



al-Ihkam: Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial, 17 (2), 2022: 412-433
ISSN: 1907-591X, E-ISSN: 2442-3084
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.19105/al-Ihkam.v17i2.7262>

Muslim Youth Under Sharia Regime in Aceh: From Accommodation to Resistance

Khamami Zada

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
email: khamami@uinjkt.ac.id

Windy Triana

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
email: windy.triana@uinjkt.ac.id

Nur Hidayah

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
email: nurhidayah@uinjkt.ac.id

Ummi Kultsum

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
email: ummi.kultsum@uinjkt.ac.id

Fathudin

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
email: fathudin@uinjkt.ac.id

Article history: Received: April 13, 2022, Accepted: December 26, 2022, Published: December 31, 2022

Abstract:

In the context of shari'a implementation in Aceh, there has been resistance among young people wanting freedom and openness in public space with its modernity values. This study aims at investigating the responses of Aceh's young people to the implementation of Sharia in Aceh and how it implies for the Sharia law enforcement in the region. This is a socio-legal research relying on interviews and focused-group discussions as data collection methods. Respondents consist of young

Author correspondence email: khamami@uinjkt.ac.id

Available online at: <http://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/index.php/alihkam/>

Copyright (c) 2022 by Al-Ihkam, Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial



people aged 20-25. This research finds out that there has been a normalization of sharia in the Acehnese society with young people tending to accept sharia in Islamic tenets, propagation, attires, economic system, and penal system. Those who were born after or a while before sharia was implemented for the first time tend to get used to the sharia and consider it a part of their normal life. Their responses vary, from accommodation, adaptation, compromise to resistance. The resistance leads to the agency and creating a counterspace as their comfort zone to express creativity. In turn, this religiosity model contributes to sharia's moderatization in Aceh. Therefore, there is a need for the Aceh local government to maintain and develop spaces for young people to express creativity while maintaining sharia as a part of their lives.

Keywords:

Aceh; Sharia; Accommodation; Resistance; Agency

Abstrak

Dalam konteks implementasi syariah di Aceh, muncul resistensi di kalangan anak muda yang menginginkan kebebasan dan keterbukaan di ruang publik dengan nilai-nilai modernitasnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui respon anak muda Aceh terhadap penerapan syariah di Aceh dan bagaimana dampaknya terhadap penegakan syariah di wilayah tersebut. Ini adalah penelitian sosio-legal dengan wawancara mendalam dan *focused-group discussion* sebagai metode pengumpulan data. Responden terdiri dari anak muda berusia antara 20-25 tahun. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa telah terjadi normalisasi syariah di masyarakat Aceh dengan kecenderungan generasi muda menerima syariah pada aspek ajaran Islam, dakwah, pakaian, sistem ekonomi, dan sistem hukum. Mereka yang lahir setelah atau beberapa saat sebelum syariah diterapkan pertama kali cenderung terbiasa dengan syariah dan menganggapnya sebagai bagian dari kehidupan normal. Namun begitu, respons anak muda Aceh terbilang beragam, mulai dari akomodasi, adaptasi, dan kompromi hingga resistensi. Resistensi tersebut mengarah pada agensi dan penciptaan *counterspace* sebagai zona nyaman bagi anak muda untuk mengekspresikan kreativitas. Pada gilirannya,

ekspresi religiusitas ini berkontribusi terhadap moderasi syariah di Aceh. Oleh karena itu, Pemda Aceh perlu memelihara dan mengembangkan ruang bagi generasi muda untuk berkreasi dengan tetap menjaga syariah sebagai bagian dalam kehidupan mereka.

Kata Kunci:

Aceh; Syariat Islam; Akomodasi; Resistensi; Agensi

Introduction

Amid support for the sharia in Aceh, young people ideally have a more critical response. Theoretically, their religious orientation is highly influenced by social and cultural environment around them. Some of their orientations are related to family, economy, education, politics, laws, friendship, entertainment, gender, sexuality, consumerism, and sports.¹ Like other youths, Aceh young people live in a modern environment with its free, open, and glamorous nature. The western lifestyle, as well as the Korean one, has become influential among them. However, such a lifestyle is also influenced by other factors, such as local values, education, multiculturalism, and global politics. Through social media, young people access information, modern and religious ideological persuasion as well as promotion. These all significantly contribute to the development of youths' attitudes.²

The youths' lifestyles, such as hanging out in coffee shops, skateboarding, dancing, surfing, graffiti painting and vaping,³ become more interesting amidst the sharia regime, which is often considered as a part of conservatism. At the same time, those lifestyles tend to be

¹ James A. Beckford, "Preface," in *Religion and Youth*, ed. Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), xxiii; Nicola Madge, Peter Hemming, and Kevin Stenson, *Youth on Religion: The Development, Negotiation and Impact of Faith and Non-Faith Identity* (Routledge, 2014).

² Maghfur Ahmad, "Indonesian Muslim Youth and the Discourse on the Caliphate System, Islamic State and Sharia-Based Regional Regulations," *RELIGIA*, April 14, 2021, 79-99, <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v24i1.4191>.

³ "In Between - Youth Living under the Sharia Law," Thomas Cristofolletti, 2016, <https://www.thomascristofolletti.com/banda-aceh-youth-under-sharia>.

incompatible with the sharia.⁴ Consequently, young people face limitations in the name of sharia. If two young people plan to meet, they will choose a public place, such as a coffee shop, and have non-alcoholic beverages to avoid problems with the sharia police.⁵ This is among the contradictions between the modern lifestyles and sharia faced by young people in Aceh.

