

The Social Inclusivity of Arab-Descendant Youth in Solo Society

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social inclusivity of Arab-descendant youth in Solo (Surakarta). It focuses on three main indicators: the shift from traditional trading occupations to other fields, participation in formal education attended by indigenous residents, and involvement in social, political, and organizational institutions dominated by the local community. Using a qualitative field-study approach supported by literature review, observation, and interviews, the study is analyzed through Social Identity Theory, Social Integration Theory, and Assimilation Theory. The findings show that Arab-descendant youth in Solo have increasingly entered education, politics, entrepreneurship, and social organizations. Figures such as Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie, Quatly Alkatiri, and Yusuf Haikal Mulachela illustrate how this group is able to take part in wider social structures without losing its cultural background. The study also shows that the long history of Arab community education, especially through Madrasah Mambaul Ulum, has contributed to this process. Overall, the manuscript concludes that inclusivity among Arab-descendant youth in Solo is not a process of cultural erasure, but a form of adaptation and participation that strengthens social cohesion in a multicultural society.

Keywords: Inclusivity, Arab-descendant youth, Solo, social identity, social integration

INTRODUCTION

Background

Indonesia is known as a country rich in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. One of the ethnic groups that has contributed to Indonesia's social dynamics is the Arab-descendant community, especially those living in Solo. Arab-descendant youth in Solo play an important role in preserving tradition while also adapting to social change within society. However, their inclusivity in social life remains an interesting issue to study. In a social context, inclusivity refers to the ability of individuals or groups to be accepted and to participate actively in different aspects of society without facing discrimination or exclusion. For Arab-descendant youth in Solo, inclusivity is not only related to social acceptance, but also to how they build identity, interact, and contribute within a multicultural society. Although they have lived alongside the people of Solo for a long time, Arab-descendant youth often face stereotypes and prejudice that may affect their level of social participation. Therefore, it is important to understand the extent to which inclusivity is realized and the factors that support or hinder Arab-descendant youth in their social life in Solo. This study aims to explore the experiences and perspectives of Arab-descendant youth in Solo in facing social dynamics, and how their inclusivity can strengthen social cohesion and cultural diversity in society. With deeper understanding, it is expected that more effective strategies can be created to build an inclusive society that respects difference and diversity.

Research Questions

Based on the background described above, the researcher identifies several questions in this study:

1. Why have many Arab-descendant youth in Solo left the tradition of working as traders?

2. Since when have Arab-descendant youth in Solo studied at institutions attended by indigenous residents?
3. How have many Arab-descendant youth in Solo succeeded in occupying important positions in organizations and institutions dominated by indigenous residents in Solo?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify changes in the occupational orientation of Arab-descendant youth in Solo from traditional trading to other sectors; (2) to analyze the involvement of Arab-descendant youth in Solo in the general education system attended by indigenous residents; (3) to explore the roles and positions of Arab-descendant youth in social organizations or institutions whose members are predominantly indigenous residents in Solo; and (4) to understand the social dynamics that encourage the process of inclusivity among Arab-descendant youth in contemporary Solo society.

Research Benefits

This research is academically useful in enriching studies on social inclusion and minority ethnic identity, especially the Arab diaspora in Indonesia. Practically, the study provides a real picture of the role of Arab-descendant youth in Solo within society, which can encourage greater tolerance and social harmony. For the Arab community itself, the findings may serve as a means of reflection, identification of social challenges, and strengthening of participation and contribution in social life.

Research Limitations

This study focuses on how Arab-descendant youth in Solo have experienced increased social inclusivity as shown through occupational shifts, integration into general education, and active participation in indigenous community organizations. The study therefore limits its scope to the main issue of social inclusivity among Arab-descendant youth in Solo within indigenous society.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses three theories: Social Identity Theory, Social Integration Theory, and Assimilation Theory.

1. Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel and John Turner, 1979)

The core concept explains how individuals form identity based on their social groups, and how intergroup interaction shapes inclusion and integration. Its relevance to this paper is that it explains how Arab-descendant youth position themselves as part of Solo society without losing their original identity, and how a dual identity (Arab and Javanese/Indonesian) can emerge.

2. Social Integration Theory (Emile Durkheim, 1981)

The core concept states that social integration occurs when individuals feel that they are part of a larger social group through norms, values, and social interaction. Its relevance to this paper is that it explains how Arab-descendant youth become part of Solo's social network through education, work, and organizations.

