Assessing Future Potential Leaders:
A Pilot Study among Indonesian Muslim Youth

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Abstract

Muslim society was changing rapidly due to the industrial revolution 4.0 and globalization effect. The Muslim youth are facing the uncertainty and challenges from internal and external factors. On the other side, youth Muslims are the future generation that expected to be prospective leaders as well. Capabilities and individual potentials are essential to prepare and pursue future leaders. Hence, this study aims to assess the leadership potentials among Indonesian youth Muslims and determinant factors to support the outcome as prospective leaders. A qualitative method was used through focus group discussion with 19 Muslim youth participants aged 13 to 24 years in Yogyakarta region, Indonesia. All participants were involved voluntary and recruited through an online publication through social media. Results showed some themes related to leadership potentials: self-control, technology literacy, taking chance, and motivation. There are also three determinant factors related to risk factors, strengthening factors, and prospective factors. Limitations and implications of the study will be discussed further in the article.

Keywords: Indonesia, Muslim youth, prospective leadership, potential leaders

Introduction

The Arabic proverb says that today's youth is a leader in the future (*syubbanul yaum rijalul ghod*) so that the character of youth and the virtues in it becomes a determinant of the goodness of youth leadership in the future. Furthermore, Imam Shafi'i stated that the youth was standardized from the quality of knowledge and piety so that if the youth did not have both, then the term youth would be a problematic assumption (Al-Maghribi, 2004). The education of youth in the family will influence the virtues of the youth character. The opinion reinforces this that the good of the family will affect the good of society, and the good of society will affect the good of the country (Al-Atsari, 2013). Thus, the statement also reinforces the primacy of the family in the process of community education that impacts on the progress and good of a country through its young generation. Furthermore, as a Muslim, it should be in the family; it is necessary to try to educate our family members to be kept away from the torments of hellfire.

Taking into account the importance of the position of youth in the future, Indonesia prepares youth under the coordination of the Minister of Youth and Sports. One of the ministries' duties is to prepare the physical and spiritual health of youth. In Indonesian history, the youth had contributed to the struggle for Indonesia Independence. Hence, in Indonesia there was term *Sumpah Pemuda*, to remember Indonesian youth struggling for Indonesia Independence (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Furthermore, as one of the countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is a country that has cultural diversity. In the last decade, it was mentioned as a country that has the largest Muslim population in the world of 13.1% of the total world population (Tarman, 2016; Anshori, 2016). It was even further stated that the Muslim population would increase compared to the people of adherents of other religions. In the previous three decades, the number of Muslim communities in Indonesia increased to 88.22% in 2000 (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, in the future, Indonesia is predicted by the Pew Research Center to experience a decline in the number of the Muslim population in the world in 2050 to 9.3%, while the Muslim community in the world will

increase by 29.7% in 2050 (Anshori, 2016; Haryanto, 2020). It was further emphasized that the age distribution of the Muslim population in 2010 in the Asia-Pacific region was the most in the range of 15-59 years, which is as much as 62% of the Muslim population in the region (Fauzan & Nadia, 2019; Anshori, 2016). It shows that the number of young people has the most substantial portion of the Muslim population in Asia.

Furthermore, the Muslim community is currently facing the industrial revolution 4.0 with easiness to access the information and extensive social interaction. It can influence changes in family and individual values that are essential elements in shaping personality and quality of life, especially Muslim societies. The values adopted will form a social identity that can affect the increase in the internal locus of control of individuals, for example in the community (for instance Muslim societies) who also have a collective cultural tendency (Triandis, 2001). These values will be a protective factor for the younger generation in building individual and family resilience to face complex and risky problems (Nissen, 2001).