Since Aceh was determined to be the only province to implement sharia in a broader sense, Aceh has attracted scholars from various disciplines to be their object of study. These scholars include those from legal, political, and social sciences. Academic studies have continuously been conducted even after the two decades since the sharia was firstly formalized. Among the focus of those studies are related to sharia and politics;⁶ sharia in the context of legal pluralism;⁷ economy;⁸ the impacts of sharia on vulnerable and minority groups, such as non-Muslims and women;⁹ the implementation of Islamic

⁴ Abdul Manan, "Acceptance of the Implementation of Islamic Sharia Laws in West Aceh, Indonesia," *KnE Social Sciences*, 2020, 615–27.

⁵ Ana Salva, "Aceh, Indonesia: When Dating Meets Sharia Law," July 24, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/aceh-indonesia-when-dating-meets-sharia-law/>.

⁶ Moch Nur Ichwan, "The Politics of Shari'atization: Central Governmental and Regional Discourses of Shari'a Implementation in Aceh," *Islamic Law in Modern Indonesia*, Harvard: Islamic Legal Studies Program, 2007; Michelle Ann Miller, "The Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Law: A Serious Response to Acehese Separatism?," *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 3 (2004): 333–51; Arskal Salim and Azyumardi Azra, *Shari'a and Politics in Modern Indonesia* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

⁷ Ratno Lukito, *Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: Bridging the Unbridgeable* (Routledge, 2013); Arskal Salim, *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Dedy Sumardi, Ratno Lukito, and Moch Nur Ichwan, "Legal Pluralism within the Space of Sharia: Interlegality of Criminal Law Traditions in Aceh, Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 1 (2021): 426–49.

⁸ Bedjo Santoso Kadri, "Gold Currency Model in Aceh", *Al-Iqtishad: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah*, 12 (2), 2020, pp.207- 234.

⁹ Ali Abubakar, "Kedudukan Non-Muslim Dalam Qanun Jinayat," *Banda Aceh, Aceh: Dinas Syariat Islam Aceh Dan CV. Rumoh Cetak*, 2020; Dina Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh* (Routledge, 2015); Muhammad Ansor and Yaser Amri, "Being Christians in the Acehese Way: Illiberal Citizenship and Women's Agency in the Islamic Public Sphere," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 77–112; Abdul Halim, "Non-Muslims in the Qanun Jinayat and the Choice of Law in Sharia Courts in Aceh," *Human Rights Review* 23, no. 2 (2022): 265–88; Al Makin, "Islamic Acehese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor: A Study of the Narratives of the Attack on the

criminal law;¹⁰ as well as the relationship between sharia and social, cultural, and economic aspects.¹¹ However, one aspect has been understudied, which is the response of the young generation to sharia. They are likely to have different perspectives about sharia than their older generation. This group has a significant influence on society but is often neglected. This section briefly shows the maps of previous studies and the gaps in them to justify the significance of this currently particular study.

Another issue that often comes up pertaining to sharia implementation is how sharia treats women¹² and minority groups, which in this case are non-Muslims. More or less similar finding is also discussed by Ansor and Amri in their study of non-Muslim women in Aceh. Their study reveals that non-Muslim women demonstrate dynamic agency during their lives under sharia.¹³

Bethel Church in Penauyong Banda Aceh," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1-36; Ma Milallos and R. Theresa, "Muslim Veil as Politics: Political Autonomy, Women and Syariah Islam in Aceh," *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 3 (2007): 289-301.

¹⁰ Khamami Zada, "Pemberlakuan Hukum Jinayah Di Aceh Dan Kelantan" (Jakarta, Graduate School, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2014). Mizaj Iskandar et al., "From the Public Space to the Prison Space: Regulation Polemic and the Implementation of Caning Law in Aceh," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 1 (July 12, 2022): 216-41, <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v17i1.5646>;

¹¹ R. Michael Feener, "Social Engineering through Shari'a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da'wa in Contemporary Aceh," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 275-311; R. Michael Feener, *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (OUP Oxford, 2013); Hary Abdul Hakim et al., "The Islamic Law within The Indonesian Legal System) A Case Study of Islamic Sharia Law in Aceh," *TSAQAFAH* 17, no. 2 (2022); Reza Idria, "Cultural Resistance to Shariatism in Aceh," *Regime Change, Democracy and Islam: The Case of Indonesia*, 2013, 180-201; Michelle Ann Miller, "The Role of Islamic Law (Sharia) in Post-Tsunami Reconstruction," *Post-Disaster Reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh*, 2010, 29-60; Mahdi Syahbandir et al., "State and Islamic Law: A Study of Legal Politics on Zakat as a Tax Deduction in Aceh," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022), <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/26200>.

¹² Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia*; Afrianty; Ansor and Amri, "Being Christians in the Acehnese Way"; Milallos and Theresa, "Muslim Veil as Politics."

¹³ Ansor and Amri, "Being Christians in the Acehnese Way"; Halim, "Non-Muslims in the *Qanun* Jinayat and the Choice of Law in Sharia Courts in Aceh"; Makin, "Islamic Acehnese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor"; Safrilsyah Safrilsyah, "Non-Muslim under the Regulation of Islamic Law in Aceh Province," 2012.

