



The Mimicry of Shia Youths in Islamic Education and Religious Space of Education Institutions

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Abstract

Keywords:

Islamic
Religious
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Mimicry.

This article aims to reveal the discriminatory experiences encountered by Shia youths in educational institutions and their strategies for constructing their identities, both in Islamic religious education classes and in the public spaces of educational institutions. This article is the result of a qualitative-descriptive study of five Shia youths in Jember who were recruited using the chain-referral sampling method. Data collected by life-story interviews were analyzed using interactive model (Miles, et al). This article finds that Shia youths encounter discriminatory experiences because they are required by Islamic Religious Education teachers to recite prayers of Nahdlatul Ulama-style, such as *qunut*, even though they claim to be members of Muhammadiyah. The two Shia youths who imitated members of Muhammadiyah intended to avoid the practice of Nahdlatul Ulama-style prayers preferred by their Islamic Religious Education teachers. In addition, Shia youth generally do not dare to reveal their identity as adherents of Shia. A Shia youth claims to be a traditional Muslim or follower of Islam to avoid discrimination from his friends. It was also discovered that Shia youths pretend to perform prayers according to the Sunni schools while secretly performing Shia prayers to fight for their right to worship. Mimicry performed by minority Shia youths confirms Homi K. Bhabha's image of mimicry because Shia youths use the Sunni Muslim's identity space. However, they secretly try to maintain their primordial identity as Shias so that minority Shia youths use an identity that is almost the same as that of Sunni Muslim, "but not completely the same".

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:
Pendidikan Agama
Islam; Resistensi

Artikel ini bertujuan mengungkap pengalaman diskriminatif yang dialami pemuda Syiah di lembaga pendidikan dan strategi

Minoritas Agama;
Mimikri.

mereka mengonstruksi identitasnya, baik di kelas pendidikan agama Islam maupun di ruang publik lembaga pendidikan. Artikel ini merupakan hasil penelitian dengan metode kualitatif-deskriptif terhadap 5 orang pemuda Syiah di Jember yang direkrut dengan chain-referral sampling method. Data yang dikumpulkan dengan life-story interview dianalisis dengan teknik interaktif Miles, dkk. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa pertama pemuda Syiah mengalami pengalaman diskriminatif karena diwajibkan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam melafalkan doa salat ala Nahdlatul Ulama, seperti qunut, meski dirinya telah mengaku sebagai pengikut Muhammadiyah. Kedua pemuda Syiah melakukan mimikri sebagai pengikut Muhammadiyah dengan tujuan terhindar dari praktik salat ala Nahdlatul Ulama yang dilakukan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam. Ketiga, pemuda Syiah umumnya tak berani membuka identitasnya sebagai pengikut Syiah. Seorang pemuda Syiah mengaku sebagai pengikut muslim tradisional atau pengikut Islam untuk menghindari diskriminasi dari temannya. Keempat, pemuda Syiah melakukan penyamaran salat ala Sunny sambil diam-diam melakukan gerakan salat Syiah untuk memperjuangkan hak beribadahnya. Mimikri yang dilakukan pemuda minoritas Syiah mengkonfirmasi gambaran mimikri Homi K. Bhabha karena para pemuda Syiah menggunakan ruang identitas Sunny meski diam-diam tetap berusaha mempertahankan identitas primordialnya sebagai Syiah, sehingga pemuda minoritas Syiah menggunakan identitas yang hampir sama dengan Sunny, “namun tidak sepenuhnya sama”.

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1. Introduction

Even though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has guaranteed freedom of religion for every human being, in reality, followers of minority religious groups still often encounter complex challenges. As a minority, they often become the victim of violations of freedom of religion and belief, including in the form of discrimination, marginalization, and restrictions on doing religious activities.¹

The US Department of State reported that in 2021, discriminatory practices often affect followers of religious minorities in various countries. The perpetrators were not only individuals but also intolerant groups and state officials.² Finke et al. also analyzed the practice of religious discrimination among

¹ Yenny Zannuba Wahid et al., “Laporan Tahunan Kemerdekaan Beragama/Berkeyakinan (KBB) Tahun 2019 di Indonesia: Kemajuan Tanpa Penyelesaian Akar Masalah” (Jakarta: Wahid Foundation, July 2020).

² Office of International Religious Freedom, “2021 Report on International Religious Freedom” (U.S. Department of State, 2021), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>.

477 religious minorities from 154 countries. This study concludes that if the victims of discrimination are religious institutions and leaders, they will receive greater support than if the victims are religious minority individuals.³ The Pew Research Center discovered that in 2018, the trend of restricting religious freedom by state actors has increased compared to the data of the last ten years.⁴

In Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system has guaranteed student's right to religious education. In article 12 of the law, students have the right to receive religious education learning services from educators of the same religion.⁵ On the other hand, Government Regulation number 55 of 2007 concerning Education of Religion and Religious Education regulates opportunities to organize religious education in the community for schools that cannot provide a place to deliver religious education.⁶ This rule explicitly regulates space, not by whom religious education is taught, so it is not yet sensitive considering the risks that could occur in schools if religious minority students are taught by teacher from majority religious groups even though both are of the same religion. Similarly, Regulation of the Minister of Religion number 16 of 2010 also regulates the mechanism for the minimum number of students in a class that can be served in a religious education subject, either independently, by combining several classes from the same school or from several other schools, or by organizing a class with the assistance from a religious institution.⁷ Syafi'i reviewed that the policy stipulated in Article 12 of the law guarantees the fulfillment of students' rights to learn the religion from teachers of the same religion, which should result in no discriminatory practices in religious education classes.⁸

Even though freedom of religion has been guaranteed in the constitution of Indonesia, it still encounters challenges at the grassroots level, including in schools. This is because, in the context of religious education in Indonesia, not all students' religious rights have been fulfilled at school. Raihani reported that in Yogyakarta and Central Kalimantan, religious minority students were vulnerable to discriminatory treatment from the majority religious group, were powerless, and had their religious rights at school disrupted, particularly regarding the right to provide learning facilities.⁹ A study conducted by Ardiansyah also confirmed that

³ Roger Finke, Robert R. Martin, and Jonathan Fox, "Explaining Discrimination against Religious Minorities," *Religion and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association* 10, no. 2 (2017): 389–416.

