adult women and men who lived in a luxury suburb in a major metropolitan city in the United States had a low response rate. Still, the theme that came up overall was very positive. Individuals feel that the program gives them a voice, a safe place to tell their life stories and can be heard. This finding is in line with Gravell (2013), who runs a program with the homeless. He found a young homeless man who learned from more experienced homeless people who are also homeless in London. This shows the importance of addressing the spiritual needs of the homeless who are facing a housing crisis. Furthermore, such programmes have an impact on feelings of isolation and loneliness. Douglas et al. (2008) found that intervention may affect the spiritual need for loneliness among women, and this study suggests that religion may be a mechanism. The reduction in isolation seems to occur regardless of one's ethnic identity, demonstrating the relative importance of spirituality in their life. They feel lonely and isolated without sorting, but there are some who express it.

Thus, Mutiawati (2014), in studies related to homelessness, stated all religious activities applied appropriate to them and then followed all homeless social buildings and guided by a central office, with help from members and religious speakers. The changes experienced by the socially constructed community after following the whole activity homeless people's attitudes and behaviours much improved over the previous situation. They are more obedient to religious orders, become more religious and bring themselves closer to God. More importantly, they are making progress in returning to the community. As a result, homeless people can restart social functions and work rather than homelessness and begging on the streets.

On the other side, observation studies have found significant behaviour between social loafing and homeless behaviour. Social practices of loafing, which is normal at first, become an unconscious habit. This habit, if not curbed, will become ingrained and comfortable with oneself. It starts from the transition from childhood to adolescence. According to Harre and Lamb (1983), teens start to make adjustments more complex with family, peers and teachers through daily activities and social life according to their feelings. Homelessness spends a lot of time with their group. Therefore, the development of a positive and competitive society among homeless circles does not happen because of their homeless condition. They were found to have personality traits and low religious appreciation (Mohamed et al., 2015). The results of interviews in this study found that all the informants agreed that the Muslims homelessness should be given religious support based on a relaxed street program and light so that they can easily accept such methods of religious support for them. The findings of this interview strengthen the results of observations made on the need for religious support for homeless Muslims. Five informants associated religiosity with homeless behaviour and personality traits throughout the interview. Two of the informants agreed that the homeless lost the support system in which religious support was also included in the support system. While the other three relate that religiosity develops personality and identity directly. In contrast, the findings through projective drawing and religious appreciation were tested during in-depth interview sessions. Clearly, it is life during early childhood. Studies conducted prove social, and religious support coincides with what is stated al-Nawawī (2005) in the hadith of the prophet (PBUH) said, narrated by Abū Hurayrah (RA), as follows:

عَنْ أَبِى هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلاَّ يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ وَيُنَصِّرَانِهِ وَيُمَجِّسَانِهِ كَمَا تُنْتَجُ الْبَهِيمَةُ بَهِيمَةً جَمْعَاءَ هَلْ تُحِسُّونَ فِيهَا مِنْ جَدْعَاءَ " . ثُمَّ يَقُولُ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ وَاقْرَءُوا إِنْ شِئْتُمْ { فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِى فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لاَ تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ} الآيَةَ .

Translation:

*"There is none born but is created to his true nature (Islam). It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian quite as beasts produce their young with their limbs perfect. Do you see anything deficient in them? Then he quoted the Qur'an, {The nature made by Allah in which He has created men there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion}." (al-Rūm: 30).*

[Muslim, *Kitāb al-Qadar, Bāb Maʿnā Kulli Mawlūd yūlad ʿalā al-fitrah…*, Hadith No. 2658]

Moreover, developing social influence and faith is critical to feeling like a servant of God by fulfilling trust and responsibilities. Fowler (1981) acknowledges that there is a broad pattern to the development of faith, which explains the pattern of developing emotional, cognitive, as well as moral responses and interpretations. Meanwhile, Rahman et al. (2018) and Sudi et al. (2017) displayed those Islamic methods of therapy performed on mental disorders through self-purification therapy by the cultivation of oneness of God (tawhidic) values into self and repentance made based on strong conditions and Islamic principles. All approaches to dealing with troubled people are brought to the appreciation of religious life. It is seen to be very significant in the context of application to the homeless.

Therefore, in the authors' view, faith in the tawhidic paradigm aspect is the first step toward a major shift in personal identity. With faith, homeless Muslims can transform their cognitive form into great spiritual strength on *'aqīdah*, able to perfectly change their perspective on the life of themselves, others, and the universe. The tawhidic is so significant to the concept of piety (*taqwā*), which fortifications safeguard themselves against unethical actions and deviant identities. The sense of piety embedded in the homeless will improve themselves, as well as enhance their ability to think in a more positive way. Furthermore, the concept of *taqwā* gaining a guaranteed blessing from Allah for a good life is stated in the Quran, verse al-Hadid: 28:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِرَسُوْلِهٖ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرْ لَـكُمْ وَاللهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

Translation:

*"Believers, have fear of Allah and believe in His Messenger, and He will grant you a two-fold portion of His Mercy, and will appoint for you a light whereby you shall walk; and He will forgive you. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate."*

In addition, the formation of a homeless self-identity also correlated with spirituality and Islamic identity will develop themselves into a prosperous identity. This is also stated in the Quran, verse al-Ahzab: 70-71, which brings out the motivation and approach for enhancing a prosperous identity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا (٧٠) يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِع اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (71)

Translation:

*"O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allâh and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allâh and His Messenger (PBUH) he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e. he will be saved from the Hell-fire and made to enter Paradise)."*

That way, the authors state to instil a positive sense of prosperous identity for every Muslim individual, especially the homeless, needs the support and guidance from all parties, including the authorities and NGOs, in applying the religious aspect through various activities carried out is appropriate and significant. With the support of religion, homeless people have the ability to develop their spiritual identities in a balanced way. At the same time, we found the type of support given is also critical to emphasise compassion and respect between all human beings through a way of wisdom social interaction approach as the best support system as best of support system organised by the Quran and Hadith.

## 5. Conclusion

Strengthening the element of self-identity based on religious factors in the formation of self is the main basis for an individual's balance and well-being, including for the homeless. The development of a prosperous individual must be holistically linked to spiritual, physical, and mental aspects to create a strong identity. Spiritual dimensions that include human nature (*fitrah*), physical elements, as well as the bonding between individuals are firming relationships that are interconnected with each other vertically and horizontally obligatory Muslim growth, including the homeless.

While the social support system also contributes to the development of a more positive homeless identity. With the support of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in applying the approach 'religion-based', a complete understanding of religion is capable of developing positive motivation, good self-esteem and strong self-sufficiency. Recommendations for an approach that can use by NGOs are obtained by purifying a direct understanding of Islam and a true belief or *'aqīdah* among the Muslims homelessness. It is one of the approaches that must be implemented to survive a more organised life than a life of being homeless for the rest of their life. Therefore, the need for further study on relevant 'religion-based' models and a more structured local nature for the implementation of NGOs in the future. The implication of this study is the increasing understanding of society on the reality of homeless life in particular and the best coping methods.

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