Nevertheless, the limitation posed by sharia does not always limit women's movement. Afrianty, for example, found that amid such limitations, women in Aceh have been able to play their roles in the democratization and Islamization of society through the establishment of women-based civil society organizations. Therefore, sharia has not prevented the Aceh women from playing their role in public spaces.¹⁴

In this study, negotiation and agency are likely to be found during the sharia implementation. The significant role of youth in Indonesia is in their status as key actors in economic and social changes. A study by Naafs and White on Indonesian youths identifies three roles of this group: the future generation, the transitional generation, and culture creators and consumers.¹⁵ Regarding culture, the youths are likely to be influenced by globalization. Global cultures and consumerism are parts of globalization. Among the young Indonesian generation, at least two aspects influence their lifestyles and identities: consumerism and Islamism.¹⁶ These two generate a unique feature of lifestyles and cultural hybridity among young people.¹⁷

Furthermore, the study of religiosity among youth in the contemporary world is not new. Previous studies on the trend of piety among the youths are related to the born-again Muslim phenomenon,¹⁸ *hijrah*,¹⁹ and alike. Such phenomena are mostly related to young people's perspectives on sharia. Ihsan Yilmaz in Australia conducts a specific study on young people's perspective of sharia. He

¹⁴ Afrianty, *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia*.

¹⁵ Suzanne Naafs and Ben White, "Intermediate Generations: Reflections on Indonesian Youth Studies," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 3-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2012.645796>.

¹⁶ Naafs and White, 13.

¹⁷ Pam Nilan, "The Refl Exive Youth Culture of Devout Muslim Youth in Indonesia," in *Global Youth?* (Routledge, 2006), 103-22.

¹⁸ Amélie Blom, "Emotions and the Micro-Foundations of Religious Activism: The Bitter-Sweet Experiences of 'Born-Again' Muslims in Pakistan," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 54, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 123-45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464616683473>.

¹⁹ Firly Annisa, "Hijrah Milenial: Antara Kesalehan Dan Populism," *MAARIF Journal* 13, no. 1 (2018): 38-54; Windy Triana et al., *Hijrah: Millenials' Trends of Religiosity in Indonesia* (Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2021).

determines young people as a strategic research object, considering the meeting of religion and plurality during their identity formation in western society.²⁰ Yilmaz classifies two attitudes of young people towards sharia: legal pluralist and Muslim secularist. The legal pluralists see sharia as a legal system that can possibly be implemented in Australia. Meanwhile, Muslim secularists believe that sharia cannot be implemented formally in their country but can be implemented in Muslim-majority countries.²¹

Previous studies on young people in relation with the sharia is still very limited and mostly focused on other countries. Unlike those studies, this research presents discussions about young people in Aceh who were born and grew up under the shadow of sharia and have distinct perspectives. It is an influential aspect of young people's lives but is often considered to limit their expression and activities in public spaces. This paper analyses the accommodation and resistance of Aceh young people born during the formal sharia implementation in Aceh as well as its impact on sharia enforcement. On the one hand, their lives have been limited by the sharia regime. On the other hand, they are faced with free and open modern lifestyles. This paper therefore shows how young people negotiate sharia in their daily lives.

Method

This is a field research employing a socio-legal approach to see how the law is implemented and responded to by society.²² This approach examines the accommodation of young Muslim people towards the formal implementation of sharia and how their response colors the sharia enforcement in Aceh. This fieldwork was conducted in Banda Aceh, a metropolitan area in Aceh with young people adhering pop culture amid the sharia.

²⁰ Ihsan Yilmaz, "Muslim Secularism by Conduct: Attitudes of Young Australian Muslims to Legal Pluralism and Sharia," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 0, no. 0 (July 25, 2022): 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2022.2104826>.

²¹ Yilmaz.

²² Linda Hamilton Krieger, "Socio-Legal Backlash," *Berkeley J. Emp. & Lab. L.* 21 (2000): 476; Annelise Riles, "Comparative Law and Socio-Legal Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Reza Banakar and Max Travers, *Theory and Method in Socio-Legal Research* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005).

The primary data is obtained from in-depth interviews and FGD with 50 young Muslim people pursuing music, arts, theatre, sport, environmentalists, and adventurers in Banda Aceh, Sharia Office officials, and academics. These young Muslims aged between 20-25 (when the sharia had just been implemented for the first time in Aceh in 1999). The secondary data is taken from legal documents, such as Law No. 44 of 1999 on the Implementation of Aceh Specialty; Law No. 18 of 2001 on Nangroe Aceh Darussalam Special Autonomy; Law No. 11 of 2006 on Aceh Government; *Qanun* No. 11 of 2002 on the Implementation of Sharia in Field of Islamic Tenets, Worship, and Proselytization; and *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on *Jinayat* (Criminal Law).

The data is examined using sociological analysis²³ to show the experience of the young people in accommodating and negotiating the sharia. Some respondents in this study use pseudonyms to protect their privacy based on their requests. The data is taken during the field work in July 2022.

Discussion and Result

Sharia Normalization in Aceh: from Accommodation to Resistance among the Youth

In discussing the perception and experience of sharia, previous studies tend to focus on the initiators and policymakers, which can be considered "senior citizens" in Aceh. It can be said that these people had consciousness when Aceh started to implement sharia formally. However, the current findings showed their experience and perception are relatively different from young people who were born after or while sharia was formalized. This means that these young people have lived during the two decades of the sharia implementation. Their different experiences, in turn, generate distinct perspectives and attitudes towards sharia.