⁴ Samirah Majumdar and Virginia Villa, "In 2018, Government Restrictions on Religion Reach Highest Level Globally in More Than a Decade: Authoritarian Governments Are More Likely to Restrict Religion" (Pew Research Center, 2020).

⁵ Tabita Kartika Christiani, "The Future of Religiosity Education in Catholic Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 22, no. 4 (December 2014): 525–40, doi:10.5367/sear.2014.0233; Read also Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, "Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional" (2003), Article 12.

⁶ Presiden Republik Indonesia, "Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 55 Tahun 2007 tentang Pendidikan Agama dan Pendidikan Keagamaan" (2007).

⁷ Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia, "Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 16 Tahun 2010 tentang Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Agama" (2010).

⁸ Syafi'i, "Politik Pendidikan Agama di Sekolah: Studi tentang Polemik Pendidikan Agama dalam UU No. 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional" (Dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020).

⁹ Raihani Raihani, "Minority Right to Attend Religious Education in Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah*:

minority students taught by teachers of the same religion, might experience discriminatory practices and not receive recognition on their belief, especially in relation to celebrations of religious holidays.¹⁰ The studies confirmed that even though they are taught by teacher of the same religion, not all students from the minority background have right to be free to learn and worship according to the teachings of the religion of the group and be free from discrimination.

It is not surprising that freedom of religion in Indonesia, according to Marshall, is still ambiguous, because, on the one hand, the state guarantees freedom of religion, but on the other hand, Muslim minority groups are often faced with courts that ask for consideration from religious organizations to decide whether the religious group is part of the orthodox religion or the deviant one.¹¹ Bagir offered strategies to overcome problems that often arise in diversity by mainstreaming civic pluralism. The first strategy is recognition, which is recognition and respect for other and different individuals, including individuals with non-majority and marginal religious identities and beliefs. The second strategy is representation, namely providing space for participation to others and different individuals to channel their aspirations, providing institutions that can facilitate their representation, and regulating the mechanism. The third strategy is redistribution, namely providing political-economic equalization opportunities to different groups, including religious groups, in the form of protection and affirmation, especially by the state, to obtain equal welfare resources.¹² Some good practices like this have been shown by several Islamic Religious Education teachers in Yogyakarta who managed to manage the diversity of their students well.¹³

Ethnicity, race, gender, religion, and beliefs that are taught and habituated from the early childhood phase contribute to constructing one's identity. Discourses about identity have been widely adopted in research conducted with

Journal of Islamic Studies 53, no. 1 (2015): 1–26, doi:10.14421/ajis.2015.531.1-26.

¹⁰ Mochammad Zaka Ardiansyah, "School, Symbolic Violence, and Religious Experience of Aboge Youth," *Didaktika Religia* 8, no. 1 (2020): 51–77, doi:10.30762/didaktika.v8i1.1342; Read also Mochammad Zaka Ardiansyah, "Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 8, no. 2 (2020): 97–114, doi:doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2020.8.2.97-114.

¹¹ Paul Marshall, "The Ambiguities of Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 85–88, doi:10.1080/15570274.2018.1433588.

¹² Zainal Abidin Bagir and AA GN Ari Dwipayana, "Keragaman, Kesetaraan, dan Keadilan: Pluralisme Kewargaan dalam Masyarakat Demokratis," in *Pluralisme Kewargaan: Arah Baru Politik Kenegaraan di Indonesia*, ed. Zainal Abidin Bagir et al. (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM dan Mizan, 2011), 41–44.

¹³ Anis Farikhatin, "Berhadapan Dengan Prasangka: Merespons Isu Sesat Ahmadiyah Terhadap Sekolah PIRI I Yogyakarta," in *Mengelola Keragaman di Sekolah: Gagasan dan Pengalaman Guru*, ed. Suhadi et al. (Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2016), 1–15; Read also Puji Handayani, "Kebijakan Sekolah untuk Mengantisipasi Diskriminasi Minoritas di SMAN 1 Muntilan," in *Mengelola Keragaman di Sekolah: Gagasan dan Pengalaman Guru*, ed. Suhadi et al. (Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2016), 87–97; Compare with Indriyani Ma'rifah, "Belajar Islam Inklusif dari Bangku Sekolah: Menilik Inovasi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMA Budi Mulia Dua Yogyakarta," in *Mengelola Keragaman di Sekolah: Gagasan dan Pengalaman Guru*, ed. Suhadi et al. (Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2016), 73–85.