3. Assimilation Theory (Milton Gordon, 1964)

The core concept explains how minority groups gradually adopt the culture of the majority and integrate into the social structure of the dominant society. In this paper, the evidence shows structural assimilation, where Arab-descendant youth leave the traditional trader profession and

move into other sectors, as well as social and institutional assimilation, where they study and organize within institutions owned or dominated by indigenous residents.

METHOD

1. Research Method

This study is a qualitative research project with a field-study approach. The method was chosen to gain a deep understanding of how Arab-descendant youth in Solo have experienced increased social inclusivity through occupational shifts, integration into general education, and active participation in indigenous community organizations. The data collection methods used were literature study, observation, and interviews. The data obtained consist of descriptive analysis that explains, narrates, describes, and analyzes the history and understanding of the increasing social inclusivity of Arab-descendant youth in Solo within indigenous society.

2. Research Technique

Research technique is generally understood as a process, method, or procedure used to solve a problem. In this study, the technique used to collect data was library research. Library research is a concrete initial step in data collection. It is a method directed toward searching for data and information through documents, including written documents, photographs, images, and electronic documents that support the writing process. Existing academic and artistic works make research findings more credible.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Findings

Initially, the Arab-descendant community in Solo was known as traders, especially in the batik industry. Over time, however, many of them shifted to other professions such as education, politics, and social organizations. For example, Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie, an Arab descendant, was active in various religious and social organizations in Solo, such as Pelajar Islam Indonesia and the Indonesian Ulema Council. He was also involved in politics by founding the Crescent Star Party in Solo and contributing to the victory of the Surakarta mayoral election. Several Arab-descendant figures in Solo have also demonstrated their inclusivity within society.

- 1) Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie showed inclusivity by being active in various organizations and institutions whose members were mostly indigenous residents. He served as Chair of Pelajar Islam Indonesia in Surakarta and participated in various foundations and other social organizations. He also contributed to the development of the batik industry through initiatives such as New Sarekat Dagang Islam and Kampung Batik Laweyan.
- 2) Quatly Alkatiri is known as a humble, active, sociable figure who enjoys sharing knowledge. Graduating from the world-renowned University of Berlin in Germany did not make him forget his roots. He absorbed knowledge, experience, and wisdom well during his time in Germany and continued to share and inspire others at home. While studying in Germany, he was trusted to serve as Chair of PKS Europe. His involvement in practical politics was significant. He became a member of the Surakarta City Regional House of Representatives for three periods, from 2004 to 2019, before being elected as a member of the Central Java DPRD and serving as Deputy Speaker of the Central Java DPRD for the 2019-2024 period. In the 2024 election, Quatly was again trusted by the people of Central Java and was re-elected as a member of the Central Java DPRD with 80,000 votes.
- 3) Yusuf Haikal Mulachela is an alumnus of the Arabic Literature program at UNS class of 2015. He is currently a lecturer at UNS and a doctoral student at UGM receiving LPDP, PK-150, and PK-208 scholarships. He is the owner of the tea house SURAKARTEA located in Baluwarti, Pasar Kliwon District, Surakarta. He also serves as a teacher at Madrasah

Diniyyah Riyadhul Ilmi Solo under the guidance of Habib Muhammad bin Husein Al-Habsyi, and he is the chair of IKADIS (Surakarta Diponegoro Alumni Association).

The Arab-descendant community in Solo has a long history in education. Madrasah Mambaul Ulum, founded in 1905 by the Surakarta Palace, became one of the first Islamic educational institutions in Solo. Graduates of this madrasah, such as KH Saifuddin Zuhri and KH Imam Zarkasyi, played important roles in the development of Islamic education and da'wah in Indonesia.

Overall, Arab-descendant youth in Solo have succeeded in integrating and contributing to social life by leaving the trader tradition, continuing their education in institutions mostly attended by indigenous residents, and occupying important positions in various organizations and institutions. This shows their inclusivity in Solo society.

b. Social Identity Perspective

At the beginning of their presence in Solo, the Arab-descendant community was better known as a trading group, especially in the batik industry. Over time, a social identity transformation emerged among Arab-descendant youth, marked by their active involvement in fields beyond trade, such as education, politics, and social organizations. This process reflects a shift in how they define themselves as part of Solo society and also shows their inclusivity in wider social life. Within the framework of Social Identity Theory developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), a person forms social identity based on membership in certain social groups. Arab-descendant youth in Solo, such as Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie, Quatly Alkatiri, and Yusuf Haikal Mulachela, show that they identify not only as part of the Arab community, but also as active members of the wider Solo society. They interact and take important roles in social institutions whose members are mostly indigenous residents. For example, Haji Achmad Sulaiman was active as Chair of Pelajar Islam Indonesia Surakarta and as a member of the Indonesian Ulema Council, which shows involvement in an inclusive community not limited to his ethnic group.