Before further discussion, it is important to explain the context of young people in Aceh. Apart from their existence side by side with sharia, it is important to note that many were unknowledgeable of

²³ Keith Faulks, *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction* (NYU Press, 2000); Elisabeth S. Clemens, *What Is Political Sociology?* (John Wiley & Sons, 2016); George A. Kourvetaris, *Political Sociology: Structure and Process* (Allyn & Bacon, Incorporated, 1997); James C. Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance," in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Routledge, 2016), 3-33.

some common practices before the sharia and *qanuns* promulgation. One of them is related to the obligation of *jilbab* for women. The respondents mentioned that they did not know that Aceh women used to dress without *jilbab*, except after seeing the pictures of the parents in the past.²⁴ One of the respondents said: "women before them (parents), maybe their grandmothers, their mothers or those older than them, did not wear *jilbab* (headscarf)."²⁵ In such a situation, these young Muslims face the fact that they have been restricted by sharia to some extent. Sharia regulations, such as clothing, intersexual relationship, and consumption, have hampered their free, creative, and innovative characters.

Since the promulgation of *Qanun* No. 11 of 2002, Acehnese Muslim women should dress according to Islamic law. This *qanun* even obliges the leaders of various institutions, such as government, education, business, and society, to promote Islamic fashion. This is manifested by *jilbab* for women and covering outfits for men. Regarding social relationships, the *qanun* gives a clear restriction by forbidding activities leading to *khalwat* (a woman being in close proximity with a man unrelated to her by blood or marriage), *ikhtilath* (physical intimacy between an unmarried man and woman), *musahaqah* (lesbianism), *liwath* (homosexuality), and *zina* (adultery). *Qanun* No. 6 of 2014 on *Jinayat* (Criminal) Law regulates *khalwat* (Article 23), *ikhtilath* (Article 25), and *zina* (Article 33). The *qanun* also forbids what is considered sexual deviation, such as *liwath* (Article 63) and *musahaqah* (Article 64).²⁶

Despite the number of restrictions on young people's social interaction made by sharia, this research finds that they accept it. This acceptance cannot be separated from the normalization process.

²⁴ Interview with Dedy, a hip hop artist, 5 July 2022.

²⁵ Interview with Ihdi Karim Makinara, a lecturer at Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 3 July 2022.

²⁶ Salma Salma et al., "The Other Side of the History of the Formulation of Aceh *Jinayat Qanun*," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022), <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/21000>; Muhammad Amin Suma, Ridwan Nurdin, and Irfan Khairul Umam, "The Implementation of Shari'a in Aceh: Between the Ideal and Factual Achievements," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 20, no. 1 (June 30, 2020), <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/14704>.

Theoretically, normalization is the effort to make a practice as a part of everyday life elements, namely through embedding and instilling the practice into a social context or integration.²⁷ After more than two decades of sharia implementation, what has happened is the normalization of sharia in the society, which has made sharia a living value and part of Aceh people's identity. Moreover, the acceptance of sharia has been influenced by its existence which has become a value in Aceh cultures and customs. This implies that sharia has been an effective tool of social engineering.²⁸

To some extent, sharia formalization has changed the lives of Aceh people. They have adjusted to control their relationship and interaction with the opposite sex in public. *Khalwat* and *ikhtilat* are considered immoral acts; Alcoholic beverages have no longer been a part of their lives. The women have strengthened their Muslim identity with a *jilbab*. It is rare to find a Muslim woman without a *jilbab* in public.

Fatimah, for example, does not feel that she is oppressed by sharia. This is mostly because she was born and grew up in the middle of a Muslim society upholding the sharia. Her family and society see sharia as part of their lives.²⁹ Concerning the *jilbab*, young people in Aceh feel that wearing the *jilbab* (scarf) is a part of their religious consciousness. The respondents of this research maintained that they feel odd to see a woman without a *jilbab* in public. Silvi, a young athlete, said, "it feels odd not to wear a *jilbab* in public. It feels like everybody is looking at me. Going out of my boarding house, even just in its yard, without a *jilbab*, reminded me of the elders around wearing one."³⁰ Even, Aceh people have a critical consciousness to reject the anti-*jilbab* movement. Hamdani stated, "If someone asks Aceh women to take off their *jilbab*, it means war!" The

²⁷ Carl May and Tracy Finch, "Implementing, Embedding, and Integrating Practices: An Outline of Normalization Process Theory," *Sociology* 43, no. 3 (2009): 535-54; Carl R. May et al., "Development of a Theory of Implementation and Integration: Normalization Process Theory," *Implementation Science* 4, no. 1 (May 21, 2009): 29, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-29>.

²⁸ Feener, "Social Engineering through Shari'a," 309.

²⁹ Interview with Fatimah, a theater artist, 3 July 2022

³⁰ Interview with Silvi, an athlete, 7 July 2022.

women will fight for the *jilbab* because they accept their fates and religious command."³¹

In the middle of a religious society, these young people are used to Islamic cultures. They are accustomed to the prohibition regulated by sharia until they feel that they need to be careful in obeying the rule. They are conscious that sharia in Aceh is controlling them. Mila, for instance, said, "they always remember that they can be raided if caught. When they are caught, they are caught. When they are not, they are not. They need to think that they live in Aceh. Therefore they need to be very careful".³² These young people know they should not do any prohibited acts in their social relationships and interactions.