the perspectives of psychology,¹⁴ sociology,¹⁵ philosophy,¹⁶ dan *cultural studies*.¹⁷ In an intolerant or potentially discriminatory majority community, instead of changing their identity permanently and leaving behind their family beliefs and traditions, minority students develop a distinct, highly casuistic, and personal identity. The various identities they construct are like uncovering an identity as a minority. Based on a study conducted by Wheatley and Connley, Muslim minority students use their own identities. Wheatley reported that Muslim students who go to school in a non-Muslim majority society in America open their identity as a Muslim. Even though in the first year they were not subject to discrimination at a school that manages diversity in a melting pot, finally they had to feel discrimination because of the Islamophobia of a non-Muslim friend. who are pressured during discussions.¹⁸ In contrast, Connley revealed that a student who disclosed their identity as an Ahmadiyya follower experienced various practices of marginalization and discrimination in class from other Muslim students.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in scrutinizing the identity construction strategy of marginal groups, Bhabha introduced a mimicry strategy that is often taken by colonized groups by adopting colonial identities. Mimicry done by the colonized does not necessarily change the identity of the colonized to become a colonizer because secretly, they are trying to maintain their original identity. Liminality in Bhabha's conception of the space of identity lies between the colonial identity and the original identity of the colonized (in-between space).²⁰

Mimicry is a disguised strategy that allows colonized individuals to use symbols of colonial identity that are different from their original identities to camouflage to express resistance.²¹ Even though they are almost similar and

¹⁴ Samuel Abramovich and Peter Samuelson Wardrip, "Can Digital Badges Strengthen Religious Ethnic-Cultural Identity in a Religious Education Setting?," *British Journal of Religious Education* 42, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 338–49, doi:10.1080/01416200.2019.1626219; Read also Yona Gilead, "School's Place in Nurturing Students' Jewish Identity Within a Broader Social and Cultural World: Stakeholders' Experience," *Journal of Jewish Education* 86, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 321–57, doi:10.1080/15244113.2020.1727305; Compare with Muhammad Suwaed and Nohad Ali, "Education, Identity, and Ideology: The Islamic Movement and Moslem Religious Education in Israel," *Social Identities* 22, no. 4 (July 3, 2016): 426–49, doi:10.1080/13504630.2015.1128811.

¹⁵ Johannes Lunneblad, Ylva Odenbring, and Anette Hellman, "A Strong Commitment: Conforming a School Identity at One Compulsory Faith School in a Disadvantaged Area," *Ethnography and Education* 12, no. 1 (2017): 112–26.

¹⁶ Zehavit Gross and Suzanne D. Rutland, "Creating a Safe Place: SRE Teaching as an Act of Security and Identity Formation in Government Schools in Australia," *British Journal of Religious Education* 38, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 30–46, doi:10.1080/01416200.2015.1025699.

¹⁷ Ardiansyah, "Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan."

¹⁸ Lance Wheatley, "Resisting Islamophobia: A Young Muslim Male's Experience in a US Public High School," *Religion & Education* 46, no. 3 (2019): 13–14.

¹⁹ Aleah Connley, "Understanding the Oppressed: A Study of the Ahmadiyah and Their Strategies for Overcoming Adversity in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 1 (April 2016): 36, doi:10.1177/186810341603500102.

²⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1.

²¹ Jacques Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 99; Another reading material for Lacan's concept of mimicry was written by Nasir in Ahmad Natsir, "Identitas Poskolonialisme Pesantren Modern," *Cendekia*:

very similar, this camouflage does not turn the colonized into colonizers because mimicry is only a strategy of disguising identity that creates a partial, incomplete representation. Thus, mimicry creates identity ambivalence, meaning that colonized people are almost the same, but not entirely the same.²² Mimicry by colonized groups is the answer to the agenda of subjection, disciplining, and standardization of behavior by colonizers on the colonized. They think that conquest like this will result in colonized people who are completely obedient because programs and policies that require the colonized to obey and respect the colonizers have never produced the effect of "sincere love", which is artificial and inauthentic.²³

In the context of learning Islamic education and Islamic religious education involving minority Aboge Muslim youths, Ardiansyah reported that minority Aboge students use mimicry to hide their identity in front of teachers of Islamic religious education and education of Islam and their friends at campuses, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. With the perspective of Bhabha's postcolonial theory, Ardiansyah found that amid a Muslim majority community, minority Aboge youths construct their identity by firstly, doing mimicry by borrowing the identity of the dominant community in their educational institutions and secondly, doing mimicry by borrowing the identity of "other, more dominant communities". , and changing their identity based on the measurement of the risk of discrimination that can be done by their interlocutors.²⁴ The discussion in this study will refer to two variants of mimicry performed by minority Muslim students that Ardiansyah found from developing the concept of Bhabha's mimicry.

Becoming a minority ethnically or religiously is often unpleasant, including for youth with a religious minority background. In the context of secondary and tertiary education, for example, Wheatley revealed the experience of minority students being discriminated against in public schools in America.²⁵ Fosnacht and Broderick also reported that in America, religious discrimination more often affects non-Christian minority students than students who adhere Christianity, which is the religion of the majority there. This study also revealed that an increase in the comfort of expressing religious beliefs on campus is positively correlated with an increase in the intensity of acts of religious intolerance.²⁶ From his study of minority students in Indonesia, Connley also reported discrimination against minority Ahmadiyya students by their friends and teachers at school.²⁷ Ardiansyah in another article also confirmed that minority Aboge youth also experienced discrimination from their religious teacher at a public junior high school, for example, being asked by the religious teacher about their reasons for joining Aboge and receiving a remark from his religious education teacher stating

Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan 17, no. 2 (November 5, 2019): 207, doi:10.21154/cendekia.v17i2.1549.

²² Homi K. Bhabha, *Tentang Mimikri*, trans. Saut Pasaribu and Tia Setiadi (Yogyakarta: Circa, 2021), 9–17.

²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁴ Ardiansyah, "Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan," 107–10.

²⁵ Wheatley, "Resisting Islamophobia; A Young Muslim Male's Experience in a US Public High School."

²⁶ Fosnacht Kevin and Cynthia Broderick, "Religious Intolerance on Campus: A Multi-Institution Study," *Journal of College and Character* 21, no. 4 (2020): 244–62.