While what can be categorized as the age of youth as stated in law (Indonesian's Government Law) number 40 of 2009 concerning youth (Kettani, 2010), it is stated that youth are Indonesian citizens who enter essential periods of growth and development aged 16 to 30 years. It was further explained that youth development in Indonesia was carried out in the form of youth services which included four functions, one of which was the development of leadership potential. This youth service is carried out following the characteristics of youth, which has a spirit of struggle, volunteerism, responsibility and dignity, as well as being critical, idealistic, innovative, progressive, dynamic, reformist, and futuristic. Therefore, the idealism described in Law No. 40 of 2009 needs to be aligned with the real conditions of Muslim communities which base their values on the *Quran* and *Hadith*.

As mentioned by Kettani (2010), that the Muslim population in Southeast Asia will continue to grow and is expected to increase by 31% in 2020. Thus, an increase of 1% per decade. These conditions indicate the potential for the development of Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, which is estimated to be the majority of the Muslim population as young people.

A study in 10 Arab countries with respondents were young people aged between 15-33 years as many as 6862 themes on millennial Muslims which included identity, worship, religion in the general public, religious scholars, and extremism (Taubah Future Initiative, 2017). Further, it was mentioned that the young Muslim generation in the millennial era in the Arab region then described the individual internal and external conditions, including accurately:

1. National identity is the fundamental identity of the young Arab generation.
2. The young generation of Arabs wants to be known for their beliefs.
3. The young Arab generation believes that non-Muslim residents in Muslim countries must be treated as citizens who have the same rights.
4. Applying Islamic values in society and promoting the development of a country are the main things of religious duty.
5. The young generation of Arabs does not believe in the existence of religious debate with the modern world, because religion should be part of religious institutions and Muslim scholars.
6. Local leaders (imams) who are followed by fatwa centres and religious programs on television or social media are those who will be the place to look for answers to the questions of the young Arab generation.

To understanding this phenomenon, it is implied that the young generation of Muslims in the context of the Arab countries still upholds religious beliefs as a fundamental thing that must be held so that leadership with trends will tend to be followed. Cultures are assumed to be the determinant factor that might affect the perspectives, paradigms, values, attitudes and behavior among Muslim youth, including social support systems.

Further, based on the pre-study observation, the Indonesian Muslim youth tend to follow the trend through Muslim youth organization and social media, especially in choosing the leader to be followed. On the one hand, Islamic beliefs and values are still important things to hold fast in the modern era. However, the personal characteristics of individuals and the family background of the current global Muslim generation have not been mapped clearly, so the understanding of the impact of behavior and possible potential factors as future leaders has not been studied further. Particularly in

Indonesia, there should be many factors that might influence the Muslim youth that can depict the profile of Muslim youth as potential future leaders.

Concept of leadership is defined as knowledge, skills, and abilities to share visions of life, beliefs, values and principles that guides or motivates to certain kinds of action and behavior (Mir, 2020). Leadership concepts introduced by Western scholars have been implemented in most countries, including many Muslim countries (Rafiki, 2020). It is explained further that many of them are applying leadership styles, such as transactional and transformational leadership. Nevertheless, the implementation of those leadership styles is different in Muslim countries. *Quran* (the holy book in Islam) and *sunnah* (the examples and ways of life from the Prophet Muhammad) as revealed sources of knowledge are given the highest priority as sources of developing leadership principles in Malaysia (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011). Whereas in other Muslim countries, such as Oman, Islamic leadership rely on rational-legal systems based on the unity of purpose, acknowledgement of the one God, and the foundational example of Prophet Muhammad as part of *sunnah* (essential way as the best example) in Islam (Almoharby & Neal, 2013). An example in Yemen, the concept of Islamic leadership is based on the concept of *taqwa*, which consists of *iman* (belief), *ibadah* (rituals), and *tawbah* (repentance), and responsibility of other dimensions, such as emotional control, *sadaqah* (charity), forgiveness, integrity, patience and justice (Mohsen, 2007).

According to the concept leadership in Muslim countries, it seems essential that young generation in Muslim countries should be prepared as they are the future leaders with some expectation that they will apply the concept of leadership in Islam perspective for building the *khoiru ummah* (best society). *Akhlaqul karimah* (great virtuous) should become the foundation that embedded in the character of Muslim leaders nowadays or even in the future.