The combination of identities becomes the key to inclusivity. Quatly Alkatiri, who served as a member of the Surakarta City DPRD and the Central Java DPRD for several periods, is a clear example of how his Arab identity did not prevent him from becoming a public representative trusted by the wider community, including non-Arabs. The social recognition he received reflects acceptance of his identity as part of the larger society. Yusuf Haikal Mulachela also shows a dual social identity as an academic, a young entrepreneur, and a figure in Islamic education who is well received by various groups in Solo. In this theory, the change in social identity does not erase ethnic identity, but adds new layers of identity grounded in social participation and cross-community involvement. Arab-descendant youth are no longer viewed only as an out-group, but are recognized as part of the in-group of Solo society because of their active role and contribution. In addition, the history of Arab community education in Solo through institutions such as Madrasah Mambaul Ulum shows that the formation of social identity has been taking place for a long time. Education becomes a transformative tool in shaping an inclusive identity and encouraging social integration. Graduates of this madrasah, such as KH Saifuddin Zuhri and KH Imam Zarkasyi, also helped build a collective identity that is not only Arab, but also national and Islamic. Overall, the inclusivity of Arab-descendant youth in Solo shows that their social identity is not static, but develops through social interaction and active participation in society. Arab ethnic identity remains part of who they are, but through involvement in organizations, politics, and education, they have formed a wider social identity as citizens of Solo and Indonesia. This proves that inclusivity does not mean melting away or abandoning one's original identity; rather, it means building a bridge between identities within a plural society.

c. Social Integration Perspective

The Arab-descendant community in Solo has a long history closely linked to trade, especially in the batik industry. However, over time, Arab-descendant youth no longer remained tied to the identity of trader alone. They began to pursue more diverse careers such as education, politics, and social

activities. This change marks a significant process of social integration, in which Arab youth are not only present in society, but also actively involved and recognized within various local social structures. Social integration theory, as explained by Emile Durkheim, views integration as the process by which individuals or groups become attached to the social system through shared values, norms, and institutions. In this context, Arab-descendant youth in Solo show that they are able to internalize the social values embraced by the wider community without losing their own cultural identity.

Figures such as Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie are clear examples of effective social integration. He is known not only within the Arab community, but also as an active member of organizations whose members are mostly indigenous residents, such as Pelajar Islam Indonesia and the Indonesian Ulema Council. His involvement in founding the Crescent Star Party and in local politics shows that he has been accepted as part of Solo's social power structure. Likewise, Quatly Alkatiri, through his political career spanning three periods in the Surakarta DPRD and later the Central Java DPRD, gained social legitimacy from the wider public. He is an example of an Arab youth who not only succeeded personally but also demonstrated collectively that ethnic background is not a barrier to becoming part of public decision-making. His success in winning 80,000 votes in the 2024 election is a concrete symbol of social integration in the form of acceptance and trust from people across ethnic groups. Yusuf Haikal Mulachela, as a young academic, entrepreneur, and religious educator, also shows how integration occurs not only in formal politics but also in everyday social life. He manages the local tea business Surakartea in Baluwarti, which is an important part of the Solo urban structure, and he also teaches at a madrasah and at a university. His presence in educational institutions open to the general public proves that the Arab community has become integrated into local social and educational systems. In addition to individuals, institutions such as Madrasah Mambaul Ulum, founded in 1905 and producing major figures such as KH Saifuddin Zuhri and KH Imam Zarkasyi, are also evidence of the long history of Arab community integration into Islamic education and da'wah in Indonesia. This institution became a meeting point for Arab and Javanese values in one educational system open to all. Within the framework of social integration theory, which covers structural, normative, and functional dimensions, Arab-descendant youth in Solo have met all three. They are involved in the local socio-political structure, internalize the values of mutual cooperation and tolerance, and contribute to the education, economic, and social sectors.