²⁷ Connley, "Understanding the Oppressed," 35.

that the fasting they were doing was illegal.²⁸ Therefore, religious minority students need to prepare themselves to face religious discrimination that can befall them, both from classmates and religious education educators.

Studies on the identity of Muslim minority students in educational institutions have so far been conducted. In the context of education in America, Stubbs and Sallee reported that Muslim minority students experienced neglect by campus policies and support that made them articulate their identity in a double way, as part of the American and Muslim cultural communities.²⁹ Meanwhile, in England, Brown and Saeed concluded that radicalization discourse directed at Muslim students succeeded in limiting their activism, identity, and college experience. Muslim minority students develop alternative identities in the radical stigmatization they feel at universities.³⁰

Further, in the context of education in Asia, Arar et al. reported that Palestinian minority female students who continued their studies in Israel and Jordan experienced different identity problems. Students who migrate to study in Jordan feel in a safe space, while students who migrate to study in Israel feel an identity as students who are alienated and experience foreignness. This study also discovered that tertiary institutions become a community that can disturb the lives of minority Muslim students.³¹

These studies generally reveal how minority Muslim students in a non-Muslim majority society experience discrimination academically, minorities in quantity, and discourse of radicalization and the construction of its identity as a response by developing an identity as a student who is alienated, has alienated alternative identity and dual identity. None of these studies has yet revealed how students of the Shia Muslim minorities construct their identities amidst the Sunni Muslim majority in educational institutions. Based on the mimicry strategy developed by Ardiansyah by referring to Bhabha's mimicry strategy that is performed by minority youths in educational institutions, this study aims to reveal the discriminatory experiences encountered by Shia minority students in Islamic Religious Education learning process and the Shia minority students' strategy of constructing their identities, both in Islamic religious education classes and in public spaces of educational institutions.

2. Methods

This descriptive qualitative research data were explored by the author using life story interviews with Shia minority youth participants. This technique is commonly used in education and religious studies to explore the life experiences

²⁸ Ardiansyah, "School, Symbolic Violence, and Religious Experience of Aboge Youth," 62–64.

²⁹ Benjamin B. Stubbs and Margaret W. Sallee, "Muslim, Too: Navigating Multiple Identities at an American University," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 46, no. 4 (2013): 451–67.

³⁰ Katherine E. Brown and Tania Saeed, "Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization at British Universities: Muslim Encounters and Alternatives," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 11 (2015): 1952–68.

³¹ Khalid Arar, Asmahan Masry-Harzalla, and Kussai Haj-Yehia, "Higher Education for Palestinian Muslim Female Students in Israel and Jordan: Migration and Identity Formation," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 43, no. 1 (2013): 51–67, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2012.749391>.

of sensitive informants. This technique facilitates participants to reconstruct their life experiences, including unpleasant experiences. This interview technique was chosen to facilitate the writer and informants to understand the information and to facilitate both parties to get the same interpretation.³² This interviews was conducted in July 2022 on 5 male Shia youths from Jember Regency, 3 of whom attended public schools and 2 others attended public campuses and lived in Jember.

Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 5 Shia youths in order to get their perspective as minority students in public educational institutions, particularly regarding the identity of Shia youths in the private space of Islamic religious education classes³³ and public spaces of educational institutions, without having to photograph them in the institution so the interviews were conducted in coffee shops and the hall of the foundation next to the secretariat of the Shia organization in Jember Regency. In addition to identity data, this study found various kinds of resistance from informants who were collected for articles planned to be published in other publications.

Given the relatively difficult access, the author recruited Shia youth participants who were currently attending school and university through a recommendation from a Habib who was a Shia community leader in Bondowoso. Participants were recruited using the chain-referral sampling method by asking participants who were already involved to recommend other participants whose criteria were relevant to this study. This method was chosen because the youth population with religious minority backgrounds is very small and hard to find and hard to study because they are stigmatized and have hidden experiences (and really have something to hide).³⁴

The author deliberately disguised the identities of the participants, places, and their educational institutions to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as an implementation of research ethics. Therefore, a descriptive study was adopted by the author to analyze the experiences of minority Shia youths in Islamic religious education classes and educational institutions, especially the experiences related to their strategies for constructing their identities. All informants had a learning experience in public educational institutions and Islamic Religious Education and Moral Education subjects or Islamic Religious Education courses taught by teachers of the same religion. In general, informants have experience of studying at public schools and campuses. Two out of five informants also had experience of studying at madrasas and Islamic schools. In schools and madrasas, they took this subject every semester for up to three years, while on campus they took it in the first semester. While exploring the data

³² Robert Atkinson, "The Life Story Interview as a Mutually Equitable Relationship," in *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium et al. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 115–20; In this article, without intending to make comparisons, the authors refer to the Subjects of Islamic Religious Education and Character, Islamic Religious Subjects in madrasas, and Islamic Religious Education Courses as Islamic Religious Education. Nadia Jeldtoft, "Lived Islam: Religious Identity with 'Non-Organized' Muslim Minorities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 7 (July 2011): 1134–51, doi:10.1080/01419870.2010.528441.

³³ In this article, without intending to make comparisons, the authors refer to the Subjects of Islamic Religious Education and Character, Islamic Religious Subjects in madrasas, and Islamic Religious Education Courses as Islamic Religious Education.