Another restriction is in art and theatrical performances. As long as the activities consider and maintain Islamic attires, they are not prohibited to express themselves.³³ The provincial government also allows music concerts and women performing in the concert as long as they follow the rules, namely the rules of interactions and fashion.³⁴ During the concert, males and females are separated to prevent *khalwat*. This means that sharia in Aceh limits social interactions that potentially lead to immoral acts.

Majid, an Aceh musician, stated that he does not feel any obstacle in implementing the sharia, as he feels it is a part of his self-consciousness. He further stated: "I do not feel any obstacle with sharia in Aceh. For example, I never wear shorts when I go out. I do not feel this is a formalized regulation, as I have used to wear long pants since my childhood."³⁵ Fatimah explained a similar experience. She said: "In Aceh, we are educated about values and norms. Among other things is that we are not allowed to wear tight outfits and that we should wear *jilbab*. We have been taught about that since our childhood that females should wear *jilbab*."³⁶ These testimonies imply that both Majid and Fatimah do not get bothered with the restriction

³¹ Interview with Hamdani, a Sharia Office official, 4 July 2022.

³² Interview with Mila, a university-based environmentalist and adventurer, 4 July 2022.

³³ Interview with Jeje, an artist, 3 July 2022.

³⁴ Interview with Majid, a musician, 3 July 2022.

³⁵ Interview with Majid, a musician, 3 July 2022.

³⁶ Interview with Fatimah, theater artist, 3 July 2022.

of social interactions in public spaces, as they feel that those are part of the common practice.

As young people are known as "culture makers and consumers,"³⁷ they need spaces for expression and activities. In facing sharia restrictions formalized by the provincial government of Aceh, at least there are two ways they can take: accommodation or resistance. In this case, accommodation is how individuals conform to and uphold an ideology, which is integrated and socialized into a culture.³⁸ Accommodation, in turn, will generate adaptation and compromise. For example, young people from Theater Rongsokan whose performers are from UIN Ar Raniry students, mostly take the tendency to accommodation by adjusting their performance to the provisions of the sharia.

Even though young people of Aceh accept sharia, they still accommodate it with a distinctive way of adaptation and compromise. This is because some aspects of youth lifestyle cannot be freely expressed in various activities, especially in the aspects of arts and cultures when they strictly consider sharia. For example, in the theatrical performance, Aceh young people adapt and compromise with sharia by making strategies to alter sensitive acts, such as sexual scenes. In such cases, they will use an innuendo by swaying bed curtains. When a woman should show hair for the act, she will wear a wig. If the scenario involve the characters of LGBT, they tend to skip or even omit such scenes.

Fatimah stated: "In our "Putro Neng" performance, we have a sex scene, but we sought a way to do it by swaying the bridal bed curtains."³⁹ Fatimah added:

"If we make a performance where a woman should show hair, then she can wear a wig. Why not? Some acts are considered inappropriate in Aceh, and we will leave them. We often seek ways to make them appropriate and feasibly performed. We

³⁷ Naafs and White, "Intermediate Generations."

³⁸ Leoandra Onnie Rogers and Niobe Way, "Child Development in an Ideological Context: Through the Lens of Resistance and Accommodation," *Child Development Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (2021): 242–48.

³⁹ Interview with Fatimah, a theater artist, 3 July 2022.

consider options A and B. Some parts need careful consideration."⁴⁰

She continued that other theatrical performances need body moves and only males can take off their shirts. On the other hand, female actors should always wear clothes covering their *aurat* (body parts that should be covered according to sharia). If the performance involves a female actor as a prostitute, for instance, she will dress up to look like a prostitute but still cover her *aurat*. She can wear an inner shirt, and so on. However, they cannot do that in all places. Stull adaptation and compromise are needed to avoid the violation of sharia rules.⁴¹

Apart from accommodation, another chosen way by young people is resistance. Theoretically, resistance is a way chosen by individuals, consciously or unconsciously, to reject and oppose an ideology they consider "inhumane" and question social hierarchy.⁴² James Scott introduces the theory of "everyday resistance" to accommodate a resistance without dramatic actions, rebellions, demonstrations, and other extreme behaviors. "Everyday resistance" tends to be quiet, disguised, and unseen. Individuals use this strategy to survive amid repressions, and they see that extreme reactions will be risky.⁴³

Tofa, another informant, stated that in Aceh's case, everyday resistance could be found among the artist community. Some of them feel that there are things that they can no longer do after the sharia is formalized. They compromise to avoid conflicts. This is also because the Aceh people have been exhausted by the prolonged conflict during the Military Operation period.

"In the past, it is difficult (to do things) because of the conflict. We did not feel safe because of the conflict. We feel safe and comfortable now. I think that's the difference. What we have now (sharia) is what we have to pay to make us safe. It is okay,

⁴⁰ Interview with Fatimah, a theater artist, 3 July 2022.

⁴¹ Interview with Fatimah, a theater artist, 3 July 2022.

⁴² Rogers and Way, "Child Development in an Ideological Context."

⁴³ Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance."

as long as we can go out, and visit a coffee shop at any time, any hour. In the past, we were limited by curfew. We saw weapons and felt not safe. So, I would say we feel more comfortable now rather than in the past. ".⁴⁴

In the resistance, there is a so-called counterspace. Counterspace is where young people who feel marginalized can be themselves while expressing their truly selves and existence. They do not need others' validation to prove that others are wrong.⁴⁵ This means that counterspace is a safe space for young people to express their creativity. Besides that, everyday resistance can also generate agency. In the context of Aceh young people's response to sharia, the agency is manifested in the form of new creativities as a strategy to express their creativities despite the restriction.