d. Assimilation Perspective

The Arab-descendant community in Solo has long been known as an ethnic group closely associated with trade, especially in the batik industry. However, social dynamics and changing times have encouraged a shift in occupational orientation, especially among the younger generation. Arab-descendant youth now take part in fields such as education, politics, entrepreneurship, and social organizations, showing broader involvement in Solo's social structure. This phenomenon can be explained through assimilation theory, which describes the process by which a minority group becomes part of the culture and social system of the majority without completely losing its original identity. In this context, assimilation does not always mean the disappearance of the original culture, but rather adjustment to the norms and social structure of the dominant society. Arab-descendant figures such as Haji Achmad Sulaiman Badrie have followed a path of assimilation through their involvement in social and religious organizations dominated by indigenous residents, such as Pelajar Islam Indonesia and the Indonesian Ulema Council. His role in developing Kampung Batik Laweyan also shows his contribution to a collective and cross-ethnic economic sector.

Quatly Alkatiri is another clear example of successful assimilation in politics. Although he comes from the Arab community, Quatly succeeded in building close ties with the wider public through an inclusive approach and public service. His trust to lead a party outside his ethnic community and his success in being elected to the Surakarta DPRD and the Central Java DPRD for three terms show that he has been socially and politically accepted as part of the people of Solo as a whole. In this

case, assimilation is not merely cultural acceptance, but also acceptance within structures of power and leadership. Another example is Yusuf Haikal Mulachela, a young academic who is also an entrepreneur and educator in a local Islamic institution. He combines the Arab cultural values attached to his background with local and national values through his social and academic activities. His leadership in communities such as IKADIS and his involvement in Madrasah Diniyyah Solo are clear forms of productive and harmonious assimilation. It is important to note that this assimilation process has taken place within a long historical context. For example, Madrasah Mambaul Ulum, founded in 1905 by the Surakarta Palace, became a meeting point between the Arab community and the local community in the field of Islamic education. Graduates of this madrasa, such as KH Saifuddin Zuhri and KH Imam Zarkasyi, played roles in shaping Islamic da'wah and education in Indonesia, and also proved the active participation of Arabs in the intellectual development of the nation. Based on classical assimilation theory as proposed by Robert E. Park and Milton Gordon, there are several stages in the assimilation process: contact, accommodation, and finally full assimilation. Arab youth in Solo have gradually passed through these stages: from initial contact as traders, to accommodation within social institutions, to occupying important positions in Solo society more broadly. However, this process has not eliminated their Arab identity; rather, it has formed a dual identity that is adaptive and contextual. Based on the framework of assimilation theory, Arab-descendant youth in Solo have shown their ability to blend into local society socially, politically, and culturally. They are not only accepted by Solo society, but also trusted to lead, teach, and contribute in various sectors of life. This process shows that assimilation does not mean losing ethnic identity; instead, it is an active form of adjustment that allows diversity to grow in harmony. The inclusivity they demonstrate is tangible evidence of the success of a healthy assimilation process in a multicultural city such as Solo.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion using three main theoretical approaches Social Identity Theory, Social Integration Theory, and Assimilation Theory it can be concluded that Arab-descendant youth in Solo have succeeded in demonstrating a high level of inclusivity in social life. Initially, the Arab community in Solo was known as a trading group with a rather exclusive cultural identity. However, over time, especially among the younger generation, a transformation of identity has occurred, showing openness and active participation in various social sectors such as education, politics, culture, creative economy, and religious organizations.

Through Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner), it can be seen that Arab youth in Solo are able to form a dual identity as both members of the Arab community and full members of Solo society. They do not isolate themselves; instead, they actively participate in broader social groups, showing that social identity can develop in an inclusive way. Through Social Integration Theory (Durkheim and Parsons), these youth have successfully adjusted to the values, norms, and institutions of Solo society. They are accepted into social structures and make real contributions to social stability and progress. This can be seen in their involvement in educational institutions, regional parliaments, and civil communities. Through Assimilation Theory (Park and Gordon), it is clear that Arab-descendant youth do more than simply mingle; they become structurally integrated into local social life without having to eliminate their cultural identity. This assimilation process occurs gradually through contact, accommodation, and integration in social, political, and economic fields.

Thus, Arab-descendant youth in Solo are not only successfully 'accepted,' but have also become important actors in the social dynamics of the city. Their inclusivity is not the result of cultural uniformity, but of intelligent social adaptation, in which they preserve their cultural roots while opening themselves to the collective values of the local community. This is a portrait of successful social pluralism at the local level, where differences in identity do not become an obstacle to social cohesion, but rather a strength for mutual support and shared development.

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