³⁴ H. Russell Bernard, *Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Sixth Edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 149–50.

based on the mimicry concept of religious minority youth developed by Ardiansyah and the Mimicry concept proposed by Bhabha, the authors analyzed the identities that these Shia youths constructed in Islamic religious education classrooms and in educational institutions using interactive analysis techniques by Miles et al.³⁵

3. Result and Discussion

As a minority studying in public schools, Shia youths also face challenges to construct their identities. Departing from the identity mimicry concept of minority Muslim youth found by Ardiansyah,³⁶ which was developed from the Bhabha mimicry concept,³⁷ this article explains the strategies of Shia youths for constructing their identities in the private space of Islamic religious education classes and the public space of educational institutions.

The identity construction of minority Muslim youth with mimicry strategies becomes the identity of another community that is more dominant and changes its identity by considering the risk of discrimination that can befall them at any time. Various identities constructed by Shia youths in the private space of Islamic religious education and the public sphere of educational institutions are elaborated as follows

3.1. Islamic Religious Education Learning and Discriminatory Practices Against Minorities

In the last five years, students still experience religious discrimination in Islamic Religious Education learning, for example, symbolic violence befalling minority students such as Muslim Aboge students,³⁸ and Muslim students who do not wear headscarves in public schools.³⁹ Although it is not expected to exist in public schools and madrasas, this kind of discriminatory practice was received by Shia youths from Islamic Religious Education teachers. In their long educational background, several times Shia youths experienced discriminatory practices committed by Islamic Religious Education teachers, especially in the prayer and worship practice examinations, which became the momentum for them to feel discriminated against.

Asman, a Shia youth, said that when he took the Islamic Religious Education subject practice test in the third grade at a junior high school in Jember in mid-2022. According to him, the practice of worship is an Islamic Religious Education learning process that provides a discriminatory experience to him because according to him, "*What is vulnerable is practice [session]. My practice is really forced. I have to, I have to be able to adapt, be able to learn like them. That is what I find difficult.*" Even though he had

³⁵ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, Third Edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014), 12–14.

³⁶ Ardiansyah, "Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan."

³⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *Tentang Mimikri*, 9–17.

³⁸ Ardiansyah, "School, Symbolic Violence, and Religious Experience of Aboge Youth," 51–77.

³⁹ Andreas Harsono, "Aku Ingin Lari Jauh: Ketidakadilan Aturan Berpakaian bagi Perempuan di Indonesia" (Human Rights Watch, 2021), 2, 41, dan 42, <https://www.hrw.org/id/report/2021/03/18/378167>.

imitated Muhammadiyah follower with mimicry with the aim of avoiding being required to read *qunut* and long prayers, he admitted that he was still asked by his teacher to memorize and practice them. "Still, you have to follow, you have to memorize things like this," like that he added. The teacher made it mandatory for himself and another Muhammadiyah student to memorize the prayers and practice the morning prayer movements by reciting *qunut*, which was used as the standard for evaluating prayer practices at that time.⁴⁰ Even though he has done mimicry as a follower of Muhammadiyah, He is still required by the teacher to memorize the prayers and practice the prayer movements that the teacher wanted, "Well in the end, even though I already confessed to Muhammadiyah, I still memorized it, it's useless, so why to claim to be Muhammadiyah", he admitted.⁴¹

Darman, a Shia youth studying in the third grade of senior high school, experienced a similar experience.⁴² The learning process of Islamic Religious Education, which during the pandemic prevented him from sudden discrimination, made him insecure. In the Islamic Religious Education practice examination held for twelfth grade students at a high school in Jember, Darman assessed that the teacher deliberately asked students to memorize the *qunut* prayer and practice the morning prayers with *qunut*. "So we have to offer a *qunut* prayer before the practical exam so that we can make sure this student can or not, that will be included in the grades," he said. In contrast to Asman, Darman does not imitate a follower of Muhammadiyah. The reason was that according to him "there were [friends] who said that Muhammadiyah, sir, yes, they must [follow the prayer readings as taught by the teacher], because his assessment was included in that material, curriculum material," so he decided not to practice mimicry of a member of Muhammadiyah.⁴³

Darman also did not admit to or was caught by the teacher as a Shia follower. However, according to him, the teacher does not give opportunities to minority students like him to pray with prayer recitations according to the religious traditions taught in his family. Thus, in the practice of the morning prayers, he repeatedly forgot the prayer recitation he had memorized by force. As a follower of Shia, in prayer, he recites prayer that is different from Sunni's prayer, which he has to practice in front of his Islamic Religious Education teacher.⁴⁴

3.2. Mimicry as Sunny and Muhammadiyah in Worship Practices

As a minority, Shia youths camouflage their identity to hide their true identity. As a community that has often been discriminated against for the last two decades, Shia youths choose to hide their identity by practicing mimicry by borrowing the identity of other religious organizations. Because he was required by his teacher to recite *qunut* in worship practice session, Asman decided to disguise himself as a Muhammadiyah follower after he found it difficult to do so. He revealed that at that time, he confessed "Sir, I am

⁴⁰ Asman, Interview with Asman, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² A high school in the city of Jember. When the study was conducted, he was already accepted at a university in Jember.