One of the counterspaces for the Aceh young people is social media. As Tofa admitted, social media is a safe place for young people to express their creativity without being restricted by prevailing rules in real life. Besides, they can post any content without their real identities being recognized, including that they are from Aceh.⁴⁶ Using social media becomes one of the strategies enabling young people to go beyond the sharia restrictions. They realized that social media is a space where they can "run away" from the authorities' surveillance, including *Wilayatul Hisbah* or the sharia police.

The Role of Muslim Youth in Acehnisation of Sharia: The Implication on the Sharia Law

The face of Islam shown by the Aceh young Muslim generation reflects a synthesis between sharia and modernity. To some extent, Sharia limits young people's movement and expressions. However, those young people can still express their lifestyles and creativities despite the restriction. This is, then, called "Islamic piety".⁴⁷ Islamic piety refers to the paradox of Muslims' piety with religious restriction on the one hand. On the other hand, this piety

⁴⁴ Interview with Tofa, a graphic designer, 7 July 2022.

⁴⁵ Rogers and Way, "Child Development in an Ideological Context."

⁴⁶ Interview with Tofa, a graphic designer, 7 July 2022.

⁴⁷ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

enables or gives them a space to innovate and be creative. As a result, Muslims still have freedom, agency, autonomy, and subjectivity as humans. This concept challenges a developed "conventional wisdom". It stated that if a state applies sharia, the restrictions posed by sharia tend to ignore the democratization process,⁴⁸ restrain human rights protection,⁴⁹ oppress freedom and expressions,⁵⁰ subordinate women,⁵¹ discriminate against non-Muslims,⁵² and are incompatible with modernization. This particular current study is empirical evidence challenging that conventional wisdom by proving that sharia, to some extent, does not limit the expression of young people and is not against the values of modernity, such as democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, women's and non-Muslims rights, etc.

Besides, various expressions of Aceh young people in arts, theatrical performances, dance, graphic designs, sports, etc., can be regarded as alternative lifestyles that are relatively different from the western styles. This is in line with the study of van Nieuwkerk finding that the pious lifestyles of 'hijra' celebrities in Egypt can be more acceptable alternatives compared to the ones introduced by western and secular society.⁵³ Van Nieuwkerk argues that in Islamic saloons, people manage Islamic studies forums, proselytization, and philanthropic activities. There, *hijra* celebrities have a chance to "Islamize" their lifestyles.

⁴⁸ Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁹ Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* (Routledge, 2018); Ann Elizabeth Mayer, "Universal versus Islamic Human Rights: A Clash of Cultures or Clash with a Construct," *Mich. J. Int'l L.* 15 (1993): 307.

⁵⁰ The Cases of Satanic Verses and Charlie Hebdo Cartoons are often portrayed how Islamic values on freedom of expression have been misinterpreted as if Islam limits the freedom of expression.

⁵¹ Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (Zed Books, 1999); Nur Hidayah, "Islamic Law and Women's Rights in Indonesia: A Case of Regional Sharia Legislation," *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 19, no. 1 (July 9, 2019), <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/11717>.

⁵² Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam* (Ashgate, 2004).

⁵³ Karin van Nieuwkerk, *Performing Piety: Singers and Actors in Egypt's Islamic Revival* (University of Texas Press, 2013).

In the context of Aceh, young people's lifestyle, at a certain level, experience adaptation by maintaining sharia rules. They have a stronger influence from modernity due to religious restrictions. In turn, this has resulted in new expressions that are relatively different from the ones defined by the authorities, such as Sharia Office, and the ones presented by young people from other provinces.

The young people's accommodation, resistance, and agency in the context of sharia reflect how sharia is contextualized and localized in *Serambi Mekkah* (Mecca Verandah, designation for Aceh due to a strong influence of Islam). In general, the contextualization of Islam in Indonesia has become a concern of Indonesian Muslim thinkers.

The contextualization efforts were promoted by Muslim thinkers, such as Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholis Madjid. Abdurrahman Wahid, representing the Indonesian Muslim traditionalists, called for the "nativization of Islam" by accommodating local wisdom.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Nurcholish Madjid, representing Muslim modernists, called for "Indonesian and modern Islam".⁵⁵ Both called out the contextualization of Islamic values to be adjusted with the time (historical contextualization) and space (cultural contextualization). This makes Islam compatible with Indonesian values, multiculturalism, and modernity, leading to rationalization, secularization, and even liberalization.

Young people in Aceh have translated the spirit of the contextualization of Islam in Indonesia during the sharia implementation. They maintain their submission substantively to the sharia rules. At the same time, they reject the technical and detailed restrictions of sharia. In this situation, they improvised to maintain their expression, creativity, and innovation by considering sharia limitations. Their expression of Islam and modern, glamorous, and relatively free lifestyle reflect Indonesian Islam's localization and contextualization model in Aceh. They are able to offer a different variant of sharia by challenging the sharia implementation that tends to limit, intimidate, and degrade humanity, as shown by some

⁵⁴ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," accessed December 3, 2022, <https://gusdur.net/pribumisasi-islam/>.

⁵⁵ Nurcholish Majid, *Islam, kemodernan, dan keindonesiaan* (Mizan, 1987).