In Indonesia, issues related to Muslim youth are mostly about conservatism and radicalism with regards to their attitudes and behavior (Convey Indonesia, 2018; Laksana, 2020). There are still few studies about the leadership potential factors embedded in Indonesian Muslim youth.

Therefore, based on the explanation above, this study aims to determine the potential of Indonesian Muslim youth today in the 4.0 industrial revolution as a generation of future leaders in building a civilized Muslim society. We proposed research questions: What are the potential characters on Indonesian Muslim youth as prospective leaders? What are the risk and protective factors of leadership potentials among Indonesian Muslim youth?

Methods
Research Focus

This pilot study focuses on a qualitative approach through an exploration of the leadership potential. We considered exploring the Muslim youth perspective through their own and peers experiences related to future leadership and the potential. Hence, the Muslim youth perspective about their prospective leaders and its factors can be profiled.

Participants

This study focuses on Muslim youth who live in Yogyakarta area, Indonesia. Further, they will be called as respondents and recruited through online publications and social media. There were 19 respondents aged 13 to 24 years involved in the pilot study. We conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) and divided the respondents into two groups. The first group consisted of 9 respondents aged 13-18 years (1 male; 8 females), and the second group consisted of 10 respondents aged 19-24 years (7 males; 3 females).

Data collection and analysis

Data collection was conducted through FGD which consisted of two groups. Each group had one facilitator and an observer who drove the discussion and took notes during the FGD. The duration of the FGD of each group was 2 hours. We invited all respondents via social media and met them in a closed meeting room. The FGD was divided into two sessions. The first session was in the morning for group 1, and the second was in the afternoon. Before the FGD, all respondents were given informed consent and needed to sign as a clear statement that they would participate in the FGD voluntary. At the beginning of the FGD, the facilitator explained the rules and let all participants introduced their selves. There were two questions given in the FGD related to the topic of leadership potential: 1) Do you think that youth Muslim today has the potential to be a prospective leader? 2) What are your reasons and arguments related to the youth Muslim as a prospective leader?

All transcripts from the FGDs were analyzed using open coding, selective, and axial coding. Verbatim was coded from the keywords into a sub-category, category, sub-theme, and theme. All themes were synthesized and summarized to find the relationship among one another. In the end, the outcome of the analysis was profiled into a model about prospective leaders.

Results and Discussion
The potential characters on Muslim youth as prospective leaders

The aims of this research are focused on the assessment of Indonesian Muslim youth potentials. This study examined the understanding of Muslim youth potentials as future leaders. The results showed there are four issues related to potential characters on Indonesia Muslim youth: (1) take chance in the leadership's roles, (2) motivate themselves, (3) being technology literally, and (4) having self-control.

I think each person has the characteristics of their respective leaders, characteristics or self in the context of leading a family. Now everyone must have goodness, no matter how bad he is, there must be good in him. [LM/FGD2: 318-320]

Muslim youths and girls, the enemy is himself, because now is the era of information or the flood of information, and we are not deep in our filters and our understanding is not deep. [RN/FGD2: 41-43]

Whether I become president or not depends on our will, and it depends on our passion. Our passion actually exists, where "I am suitable to be a leader or not" My passion is here or not, such as being a secretary, just being a secretary, ministers also have a big influence on the nation, but what is more influential is the president. That goes back to their respective passion. A person wants to be a leader or not, is suitable to be a leader or not, that's a passion. Passion is a reflection of ourselves, our own will, then here it means that it doesn't have potential, in this case, everyone is suitable to be a leader. [AN/FGD2: 339-345]

The risk and protective factors of leadership potentials among Indonesian Muslim youth

In details, we explained some findings related to the risk, strengthening, and protective factors that contribute to the process of Muslim youth from its recent potentials to the prospective leadership in the future. Further, it was found that some internal factors (i.e., cognition, affection, and behavior), external factors (i.e., environment and social support), and individual chance can be strengthening the potential leadership among Muslim youth.