⁴³ Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth, July 21, 2022.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Muhammadiyah". Disguising as a Muhammadiyah follower aims to get convenience and a dispensation so that he does not have to memorize and recite *qunut* during the morning prayer practical examination. According to him, "[I do so] to make the exam easier [for me]... ...many will be skipped, many will benefit too... ...there is no *qunut*". He camouflaged as a Muhammadiyah follower because he found it difficult to memorize the prayers that were recited in Islamic religious education classes. Like other Shia followers, he never recites these prayers and never performs the prayer movements taught at school. Even though he has claimed to be a member of Muhammadiyah, his teacher still asked him to read *qunut* in prayer practice session so he tried to memorize it in order to get good grades in the prayer practical examination.⁴⁵

In contrast, Munir is a Shia youth who is currently studying in his final semester on a campus. He revealed his experience of preparing for and taking prayer practical examination at the end of his study period at a public Madrasah Tsanawiyah in the Western Jember.⁴⁶ He tried hard to memorize the prayer movements and prayers, including the *qunut* so that he could do it smoothly, "*indeed the intention is to memorize the MTs because it's true, this MTs is more jaim, you can say it's jaim, keep the image, I mean don't look like you can't pray,*" he added. The biggest challenge in participating in Islamic religious education learning at public Madrasah Tsanawiyah is memorizing prayer movements and memorizing various prayers, including *qunut*. In order to be able to master it, Munir had to buy a Sunni prayer guidebook to prepare for the prayer practical examination at the Tsanawiyah elementary school and madrasah, even though when he took the same examination at high school, he mastered it better, but *qunut* was still a prayer that must be memorized with all his might. According to him, *qunut* is the longest prayer which is difficult for him to memorize, even when he faced the same practical examination in high school.⁴⁷

Relatedly, in preparing for the prayer practice examination at a state high school,⁴⁸ he tried hard to memorize *qunut* and pray like Sunni Muslim to give the impression that he is part of the Sunni Muslim community. When he practiced prayers, he did not specifically try to camouflage himself as a follower of a particular religious organization.⁴⁹ Similarly, Darman admitted that he had to memorize *qunut* and various recitations for the morning and funeral prayers. He admitted that he tried hard to memorize the prayers, even though during the prayer practice, which was organized by an Islamic religious education teacher, he repeatedly made mistakes in reciting the prayers.⁵⁰ Munir, AUFAR, and Darman did not want their identity as a Shia youth to be exposed because they could not be practicing the Sunni style of prayer correctly. Because there was no recognition from the Islamic Religious Education teacher of their differences, the three of them tried hard to memorize the prayer movements and prayer recitation so that they gave impression that they were like their other friends, followers of Sunni.

⁴⁵ Asman, Interview with Asman, Shia Youth.

⁴⁶ A Tsanawiyah madrasa which is located twenty kilometers west of Jember Square

⁴⁷ Munir, Interview with Munir, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022; Munir, Interview with Munir, Shia Youth, July 16, 2022.

⁴⁸ Public high school located in the city of Jember

⁴⁹ AUFAR, Interview with AUFAR, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022.

⁵⁰ Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth.

3.3. Identity in Islamic Religious Education Classes and the Religious Space of Educational Institutions

Shia youths use different identities when they study in Islamic religious education classes and the environment of educational institutions. There are times when they totally hide their identity as a Shia, there are also those who are forced to uncover their identities to certain communities. Aufar, a Shia youth descended from the prophet Muhammad, was often called Habib by his teachers and friends when he studied at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama.⁵¹ His privilege as a Habib and his ability to master Islamic religious education materials made teachers of Islamic education and his friends do not suspect that he was a follower of Shia.⁵²

Likewise, while studying in the Islamic Religious Education class at a senior high school in Jember, he tried hard to master the material and memorized prayer movements and prayer recitations so that his friends assumed that as a “*common person*”, i.e. Sunni Muslim. He is also sure that his ability to get along with anyone and humble himself helps him to be accepted and not suspected. In contrast, during college, although he tried hard to hide his identity as a young Shia, several times his college friends suddenly questioned his identity as a Shia. Not in a hurry to answer, generally, he invites the questioner to have coffee at the shop and answers in a “*diplomatic and political way, of course... ..political answers actually [very much depend] reading. According to him, he often had to change his identity by considering the character of the person he was talking to and the potential for discrimination that he might get after answering, "I usually see what kind of person they are," he said. Aufar revealed that there were times when he claimed to be a traditionalist Muslim with diplomatic answers that "my family is traditionalist too, [we practice] tahlilan, and indirectly [firmly answer] I am [member of] NU... ..even the habibs are big as well in my family". He denied that he also claimed to be a follower of Nahdlatul Ulama as an organization, but his intention was that he wanted to give the impression that his identity was a traditionalist Muslim similar to member of Nahdlatul Ulama. However, on another occasion when he was asked by another friend who he thought would potentially discriminate against him, Aufar only stated that he was Muslim. "Yes, I'm Muslim," I said just like that.*"⁵³

In contrast to Aufar, Munir stated that he always concealed his identity in Islamic religious education classes and in the school environment while studying at madrasa tsanawiyah and high school. According to him, he did not dare to be confess openly taht he was a follower of Shia because he did not have enough knowledge to explain and argue with his friends and teachers. While studying in class at the university, Munir did not disclose his identity in Islamic religious education classes. According to him, there is no reason to reveal his identity. One day some of his college friends found out

⁵¹ A madrasah ibtidaiyah, a religious education institution at the elementary school level, that is located a few kilometers west of Jember Square. The religious curriculum at this institution is affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

⁵² Aufar, Interview with Aufar, Shia Youth, July 5, 2022.