Muslim countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Sudan. It can be said that the expression of Islam among Aceh young people, to some extent, contributes to the moderation of sharia implementation in Aceh, which, in turn, strengthens the image of Indonesian Islam as 'Islam with a smiling face'.⁵⁶

Conclusion

For Acehese Muslim youth, sharia is a part of their normal life. They accept and accommodate the limitations of Islamic tenets, proselytization, fashions, economic and social relationship, and penal law. Even if they seem to hope for free and modern lifestyles, they accommodate sharia by adaptation and compromise. New creativities emerge among the young people as a response to the sharia restrictions. However, some of them also maintain their resistance in silence, disguised and unseen. They avoid dramatic resistance in the form of protests and demonstrations. During the process, they create counter space as a safe and comfortable zone for them to maintain their expressions and creativities. The face of Islam shown by the Aceh young people reflects the synthesis between rigid and orthodox sharia with the value of modernity. Therefore, they can still express their modern lifestyle within the sharia limitations. Their expressions have also contributed to the moderatization of sharia in Aceh.

Bibliography

- Abubakar, Ali. "Kedudukan Non-Muslim Dalam Qanun Jinayat." *Banda Aceh, Aceh: Dinas Syariat Islam Aceh Dan CV. Rumoh Cetak*, 2020.
- Afrianty, Dina. *Women and Sharia Law in Northern Indonesia: Local Women's NGOs and the Reform of Islamic Law in Aceh*. Routledge, 2015.
- Ahmad, Maghfur. "Indonesian Muslim Youth and the Discourse on the Caliphate System, Islamic State and Sharia-Based Regional Regulations." *RELIGIA*, April 14, 2021, 79-99. <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v24i1.4191>.

⁵⁶ Azyumardi Azra, "Indonesian Islam, Mainstream Muslims and Politics," *Taiwanese and Indonesian Islamic Leaders Exchange Project*, 2006, 1-11.

- Annisa, Firly. "Hijrah Milenial: Antara Kesalehan Dan Populism." *MAARIF Journal* 13, no. 1 (2018): 38–54.
- Ansor, Muhammad, and Yaser Amri. "Being Christians in the Acehese Way: Illiberal Citizenship and Women's Agency in the Islamic Public Sphere." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 77–112.
- Ayubi, Nazih. *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*. Routledge, 2003.
- Azra, Azyumardi. "Indonesian Islam, Mainstream Muslims and Politics." *Taiwanese and Indonesian Islamic Leaders Exchange Project*, 2006, 1–11.
- Banakar, Reza, and Max Travers. *Theory and Method in Socio-Legal Research*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005.
- Beckford, James A. "Preface." In *Religion and Youth*, edited by Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010.
- Blom, Amélie. "Emotions and the Micro-Foundations of Religious Activism: The Bitter-Sweet Experiences of 'Born-Again' Muslims in Pakistan." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 54, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 123–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464616683473>.
- Clemens, Elisabeth S. *What Is Political Sociology?* John Wiley & Sons, 2016.
- Cristofoletti, Thomas. "In Between - Youth Living under the Sharia Law," 2016. <https://www.thomascristofoletti.com/banda-aceh-youth-under-sharia>.
- Faulks, Keith. *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction*. NYU Press, 2000.
- Feener, R. Michael. *Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia*. OUP Oxford, 2013.
- — —. "Social Engineering through Shari'a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da'wa in Contemporary Aceh." *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 275–311.
- Hakim, Hary Abdul, Ming Hsi Sung, Chrisna Bagus Edhita Praja, Mutia Qori Dewi Masithoh, and Salsabila Rahadatul' Aisy. "The Islamic Law within The Indonesian Legal System A Case Study of (wIslamic Sharia Lain Aceh) ." *TSAQAFAH* 17, no. 2 (2022).

- Halim, Abdul. "Non-Muslims in the Qanun Jinayat and the Choice of Law in Sharia Courts in Aceh." *Human Rights Review* 23, no. 2 (2022): 265–88.
- Hidayah, Nur. "Islamic Law and Women's Rights in Indonesia: A Case of Regional Sharia Legislation." *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 19, no. 1 (July 9, 2019). <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/11717>.
- Ichwan, Moch Nur. "The Politics of Shari'atization: Central Governmental and Regional Discourses of Shari'a Implementation in Aceh." *Islamic Law in Modern Indonesia, Harvard: Islamic Legal Studies Program*, 2007.
- Idria, Reza. "Cultural Resistance to Shariatism in Aceh." *Regime Change, Democracy and Islam: The Case of Indonesia*, 2013, 180–201.
- Iskandar, Mizaj, Azhari Yahya, Abdul Jalil Salam, and Junaidi. "From the Public Space to the Prison Space: Regulation Polemic and the Implementation of Caning Law in Aceh." *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 17, no. 1 (July 12, 2022): 216–41. <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v17i1.5646>.
- Kadri, B. S. (2020). "Gold Currency Model in Aceh". *Al-Iqtishad: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah*, 12(2), 2020, pp.207- 234
- Kourvetaris, George A. *Political Sociology: Structure and Process*. Allyn & Bacon, Incorporated, 1997.
- Krieger, Linda Hamilton. "Socio-Legal Backlash." *Berkeley J. Emp. & Lab. L.* 21 (2000): 476.
- Lukito, Ratno. *Legal Pluralism in Indonesia: Bridging the Unbridgeable*. Routledge, 2013.
- Madge, Nicola, Peter Hemming, and Kevin Stenson. *Youth on Religion: The Development, Negotiation and Impact of Faith and Non-Faith Identity*. Routledge, 2014.
- Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Majid, Nurcholish. *Islam, kemandirian, dan keindonesiaan*. Mizan, 1987.
- Makin, Al. "Islamic Acehnese Identity, Sharia, and Christianization Rumor: A Study of the Narratives of the Attack on the Bethel Church in Penauyong Banda Aceh." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 1–36.