Environment and social support

Technology issues

Like this, smartphones are the deadliest weapons, if I dare say, because from cellphones, we can remotely manage computers and such. [RY/FGD2: 290-291]

Family support

There are also relationship problems in the family. Here it could be that he comes from a well-off family, but lacks affection or maybe there are family problems and in the end he should already have an identity, finally he is confused. "Ah, I'm looking for an escape," consciously or unconsciously. It's a family problem. There is also a problem with the scope of friendship, it could be that in a family like this, it doesn't matter at first but because of the friendship, it seems like it goes into things that shouldn't be done, not bad but shouldn't be done. Then there is also a problem that is stuck, maybe he / someone does bad things, his mind doesn't want to but because he is stuck, he is forced to do that, he / she has to do it. It could be that he was forced because someone was threatening him, or maybe the economic condition made him, like it or not, have to violate what he held. [RY/FGD2: 115-124]

Internal factors

Lack of motivation

Still like being too relaxed, sis, I don't have any future views, it's too relaxed. Not yet, for myself, the problem is that if I am too involved too, miss, so if they want to do this, yes, they have joined but if you want this, if there is no plan, I also don't have any views, miss, for the future. [DC/FGD1: 61-64]

Fear

like planning like that, miss tomorrow you have to be someone like this, like this, like this, only the more I think about it my fear is getting

bigger so I feel like it's impossible. [RF/FGD1: 73-74]

Strengthening factor

Relate to God

It must involve all matters with Allah, so if you want to do anything you have to be in accordance with Allah and your religion. [RF/FGD1:110-11]

If in my opinion it is religion, then what do you forget. Hmm, not arrogant, who is smart but that doesn't mean he is smart, but is able to solve problems. [DA/FGD1: 112-113]

Muslim role model

actually ever aspired to be a leader when I heard the story of Umar bin Khatab like the heyday of Islamic leadership like if he could be sure I was biased. [DA/FGD1: 82-83]

Based on the findings, Figure 1 depicted the model of prospective leaders that we found based on the experiences of Indonesian Muslim youth and their perception among their peers. It is explained further that the need for leader, generation gap, and through the reflection of civilization become the baseline of each individual has possibilities to be a leader.
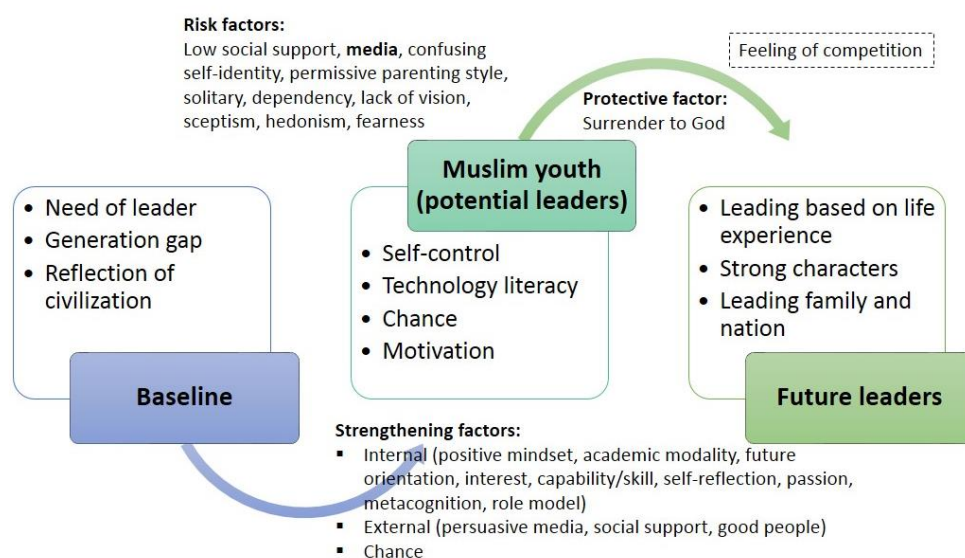