⁵³ Ibid.

about his identity as a Shia youth while reading a book and seeing the writings of Ali Bin Abi Talib. On campus, quite a few of his friends know his identity as a Shia follower. However, until now, Munir has not dared to openly perform the Shia style of prayer to his friends because he is aware that there is an older classmate who questions his identity and discriminates against him. Without being evasive, Munir just tried not to get a lot of discrimination from his friends who contrasted with Shia.⁵⁴

Similar to Munir, Asman, and Darman also continued to hide their identities from their Islamic religious education teachers and their school friends. Even though during his schooling in public elementary schools,⁵⁵ his Islamic religious education teacher knew Asman's identity as a Shia follower, he did not want to appear different from his friends. Likewise, while studying at junior high school, he never disclosed his identity as a follower of Shia.⁵⁶ Similarly, Darman also kept his identity hidden as a follower of Shia since he was in elementary school until he was in high school.⁵⁷

3.4. Disguise in the Middle of Prayer

Not only in the learning process of Islamic religious education, Shia youths also often use camouflage when they perform obligatory prayers within educational institutions and when they perform sunnah prayers outside educational institutions assigned by Islamic religious education teachers. The use of *turbah* or natural mats in prayer, straightening the hands after *takbīratu al iḥrām*, the fingertips not being raised at the beginning and end of the *tashahhud*, ending the prayer by raising the palms of the hands three times, and different prayer readings are traditions of Shia prayer that are difficult for Shia youths to practice in institutional education so they often have to do camouflage.⁵⁸

Just like AUFAR, to give the impression that he is part of Sunni Muslim community, during congregational prayers at high school, he has to pretend to cross his arms and do Sunni Muslim's prayer moves.⁵⁹ On campus, he also has to try to pray in Sunni style in front of his friends even though he forgets to recite certain prayer several times and straighten his hands as is the tradition of worshiping in his family, the follower of Shia, so he has to rush to raise his arms and cross his arms so as not to attract attention.⁶⁰ However, behind his disguise, he wants to get the freedom to perform Shia-style prayers on campus or at the Maha organization's basecamp students they follow. "*Sometimes I also want to pray as usual, you know,*" he added. To be able to pray in accordance to the teaching of Shia, AUFAR has to wait until none of his friends are watching and look for a quiet place to pray. He also admitted that even though he secretly maintained his identity as a Shiite by

⁵⁴ Munir, Interview with Munir, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022.

⁵⁵ A public elementary school located less than ten kilometers southwest of Jember Square

⁵⁶ Asman, Interview with Asman, Shia Youth.

⁵⁷ Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth.

⁵⁸ AUFAR, Interview with AUFAR, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022; Munir, Interview with Munir, Shia Youth, July 16, 2022; Asman, Interview with Asman, Shia Youth; Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth.

⁵⁹ AUFAR, Interview with AUFAR, Shia Youth, July 5, 2022.

⁶⁰ AUFAR, Interview with AUFAR, Shia Youth, July 15, 2022.

performing Shia-style prayers, he never felt peace of mind and reverent in his worship.⁶¹

Hakam also once accidentally prayed by straightening his hands in the Shia style when he was a new student at a high school. After being caught by a friend and being questioned about the reason for praying by straightening his hands, he responded, "*Huh, you know? [evasive] When will I be straight? I don't know... ..maybe I forgot.*"⁶² Disguise in the middle of prayer is not only limited to the position of straight hands while standing as Hakam does. Darman also revealed that he must finish his prayer by lifting his palm slightly from the top of his thigh three times to end the prayer in the midst of the congregation. The aim is so that he can immediately pretend to stick out their fingers like the other friends did and made an impression that he is the follower of Sunni.⁶³

Similar to Darman, Asman was also forced to always pray like Sunni Muslim. During prayers at junior high school, he could not pray with the *turbah* every time. In this school environment, Asman did not dare to openly pray in accordance to the teaching of Shia. Therefore, every time he performs the Dhuhr prayer, he is often forced to use tissue or paper as a mat for his prostrations. Meanwhile, when no one is around, he dares to use a small *turbah* surreptitiously. He said, "*I hide my turbah, I hold it like this [put it in front of his forehead]*". Thus, when he performs prayer movements other than prostration, he must always hide his *turbah* behind his palms. When one of his friends caught him using a *turbah* as prostration, he had to change his prayer movement from the Shiite way he usually did to the Sunny prayer movement.⁶⁴ According to him, he changed the prayer movement in the middle of the prayer because he did not want others to know that he was is Shiite. "*Wow, this is dangerous,*" he added.⁶⁵

Similarly, Darman also used tissues or envelopes that were placed close to each other with his cell phone, watch, and pen to disguise the tissues or envelopes used as a medium for his prostrations. According to him, "so that it looks like it's crowded, so it doesn't seem as if it looks anything, it's suspicious". Although according to him the arrangement of these objects is effective in disguising the use of tissue or envelopes as a substitute for *turbah*, he does not dare to pray by straightening his hands as is the tradition of Shia prayer because he is worried that his friends will realize that he is a Shiite.⁶⁶

3.5. Mimicry Performed by Shia youth in Private Islamic Education Classrooms and School Public Spaces: An Analysis

Discrimination that befell Asman and Darman in the private sphere of Islamic Religious Education in public schools occurred because teachers ignored the rights of others and did not recognize minority students, even though Asman at that time did mimicry of a follower of Muhammadiyah and did not openly identify himself as a follower of Shia. He did not get recognition

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Hakam, Interview with Hakam, Shia Youth, July 21, 2022.

⁶³ Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth.