- Manan, Abdul. "Acceptance of the Implementation of Islamic Sharia Laws in West Aceh, Indonesia." *KnE Social Sciences*, 2020, 615–27.
- May, Carl, and Tracy Finch. "Implementing, Embedding, and Integrating Practices: An Outline of Normalization Process Theory." *Sociology* 43, no. 3 (2009): 535–54.
- May, Carl R., Frances Mair, Tracy Finch, Anne MacFarlane, Christopher Dowrick, Shaun Treweek, Tim Rapley, et al. "Development of a Theory of Implementation and Integration: Normalization Process Theory." *Implementation Science* 4, no. 1 (May 21, 2009): 29. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-29>.
- Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Routledge, 2018.
- — —. "Universal versus Islamic Human Rights: A Clash of Cultures or Clash with a Construct." *Mich. J. Int'l L.* 15 (1993): 307.
- Milallos, Ma, and R. Theresa. "Muslim Veil as Politics: Political Autonomy, Women and Syariah Islam in Aceh." *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 3 (2007): 289–301.
- Miller, Michelle Ann. "The Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam Law: A Serious Response to Acehese Separatism?" *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 3 (2004): 333–51.
- — —. "The Role of Islamic Law (Sharia) in Post-Tsunami Reconstruction." *Post-Disaster Reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh*, 2010, 29–60.
- Moghissi, Haideh. *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*. Zed Books, 1999.
- Naafs, Suzanne, and Ben White. "Intermediate Generations: Reflections on Indonesian Youth Studies." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2012.645796>.
- Nieuwkerk, Karin van. *Performing Piety: Singers and Actors in Egypt's Islamic Revival*. University of Texas Press, 2013.
- Nilan, Pam. "The Reclusive Youth Culture of Devout Muslim Youth in Indonesia." In *Global Youth?*, 103–22. Routledge, 2006.
- Riles, Annelise. "Comparative Law and Socio-Legal Studies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Rogers, Leoandra Onnie, and Niobe Way. "Child Development in an Ideological Context: Through the Lens of Resistance and Accommodation." *Child Development Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (2021): 242–48.
- Saeed, Abdullah, and Hassan Saeed. *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam*. Ashgate, 2004.
- Safirliyah, Safirliyah. "Non-Muslim under the Regulation of Islamic Law in Aceh Province," 2012.
- Salim, Arskal. *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Salim, Arskal, and Azyumardi Azra. *Shari'a and Politics in Modern Indonesia*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003.
- Salma, Salma, Almuhammad Fajri, Taufik Hidayat, and Edi Safri. "The Other Side of the History of the Formulation of Aceh Jinayat Qanun." *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022). <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/21000>.
- Salva, Ana. "Aceh, Indonesia: When Dating Meets Sharia Law," July 24, 2019. <https://thedi diplomat.com/2019/07/aceh-indonesia-when-dating-meets-sharia-law/>.
- Scott, James C. "Everyday Forms of Resistance." In *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 3–33. Routledge, 2016.
- Suma, Muhammad Amin, Ridwan Nurdin, and Irfan Khairul Umam. "The Implementation of Shari'a in Aceh: Between the Ideal and Factual Achievements." *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 20, no. 1 (June 30, 2020). <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/14704>.
- Sumardi, Dedy, Ratno Lukito, and Moch Nur Ichwan. "Legal Pluralism within the Space of Sharia: Interlegality of Criminal Law Traditions in Aceh, Indonesia." *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 5, no. 1 (2021): 426–49.
- Syahbandir, Mahdi, Wais Alqarni, Syahrizal Abbas, Bukhari Ali, and Fauzan Samad. "State and Islamic Law: A Study of Legal Politics on Zakat as a Tax Deduction in Aceh." *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022). <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/26200>.

- Triana, Windy, Ida Rosyidah, Zaenal Muttaqin, Laifa Annisa Hendarmin, Azhar Muhamad Akbar, and Febiyana. *Hijrah: Millenials' Trends of Religiosity in Indonesia*. Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2021.
- Wahid, Abdurrahman. "Pribumisasi Islam." Accessed December 3, 2022. <https://gusdur.net/pribumisasi-islam/>.
- Yilmaz, Ihsan. "Muslim Secularism by Conduct: Attitudes of Young Australian Muslims to Legal Pluralism and Sharia." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 0, no. 0 (July 25, 2022): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2022.2104826>.
- Zada, Khamami. "Pemberlakuan Hukum Jinayah Di Aceh Dan Kelantan." Graduate School, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2014.

Interviews:

- Dedy, a hip hop artist, 5 July 2022.
- Ihdi Karim Makinara, a lecturer at Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 3 July 2022.
- Fatimah, a theater artist, 3 July 2022
- Silvi, an athlete, 7 July 2022.
- Hamdani, a Sharia Office official, 4 July 2022.
- Mila, a university-based environmentalist, and adventurer, 4 July 2022.
- Jeje, an artist, 3 July 2022.
- Majid, a musician, 3 July 2022.
- Majid, a musician, 3 July 2022 .
- Tofa, a graphic designer, 7 July 2022.