Figure 1. Model of prospective leaders among Indonesian Muslim youth

Focused on the strengthening factors among Indonesian Muslim youth, role model has an important part. Young Muslim generation must have the right or proper leaders who can lead them and become good examples of applying leadership in Muslim societies. Based on the findings depicted in Figure 1, Indonesian Muslim youth are seeing future leaders as persons who could lead based on life experience, have strong characters and virtues, including lead family and nation as well. Surrender to God is the essential factor that may protect an individual from doing harmful. This finding is in line with the previous concept from Asaf (1987) that mentioned in details about the attributes related to traits for a leader are consisting of caring, justice, experience and knowledge, exemplary behavior, willingness to consult, persuasiveness through goodness, and a trust in God. Most of these are showing the qualities of leaders.

However, some potential modalities of Muslim generation in Indonesia are found related to motivation, chance, self-control and technology literacy. Living and growing in the digital era in industrial revolution 4.0 bring a challenge for Indonesian Muslim youth to improve their technology literacy, although what is served by technology could be a risk factor as well, such as the influence of social media. In a blended culture between Islam and western perspective, it becomes a challenge for the Muslim society, especially the micro-unit, such as family, when beliefs and values are not deeply shared and implemented. This might give impacts

on fear, skeptics, hedonism, lack of vision and dependency. More likely, it can translate into apathy, frustration, indifference and fragmentation (Rafiki, 2020).

The criteria of good leaders has been described in Quran:

> *"And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us". (Al-Anbiya' 21: 73)*

> *"And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs". (As-Sajdah 32: 24)*

> *"The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, "We hear and we obey. And those are the successful". (An-Nur 24: 51)*

The combination of strengthening factors and recent potentials will drive Muslim youth as a prospective leaders which expected to have capabilities to lead based on life experiences, having strong characters so that future leaders will lead the nations and family as well. However, it is also necessary for prospective leaders to surrender to God as the foundation of the protective factor that encounters the risks factors as well (i.e., internal and external factors). Family issues, such as relationships among family members and parenting style will influence Muslim youth motivation to prepare themselves to be brave to lead in a community and taking this chance.

Integrating the concept of Islamic leadership based on religion and western concepts, including cultural traditions will not become a simple task for the young Muslim generations recently. They should prepare well to manage in the diverse global environment of Muslim communities. Strengthening the faith, beliefs, behavior, sharing Islamic values to be universal and blending the cultural heritage is part of the competence that Muslim youth should have to be future potential leaders that lead based on Islamic perspective.

Moreover, we realized that some limitations should be discussed further. The limit number of participants could become a consideration that this research is an initial work that needs to be studied further. We found difficulties to probe some answers from younger respondents during FGD session. Others method can be conducted to complement and obtain the complete answers.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and results of this study, we may conclude that facing the industrial revolution 4.0, Indonesian Muslim youth need to have potential characters as prospective leaders, such as take a chance, motivation, self-control, and technology literacy. Also, some factors may become risks (i.e., low social support, media, confusing self-identity, permissive parenting style, solitary and dependency, lack of vision, scepticism, hedonism, and fear) and other factors that may strengthen the potential characters to be prospective leaders. These strengthening factors have consisted of internal factors (i.e., positive mindset, academic modality, future orientation, interest, capability/skill, self-reflection, passion, metacognition, role model), external factors (i.e., persuasive media, social support, good people), and chance itself. Surrender to God for Indonesian Muslim youth can contribute also as a protective factor and related to the uncertainty and uncontrolled situations outside the individual. One point which is necessary to be managed due to the rapid growth of changing as an effect of globalization is a feeling of competition to lead in many aspects.

Encounters with potential characters, all findings and results give some implications for future research. Islamic leadership program for Muslim youth is necessary to be included in Islamic schools' curriculum. Also, Muslim youth organization may focus on personal development to prepare Muslim youth as a good leader for Muslim communities which revealed all the good virtues that are based on *taqwa*.

Acknowledgement

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