⁶⁴ Asman, Interview with Asman, Shia Youth.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Darman, Interview with Darman, Shia Youth.

and received his civil and cultural rights from the teacher. He can participate in the Islamic Religious Education examination like the other majority but does not receive recognition from the teacher that he is part of the different others. Recognition is about not only tolerance that allows minorities to perform their religious practices but also respect to them as different groups in an equal relationship.⁶⁷ Discriminatory practices experienced by Shia youths ideally do not occur if Islamic Religious Education teachers in their schools practice recognition politics such as practiced by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMAN 1 Muntilan,⁶⁸ SMA Budi Mulia Dua Yogyakarta,⁶⁹ and SMA PIRI 1 Yogyakarta.⁷⁰

In response to the absence of a safe space for the Shia community in private Islamic religious education classes and public spaces of educational institutions, Shia youths conceal their identities. Like Asman, when he had difficulty memorizing *qunut* and other prayers that were tested by his school teacher who has the religious tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama, he claimed to be a follower of Muhammadiyah, the goal being that he did not have to memorize and recite *qunut* when he took the prayer practical examination in Islamic religious education lessons. He admits that he is reluctant to memorize *qunut* and other prayers in the tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama because according to him, the prayers are quite difficult to memorize. The mimicry practiced by Asman is different from the mimicry practiced by youth of religious minorities discovered by Ardiansyah.⁷¹

If Ardiansyah concluded that religious minority youths perform mimicry of a larger community identity to impress that he is part of an organization whose population is larger than his campus organizational affiliation, then, the mimicry of a member of Muhammadiyah that Asman performs confirms Ardiansyah's findings that religious minority youth perform mimicry by adopting the identity of another group by creating a new identity space outside of its original identity and the dominant identity it faces. The difference is that the purpose of practicing mimicry is precisely to get a dispensation and avoid the demands of his religious teacher to memorize prayers in the tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama that he does not need because at home, he prays with prayer recitations according to the tradition of Shia.

A different mimicry strategy was used by Aufar. In Islamic religious education subject classes at Madrasa Ibtidaiyah that is affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, Aufar constructs his identity as a Habib. This made his teacher and friends quite sure that he was no different from them, the followers of Sunni Islam. Privilege as a Habib, a respected descendant of Rasulullah, led him to imitate the identity of the followers of Sunni Islam. In high school and college, his ability to memorize Islamic religious education

⁶⁷ Bagir and Dwipayana, "Keragaman, Kesetaraan, dan Keadilan: Pluralisme Kewargaan dalam Masyarakat Demokratis," 42.

⁶⁸ Handayani, "Kebijakan Sekolah untuk Mengantisipasi Diskriminasi Minoritas di SMAN 1 Muntilan," 87–97.

⁶⁹ Ma'rifah, "Belajar Islam Inklusif dari Bangku Sekolah: Menilik Inovasi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMA Budi Mulia Dua Yogyakarta," 73–85.

⁷⁰ Farikhatin, "Berhadapan dengan Prasangka: Merespons Isu Sesat Ahmadiyah terhadap Sekolah PIRI I Yogyakarta," 1–15.

⁷¹ Ardiansyah, "Taktik Bertahan Pemuda Minoritas: Perlawanan Diam dan Mimikri Pemuda Aboge di Lembaga Pendidikan," 110–11.

materials and practice Sunni prayer movements and his ability to socialize made him feel that he was a follower of Sunni Islam. The story he told his friends that he came from a traditionalist Islamic family, did *tahlilan*, and had popular Habibs in his family also reinforced the impression that he was also Sunni Muslim, who was no different from his friends. Amid his campus friends, most of whom are of Sunni religious tradition, AUFAR does mimicry by adopting the identity of Sunni Muslim, such as performing Sunni prayers. However, it did not later make him Sunni Muslim, because secretly he tried to maintain the tradition of Shia worship by trying to pray in accordance to the teaching of Shia in secret, even with some prayer movements that had to be disguised.

This finding confirms the concept of colonized mimicry that Bhabha proposed by taking the third space. AUFAR adopted the worship identity of the Sunni community but did not completely and genuinely adopt them, because as a Shia follower, AUFAR still tries to maintain his identity secretly. As an identity camouflage strategy, mimicry that AUFAR employs necessitates the disguise of a student who looks like Sunni Muslim in front of his Sunni Muslim friends and religious education teachers, so that the identity he constructs as a Sunni Muslim is ambivalent because he manages to construct an identity as Sunni Muslim using worship that seems to be similar to that of Sunni Muslim, but struggles hard to keep practicing his Shia ways of worship, so that the mimicry practiced by AUFAR places him as a student who is almost the same as but not completely Sunni Muslim student, as Bhabha's conceptualization.⁷²

4. Conclusion

As a theoretical implication, the findings of this article confirm the concept of mimicry performed by religious minority youth discovered by Ardiansyah earlier because Asman, a Shia youth, performs mimicry of a follower of Muhammadiyah to avoid the practice of prayer in the tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama performed by Islamic religious education teachers in public schools who are supposed to provide freedom of religion for students to worship according to their family's religious traditions. However, this mimicry strategy differs from that of in Ardiansyah's previous findings because the choice to act as Muhammadiyah aims to avoid the obligations imposed by Islamic religious education teachers in public schools, not to give the impression that he is part of a larger religious organization.

Mimicry of a follower of Sunni Islam performed by AUFAR, a Shia youth, also confirms the use of an intermediate identity space, namely the liminal in the in-between space as described by Bhabha, because he uses the identity of Sunni Muslim while secretly retaining his primordial identity as a Shiite. The identities in this intersecting identity space make them use almost the same, but not completely the same identity as that of Sunni Muslim.

Learning from the discriminatory experiences of Shia youths obtained from Islamic Religious Education teachers and the mimicry they practice, the authors suggest that the government should redevelop the religious moderation program so that Islamic religious educators in schools and tertiary institutions have the awareness and skills to identify the sociocultural diversity of their students, particularly concerning religious traditions. In addition, it is expected

⁷² Homi K. Bhabha, *Tentang Mimikri*, 11.

that Islamic religious education in schools and tertiary institutions can also recognize students with religious minority backgrounds by allowing them to practice worship according to their family's religious beliefs and traditions in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education, including in the worship and prayer practical examinations.

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